



April 20, 2022

The Honorable David E. Price
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Subcommittee Members:

On behalf of Chamber of Progress, a center-left tech coalition committed to ensuring all Americans benefit from technological leaps, we encourage you to include provisions in the FY23 THUD Appropriations bill that would help speed the safe deployment of autonomous vehicles. One way to guarantee robust and safe deployment is to direct NHTSA to submit a comprehensive status report to the Committee within one year explaining any delays in final rulemakings.

The widespread adoption of autonomous vehicles will have a profound impact on our communities – including improving safety, promoting sustainability, mitigating transit gaps, combating food deserts, and increasing mobility for the elderly and disabled.

Autonomous vehicles will bring safer streets and reduce the number of accidents. Between 2019 and 2021, traffic deaths and fatalities in the United States rose by 17.5 percent - the largest two-year increase since World War II.¹ Research shows that at least 90% of car crashes are caused by human error, and studies suggest that putting AVs on the road now could save hundreds of thousands of lives over the long term.

Autonomous vehicles can positively impact the environment and promote sustainability efforts. Through high-speed driving, braking, and re-acceleration, humans burn a lot of gas and energy while driving.² According to the Southwest Research Institute, through connectivity and automation, vehicles can reach 20% improvement in fuel efficiency.³ Since autonomous vehicles are programmed to follow traffic rules and speed limits, autonomous vehicles will ultimately burn less gas and energy.

Autonomous vehicles will help mitigate transit gaps. Traditional transit systems have historically contributed to inequality for disadvantaged minority and disabled communities. Research shows that Black people are more likely to rely upon public transportation accounting for 60% of all public

¹David Leonhardt, *Vehicle Crashes, Surging*, (Feb. 2022),

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/15/briefing/vehicle-crashes-deaths-pandemic.html>

²Ashleigh Rose-Harman, *The Environmental Benefits of Driverless Cars*, Greener Ideal, (Nov. 2021),

<https://greenerideal.com/news/vehicles/driverless-cars-environmental-benefits/>.

³SwRI *Achieves 20% Improvement in Vehicle Fuel Efficiency with Connectivity, Automation*, Southwest Research Institute, (Nov. 2021)

<https://www.swri.org/press-release/vehicle-fuel-efficiency-improvement-connectivity-automation-arcpa-e-nextcar> .

transit riders. In addition, Black and Brown people are more likely to experience commutes to work that are 60 minutes or longer, one way.

Autonomous vehicles will help to combat food deserts. Residents in low food access areas continue to be plagued by the food desert crisis and are forced to travel far away to get to grocery stores. In some communities, AVs are delivering groceries and food via low-speed, seatless, passengerless autonomous vehicles. With this technology, residents that live outside food-rich areas have the same convenient and affordable access to fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, and meat they need to live happily and healthily.

Autonomous vehicles will increase mobility for the elderly and disabled. For the blind and other people living with disabilities, safe autonomous vehicles can't arrive fast enough. 13.4 million Americans between the ages of 18 and 64 have self-reported travel limiting disabilities.⁴

Given the many benefits of autonomous vehicles, it is essential that the federal government play a leadership role in helping accelerate this technology. We applauded the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Association ("NHTSA") for their leadership in amending the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) to allow for Level 5 autonomous vehicles without manual controls.

But more must be done. For that reason, **we encourage your committee in the upcoming THUD Appropriations bill to require NHTSA to complete a report to the Committee within one year, explaining their delay in completing essential new AV rulemakings.**

Although NHTSA recently completed its first rulemaking on autonomous vehicles, there remains a critical need to modernize the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, covering vehicle safety technology, zero-occupancy vehicles, and other topics. The report would provide Congress with information on the causes and potential solutions to the agency's longstanding delays.

NHTSA's rulemakings are not keeping pace with emerging technology; numerous MAP-21 and FAST Act rulemakings remain pending years after their statutory due dates. And DOT has not yet proposed updates to manual control standards, covering items like brake pedals, mirrors, or dashboard lights that are unnecessary in a vehicle with no driver.

Autonomous vehicles offer tremendous promise in making our country a safer and more equitable place. For the sake of enhancing mobility for disadvantaged, elderly, and disabled communities, we look to Congress and members of this committee to invoke its authority to support the safe deployment of autonomous vehicles without further delay. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

⁴ Travel Patterns of American Adults with Disabilities, U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics (Jan. 2022) <https://www.bts.gov/travel-patterns-with-disabilities>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamie Pascal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jamie" and last name "Pascal" clearly distinguishable.

Jamie Pascal
Director of Civic Innovation Policy
Chamber of Progress



April 20, 2022

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Schatz and Subcommittee Members:

On behalf of Chamber of Progress, a center-left tech coalition committed to ensuring all Americans benefit from technological leaps, we encourage you to include provisions in the FY23 THUD Appropriations bill that would help speed the safe deployment of autonomous vehicles. One way to guarantee robust and safe deployment is to direct NHTSA to submit a comprehensive status report to the Committee within one year explaining any delays in final rulemakings.

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