

Statement of the Honorable Robert E. Latta
Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection
Markup of H.R. ____, Staff Draft on Highly Automated Vehicle
Testing and Deployment
July 19, 2017

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Good morning; today's markup represents the most significant step this Subcommittee has taken to date to ultimately enact comprehensive legislation on self-driving technologies and services. I am very happy and appreciative that we take this step together in bipartisanship.

The idea of self-driving vehicles once was the stuff of science fiction, comics, TV and movies – think David Hasselhoff and Knight Rider. Today, advanced driving equipment is embedded in cars and pick-up trucks and more sophisticated technology and systems are being designed and tested for the very near future.

Accordingly, over the past year and a half, we have attempted to highlight both the significant benefits and challenges of self-driving technology by holding hearings, technology showcases, and real-life demonstrations for our Committee's Members, and by having open and bipartisan dialogue with stakeholders from across the country.

Personally, I lost count of how many informative meetings I have had with colleagues and stakeholders! As a result, we have received an outpouring of comments, concepts, edits and counter-proposals on how best to advance this transformative issue.

Why is all of this important? One word: Safety. We don't have to accept a world where millions of accidents and thousands of fatalities on the roadway are a necessary evil of driving. In a nation of over 320 million, each year approximately 6 million Americans are involved in vehicular accidents, resulting in nearly 2 million injuries.

In 2015, over 35,000 people lost their lives on our nation's highways. Early estimates indicate that number increased to 40,000 fatalities in 2016. In my home State of Ohio, sadly there was a traffic fatality increase of 10% from 2014 to 2015.

Traffic deaths are already going up, so we must continue to quickly move forward and thoughtfully. Safety will always be our number one priority and, as a consequence, we need to unleash safety testing and the future deployment of self-driving vehicles.

The core of this self-driving legislation underscores our intention to re-affirm the roles and responsibilities of Federal and State governments, update Federal motor safety rules, and enhance public safety through testing and deployment of self-driving vehicles and technologies.

Let me elaborate on two specific issues – 1) re-affirming the traditional roles and responsibilities of the Federal, State and Local governments and 2) raising the cap on FMVSS exemptions that manufacturers can maintain.

First, one of the most important objectives of this legislation is to re-affirm the established roles of the Federal, State and Local governments. The need for this framework was laid out by the Obama administration just last year.

From the front bumper to the back bumper – whether it is a car, pickup truck or a van – how the vehicle works and is designed should be the province of the Federal government as has been the case for more than 50 years.

That said, the States and localities have an equally important role to play in determining insurance requirements, titling cars, requiring registration and setting the rules of the road. They get to enact and enforce traffic laws and regulations as well. States will also still be able to offer incentives to entities that are early participants in this field if they want to encourage testing in their state.

I am tremendously proud that my home state of Ohio is actively engaged and working on advanced transportation research and development. For example, the city of Columbus won the Department of Transportation's Smart City Challenge last year and is already leveraging advanced transportation technology and initiatives to improve mobility services for its community and the entire State.

Less than 40 miles from Columbus, we are also fortunate to have the Transportation Research Center (TRC) in central Ohio. TRC is the largest independent vehicle test facility and proving grounds in the U.S., and is at the cutting edge of a wide-range of transportation R&D, testing and manufacturing programs. Nothing in our legislation affects these state and local activities and

authority. And at the same time it ensures that self-driving vehicles will not abruptly stop at the Ohio-Michigan state line!

Second, the intention of this legislation is to increase self-driving vehicle testing on U.S. highways and dramatically increase the amount of data and information on safety and performance, all without sacrificing safety. There can be no exemption without showing that there will be no sacrifice to safety.

In my remaining time, let me thank all of our Subcommittee Members for engaging on this important issue. We have great Member interest in this issue and have had robust participation throughout. I especially want to thank Ranking Members Pallone and Schakowsky for their good faith work to get us to the bipartisan language we have before us. And of course, the tireless advocacy of Mrs. Dingell, whose passion for the automobile industry is known by all. I also want to thank our great staffs for their tireless work which involved weekdays and weekends to help us get where we are today.

Our work is not done and we will continue to perfect language as we prepare to move quickly to full-committee mark-up. I know many Members are hearing about franchise agreements and that is an issue we need to address. As we move to the next step our doors remain open to everyone who is willing to engage with us.

I look forward to advancing this bill to the Full Committee, and building upon our work for all Americans.