

Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection
“Subcommittee Markup”
July 19, 2017

Good morning.

Today marks an important milestone in our pursuit to provide safer roadways and move forward with transformative and life-saving technology. This Subcommittee markup represents our commitment to maintaining an open process and working with our friends across the aisle to ensure all are heard on this extremely important issue.

I thank and commend the chairman, and ranking member – Representative Schakowsky- for demonstrating their commitment to working with members and stakeholders in an open and bipartisan manner. I personally know how many meetings have taken place on this legislative package and, believe me when I tell you that all who want to be heard and offer input, have been given that opportunity. It is important to get this issue right- and I strongly believe the process that has taken place ensures we do just that.

The technology behind highly autonomous vehicles is stunning. Equally stunning are the latest roadway safety numbers.

Almost 40,000 lives were lost on our roads last year. In my home state alone, traffic fatalities were the highest they’ve been in 14 years, increasing an alarming 20 percent from the year before.

Statistics show that 94% of accidents are related to human behavior. During our morning commute into work, just look around. We all see folks on their phones in the cars next to us. While NHTSA cannot write a safety standard for human behavior, it can work to advance life-saving technologies – which is the underlying goal of today’s bipartisan legislation.

The auto industry alone is responsible for more than 7 million jobs nationwide and drives more than \$900 billion into the economy each year. We want to see those numbers continue to grow and do what we can to keep them here in the U.S.

In addition, there are many groups of people who could benefit greatly from better access to transportation. There is estimated to be more than 27 million people with

severe disabilities according to the census bureau. And records show that there are more than 47 million senior citizens in the U.S. Advances in autonomous vehicles could drastically change the lives of these and many more individuals for the better with improved mobility and the freedom that comes with it.

For Americans to enjoy the benefits that self-driving cars have to offer, we must develop an appropriate regulatory structure that SAFELY allows industry to innovate. We want aggressive oversight of the industry, but with the flexibility needed to test and generate the safest and most affordable technologies possible.

There is an important balance we must strike, and I believe this legislation does just that. I want to, again, commend the bipartisan leadership displayed by Chairman Latta and Ranking Member Schakowsky.

I want to echo Chairman Latta's sentiments and thank my Subcommittee colleagues for their hard work and engagement on this very important issue. I look forward to an important discussion today and advancing this bill to the Full Committee.

Thank you.