May 23, 2022

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chairwoman, U.S. Senate Committee
on Commerce, Science and Transportation
254 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee
on Commerce, Science and Transportation
254 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and Members of the Committee,

The National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) recently released crash data[1] reporting nearly 43,000 lives were lost in traffic-related fatalities in 2021. NHTSA attributes this unprecedented uptick in deaths in part to an increase in reckless driving behaviors such as speeding, driving while distracted, and driving while intoxicated. **We urge the Committee to prioritize a national legislative framework that will support the safe deployment of fully autonomous vehicles (AV).**

By removing human error, autonomous vehicles will bring safer streets and reduce the number of accidents on U.S. roads. In 2015, NHTSA issued a study finding that human error played an important role in 94% of all auto accidents.[2]

A look at NHTSA's data on alcohol-impaired driving confirms that human error plays a deciding factor in thousands of fatal crashes every year. According to the agency, alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities account for 28 percent of all motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States.[3]

NHTSA also reports that speeding is a contributing factor in 29 percent of all fatal crashes.[4] The agency writes that in 2019 alone, speeding killed 9,478 people.

If autonomous vehicles were to eliminate these two contributing factors to roadway fatalities - drunk driving and speeding - they would save thousands of lives every year. However, we know that the safety benefits of AVs do not end there. AVs can also eliminate distracted driving and could help reduce fatalities from unbelted vehicle occupants.

Tragically, within days of NHTSA's crash data report release, the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) announced its annual report, projecting a historic total of 7,485 pedestrians

[1]Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (May 2022) https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813298?source=email
[2] Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (February 2015) https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812115
[3]Traffic Safety Facts, 2019 Data. U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (July 2021)https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/813120#:~:text=These%20alcohol%2Dimpaired%2Ddriving%20fatalities,fatalities)%20from%202018%20to%202019.
[4]Speeding, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/speeding

killed by vehicles in 2021 - an increase of 11.5% from the 6,700 pedestrians that were killed in 2020.[5] Similar to the auto fatalities reported by NHTSA, both speeding and intoxicated driving played a major role in these deaths.

Studies suggest that putting AVs on the road now could save hundreds of thousands of lives over the long term.[6] The safety benefits of AVs rely heavily on the ability to experience various road conditions and driving situations to improve machine learning technology. By prolonging the widespread testing and adoption of autonomous vehicles, we delay the technological advancements that can be made to prevent possibly hundreds of thousands of fatalities over the next 30 years.[7]

As the U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg stated recently in regards to safety and autonomous vehicles, "We are in the middle of a crisis for roadway deaths and one of the areas of promise that exists with AVs is an opportunity to fundamentally change outcomes. We are doing what we can with the authorities and flexibilities that we have, but we lack a fully established legislative framework. We would welcome one from Congress that would create a division of labor between DOT and states."

Autonomous vehicles have the potential to not only save hundreds of thousands of lives but also offer tremendous benefits to our communities – including promoting sustainability, mitigating transit gaps, combating food deserts, and increasing mobility for the elderly and disabled.

The deployment of autonomous vehicles will lead to safer, more accessible, and equitable communities. To disrupt the status quo of rising death tolls on U.S. roads, we call on Congress and members of this committee to lead in the development and support of critical AV legislation without further delay.

Sincerely,

Chamber of Progress
Consumer Technology Association

[5]Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State: 2021 Preliminary Data, Governors Highway Safety Association (May 2022) https://www.ghsa.org/resources/Pedestrians22
[6]Kalra, Nidhi and David G. Groves, The Enemy of Good: Estimating the Cost of Waiting for Nearly Perfect Automated Vehicles. RAND Corporation (2017) https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2150.html.
[7]Introducing Autonomous Vehicles Sooner Could Save Hundreds of Thousands of Lives Over Time, RAND Corporation (2017) https://www.rand.org/news/press/2017/11/07.html

May 23, 2022

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman, U.S. House Committee
on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee
on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Rodgers, and Members of the Committee,

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