

**Opening Statement of
Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Consumer Protection and Commerce Hearing on “Autonomous Vehicles:
Promises and Challenges of Evolving Automotive Technologies”
February 11, 2020**

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning and welcome to the Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee hearing on autonomous vehicles.

Today’s hearing is a critical step in our bipartisan effort to advance solutions that will save lives end road congestion and improve mobility for people with disabilities, our seniors, and those without easy access to public transportation.

Every year, we lose about 37,000 lives on our roads.

That is equivalent to more than three commercial passenger planes falling out of the sky every week. If that was happening, it would be a national emergency.

Deadly traffic accidents are just as much of a crisis and we must treat it as such.

But there is hope. Automating the driving process can drastically improve safety because 94 percent of all traffic accidents are due to human error.

Autonomous vehicles will remove that error and save lives.

Like for people who are blind and have other disabilities, AVs will be transformative.

This technology will completely knock down mobility barriers.

People will no longer need to rely on others to go to work, go to the grocery store, or visit a friend across town.

Mr. Riccobono, I want to thank you for being here today to discuss what autonomous vehicles will mean for your community.

Also, welcome to David Fair and Marci Carpenter who have traveled here from Washington State with the National Federation for the Blind.

Last Congress, every Republican and Democrat on this Committee voted for the SELF DRIVE Act – a rare 54-0 vote – which the House then passed unanimously.

The SELF DRIVE Act established a needed federal framework for the safe development and deployment of this technology.

Unfortunately, a framework is still needed today.

America is leading the world in innovation and is home to the most advanced autonomous vehicle companies on the planet.

But we still trail other countries in our lack of a national approach with no viable path to deployment.

According to an annual report that ranks countries on AVs the U.S. has fallen behind since our work on SELF DRIVE. And we will continue to fall if we fail to act.

Other countries—like China—are not waiting for us. They are moving full speed ahead and it's happening in our own backyard.

Since this Committee passed SELF DRIVE, Chinese developers have nearly doubled their presence in California. Just last year, Chinese developers logged the second-most miles of any country testing there.

China is using our infrastructure, testing on our roads, collecting information on our citizens, and stealing our technology to beat us.

There is a global race to AVs. Do we want China to win that race or do we want to lead?

Do we want all the safety, faster traffic, and mobility benefits to go abroad or do we want to win this future and deliver for the American people?

I urge everyone here: we have no choice... we **must lead**... and we **must deliver**.

That's how America wins the future to beat China and maintain our global competitive edge.

We must establish a federal framework that enhances the safe development of AVs and provides a path to deployment.

If we fail, investment in this transformative technology will go abroad.

If we fail, the safety, less congestion, and mobility benefits that come with this technology will go elsewhere.

If we fail, the American people will lose.

We have a real opportunity here. We can advance lifesaving and life-changing technology.

We can ensure America remains the global leader in innovation. We can beat China.

As we proved last Congress, we can do this together with bipartisan ideas that aren't just Republican or Democratic but uniquely American.

The time is now.

I know yield the remainder of my time to a leader on this issue, Mr. Latta.