

Opening Statement of the Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Hearing on “Vehicle-to-Vehicle Communications and Connected Roadways of the
Future”
June 25, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

I want to welcome everyone to our hearing today as we take an opportunity to discuss vehicle-to-vehicle communications: an innovative technology that is advancing vehicle safety and has the potential to transform the future of our nation’s roadways.

Recently, this subcommittee held a hearing on the Internet of Things and the growing digital economy. During that hearing, we broadly examined ways in which different markets and industries are using the Internet, wireless connections, and networked sensors to create products that gather information in real-time to predict circumstances, prevent problems, and create opportunities.

Vehicle-to-vehicle communications technology is a manifestation of that digital phenomenon. The ability of cars to “talk” to one another - identifying their location, speed, brake status and other positioning data - and share that information with other vehicles and drivers, creates a transportation system in which crashes are avoided, mobility is improved, traffic congestion is avoided and, most importantly, lives are saved.

Given the life-saving benefits alone, I am eager to see this technology take shape and support our country’s efforts to build a safer and more secure transportation system. With over 30,000 motor vehicle traffic deaths a year, V2V promises to significantly reduce those fatalities and further harmonize roadway activity.

It sounds great. But the only way to save lives is to make it real. I look forward to examining how V2V will work on today’s roads. At a time when we face an aging vehicle fleet where many cars are not equipped with the latest groundbreaking technology and where Americans, still facing an uncertain economic future, continue to hold off on buying big-ticket items, we must understand how this technology will be accessible and available to everyone, and accepted by everyone.

In addition to understanding how we will make V2V a reality, I look forward to discussing how to maximize V2V’s driver and vehicle safety benefits. We need to understand the costs and expenses associated with V2V devices and what will be required to maintain the V2V communications network. Other considerations are also necessary, including: how current roadway infrastructure will impact the implementation of V2V and what infrastructure is needed to support V2V; the process for developing V2V performance and safety standards; how the technology will be compatible and interoperable among the entire vehicle fleet; how V2V will impact driver distraction and disruption; and what kind of driver education is needed to operate vehicles equipped with this technology. These and many other factors will need to be considered as we move forward into this technologically advanced transportation era.

As with all networked-connected products in this day and age, protecting personal information and ensuring that the appropriate safeguards are in place to guarantee vehicle security will be an essential part of fully realizing V2V and its economic and public safety benefits. In our examination of privacy and security issues, it is important that we understand what kinds of information is collected from vehicle systems to support V2V and other safety applications and what kinds of information is shared between vehicles. In addition, we must address the security of those connections and how they will be impacted when aftermarket devices, applications, and services are brought into vehicles.

Last month, NHTSA announced that it was taking steps to accelerate road-safety innovation, including moving ahead of its proposed timetable requiring V2V devices in new vehicles. As I said before, I am eager to see this technology implemented on our roadways and begin demonstrating its life-saving

benefits. However, we must make sure the technology is ready and the implementation is done right. We must ensure that the appropriate level of expertise is available to oversee the entirety of the V2V system so that it functions and operates properly, and can speedily remedy any system failures without disruption. As we all know, lives will depend on it.

Finally, I want to note that there are multiple facets of vehicle-to-vehicle communications and the Committee as a whole through its various subcommittees is examining all of them. This hearing, however, is focused on what the technology could mean for safety, and what industry and NHTSA need to do to bring the technology safely into the marketplace

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