



Senator Wayne Langerholc Jr.
Chair, Transportation Committee
Room 281 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3035

Senator John Sabatina Jr.
Minority Chair, Transportation Committee
Room 543 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3005

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Testimony Submitted For Senate Transportation Committee June 4, 2021 Hearing

Chairman Langerholc, Minority Chairman Sabatina, and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee, on behalf of the Self-Driving Coalition for Safer Streets, a group comprised of the leading autonomous vehicle companies, I am pleased to submit this written testimony for the Committee’s public hearing on reforms and investments to advance transportation innovations in Pennsylvania. The Coalition appreciates the Committee’s interest in advancing transportation innovations, including autonomous vehicles (“AVs”), and is encouraged by the reference to driverless testing of highly automated vehicles in the DRIVE SMART Act overview made available this week. Given the Coalition’s industry expertise in AVs and our strongly held view that fully autonomous vehicles have the potential to change the country for the better, we write to thank Chairman Langerholc for seeking to provide a roadmap toward driverless testing of AVs in the state and encourage this Committee to similarly create a path for deployment of such vehicles.

By way of background, the Self-Driving Coalition is comprised of fifteen of the world’s leading technology, ridesharing, and automotive companies¹—including companies actively testing AVs in Pennsylvania under the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (“PennDOT”) AV Testing Program. Our mission is to realize the benefits of fully autonomous vehicles (SAE Levels 4 and 5-capable vehicles) and support the safe and rapid deployment of these technologies. With its broad array of technical expertise and experience in the technology, automobile, freight, and transportation network sectors, the Coalition welcomes engaging with Pennsylvania legislators and stakeholders in an effort to develop the right solutions that will promote the testing *and* deployment of driverless, fully autonomous vehicles in Pennsylvania.

¹ See <https://www.selfdrivingcoalition.org/>.

Expressly enabling driverless testing would be a significant step forward. However, we encourage Pennsylvania to also join the 17 other states that have frameworks in place for AV deployment, rather than merely testing, by creating a clear path to deployment for AVs. Ensuring that legislation includes a path to deployment for AVs can help to incentivize AV operators to invest in Pennsylvania and bring the significant benefits of AVs to Pennsylvania citizens sooner. As members of this Committee may recognize, fully autonomous vehicles offer significant potential safety and mobility benefits, holding the potential both to save lives and to change the way we drive. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that more than 36,000 Americans died in motor vehicle crashes in 2018, the overwhelming majority of which were due to human error. However, because fully autonomous vehicles remove human error from the driving process, these vehicles hold the potential to save thousands of lives each year. Moreover, Pennsylvania is home to millions of individuals—including seniors and those with visual impairments—who would benefit greatly from the increased safety and mobility that AVs could provide. For individuals like these who are too frequently excluded from traditional transportation options, fully autonomous vehicles hold tremendous potential to transform mobility, broaden economic participation, and support greater independence. In addition to offering safety and mobility benefits, self-driving technology can also help reduce traffic congestion, improve environmental quality, and advance transportation efficiency. For example, fully autonomous trucks hold the promise of increasing the safety and efficiency of freight movement. A freight network that includes fully autonomous trucks can lower costs and reduce time to market for Pennsylvania's agricultural, manufacturing, retail, and other industries.

Pennsylvania acknowledged the tremendous potential safety and mobility benefits of AVs by establishing the PennDOT AV Testing Program in 2018. Legislation that would allow for driverless testing of AVs and the deployment of such vehicles would promise to further cement Pennsylvania's status as a leader in the autonomous vehicle ecosystem and ensure that Pennsylvanians can benefit from AVs for years to come. The Coalition therefore thanks Chairman Langerholc for including driverless testing in the proposed DRIVE SMART Act and encourages the Committee to support both the driverless testing and deployment of AVs.

The Coalition is appreciative of Chairman Langerholc's recognition that driverless testing should be advanced in Pennsylvania. At this time, the PennDOT AV Testing Program encompasses only testing AVs with a safety driver present in the vehicle. However, expressly allowing fully autonomous vehicles to operate without a human present in the vehicle will help to ensure that AV operators can robustly test and eventually deploy their technology and may also incentivize AV operators to invest and operate in Pennsylvania. Therefore, we applaud the Chairman's support for driverless testing of HAVs and encourage the Committee to similarly support driverless testing.

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of our written testimony, and we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how Pennsylvania might address AVs in future legislation. Thank you for including us in your process.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ariel S. Wolf
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Self-Driving Coalition for Safer Streets