



May 18, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 2051

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The Self-Driving Coalition for Safer Streets (“Coalition”) writes to express our interest in working with you to encourage the inclusion of provisions that support the deployment of fully autonomous technology in infrastructure legislation. Fully autonomous vehicles (AVs) offer a once-in-a-generation leap forward in technological advancement to improve public safety, create new economic opportunities, support a shift to electrification and improved environmental quality, and other benefits.

The Self-Driving Coalition was founded in 2016 to work with lawmakers, regulators, and the public to realize the safety and societal benefits of fully autonomous vehicles. Bringing together the leading AV companies in the United States, the Coalition encompasses a unique and varied set of AV voices representative of self-driving technology’s many opportunities, including automotive, technology, rideshare, and trucking companies.

Better and safer roads, highways, and bridges are needed investments for America’s future. However, AVs are already testing without specific infrastructure needs, as AVs are developed to operate on any roads and highways. AVs benefit from a state of good repair just as traditional drivers do. As Congress works on important infrastructure legislation, the Coalition encourages lawmakers to consider provisions that support the deployment of AV technology, which is poised to be the future of transportation. Federal policies that encourage AV deployment with clear federal and state roles while promoting and protecting American innovation can help to

revolutionize how passengers and goods move from point A to B. Additionally, the Coalition supports increased funding for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (“NHTSA”) to reinforce its role in facilitating AVs and to provide NHTSA and the United States Department of Transportation (“USDOT”) with research funding to study AVs’ broader impacts on infrastructure and existing transportation systems.

The Self-Driving Coalition and policymakers share many goals for an infrastructure package: to save lives, support local economies, reduce emissions, expand mobility options for all, and maintain American leadership on high-tech research & development, among others. As explained below, AV technology offers many opportunities to deliver on these common objectives.

Opening Economic Opportunities for All: We are just at the beginning of developing and imagining how AVs can create new economic opportunities for Americans, particularly for people who are low-income or disabled. For example, researchers [found](#) that commute time is a much bigger obstacle to escaping poverty than crime or test scores.¹ AVs could address transportation inequities by supporting existing public transit options and providing lower-income households with access to better jobs. On-demand AVs could [save](#) families as much as \$5,600 per household.²

Another study [found](#) that AVs could improve employment for 2 million Americans with disabilities who cannot drive.³ At least 20% of Americans [live](#) with a disability, including blindness, deafness, and epilepsy.⁴ More than a quarter don’t have a car, and a third have no or limited access to public transportation.

As delivery vehicles, AVs can help to reshape Americans’ access to healthy foods and other essential goods. Research [found](#) that automated delivery vehicles could reach 70% of the low-income households living in food deserts across the country.⁵ Many AV companies are already piloting programs in cities like Houston, San Francisco, and Phoenix to provide groceries and support food banks.

With the right policies and industry considerations, support for autonomous vehicles can help maintain existing manufacturing jobs in the United States while also helping to

¹ Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren, *The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility, Childhood Exposure Effects and County-Level Estimates*, Harvard University (Apr. 2015).

² Gidon Feen, Amitai Bin-Nun, Anthony Panasci, *Fostering Economic Opportunities through Autonomous Vehicle Technology*, 9, Securing America’s Future Energy (July 2020).

³ Henry Claypool, Amitai Bin-Nun, Jeffrey Gerlach, *The Ruderman White Paper: Self-Driving Cars: The Impact on People with Disabilities*, 16, Securing America’s Future Energy and the Ruderman Family Foundation (Jan. 2017).

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Disability Impacts All of Us*.

⁵ Joann Muller, *How Autonomous Vehicles Could Improve Mobility for the Poor*, Axios (July 17, 2020).

create new, high-quality jobs and boost U.S. economic growth and global competitiveness. A new study sponsored by the USDOT [projects](#) that a fully autonomous long haul truck fleet would increase spending across the economy by \$111 billion, and lead to a 0.3% boost in GDP.⁶ Automated trucking would increase employment nationally by 26,400 to 35,100 jobs per year, and raise workers annual earnings by more than \$200 -- without impacting the net hiring of truck drivers.⁷ AV companies recognize that it will be critical to prepare the American workforce for these new jobs with retraining and upskilling opportunities.

Fully autonomous long-haul trucks can also increase productivity for America's businesses, from supporting the ecommerce industry by keeping supply chains at peak efficiency to empowering farmers to unlock new markets with fresher produce at increased speeds and capacity.

Improved Environmental Quality: Fully autonomous fleets can help to lead a societal shift to electrification and decarbonization. Many AV companies are already building their fleets around hybrid and battery electric vehicles (EVs). Electric AV fleets can reduce emissions by replacing personal trips in gas-powered vehicles with zero-emission trips, saving more energy as smoother drivers, conducting local deliveries and offering increased routing efficiencies to mitigate congestion. Studies have [found](#) that efficiently programmed AVs can reduce energy use and emissions by at least 10%.⁸

Improving Public Safety: NHTSA [estimates](#) that more than 36,000 people died on U.S. roads and highways in 2019.⁹ Preliminary data from 2020 [indicates](#) that despite fewer vehicles on the road due to the pandemic, the U.S. witnessed a steep incline in the rate of fatal crashes.¹⁰ With an [estimated](#) 94% of motor vehicle crashes caused by human error, fully autonomous vehicles can significantly improve safety and reduce crashes from drunk, impaired and distracted driving.¹¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has already opened our eyes to the opportunities AVs could provide that have not yet been fully envisioned. AV technology could play an important role in reducing human exposure to the virus while still supporting the necessary logistics for local economies,

⁶ Office of the Assistant Sec'y for Research & Tech., U.S. Dep't of Transp., *Macroeconomic Impacts of Automated Driving Systems in Long-Haul Trucking 1* (2021).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ E.g., James H. Gawron, Gregory A. Keoleian, Robert D. De Kleine, Timothy J. Wallington, and Hyung Chul Kim, *Life Cycle Assessment of Connected and Automated Vehicles: Sensing and Computing Subsystem and Vehicle Level Effects*, Environ. Sci. Technol. (2018).

⁹ U.S. Dep't of Transp., Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Admin., *Early Estimates of 2019 Motor Vehicle Traffic Data Show Reduced Fatalities for Third Consecutive Year* (May 5, 2020).

¹⁰ Nat'l Safety Council, *Preliminary Semiannual Estimates* (2021).

¹¹ U.S. Dep't of Transp., Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Admin., *Automated Vehicles for Safety*.

larger supply chains and the medical field. We've just begun to scratch the surface on how AV innovation can transform America's future for the better.

As the world leader in autonomous vehicle technology, the U.S. needs federal policies that can bring the vision of self-driving to become a reality. The Coalition looks forward to the continued dialogue to provide our thoughts on potential legislation that could impact AVs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ariel Wolf', written in a cursive style.

Ariel Wolf
General Counsel
Self-Driving Coalition

cc: The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
The Honorable Roger Wicker, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rogers, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chair, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure