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August 30, 2018

The Honorable John Thune, Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson, Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
425 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

On behalf of the R Street Institute, we write to thank you and encourage you to continue your efforts to secure Senate passage of the critically important AV START Act, S. 1885. We appreciate your determination and that of the bill's co-sponsors, which secured broad bipartisan support in the Committee last fall and reported the bill favorably to the U.S. Senate.

As highway deaths have spiked and congestion has worsened, safety and mobility have been on the decline. In 2016 (the most recent year for which the official DOT numbers are available), 37,461 people were killed on U.S. roads; more than 100 per day and a 14 percent increase in just two years. Of these, 94 percent were caused by human factors.

Your legislation therefore presents an incredible opportunity for the United States to strengthen its traditional position of leadership in both highway safety and personal mobility. With each passing day that the bill is not considered, investment in emerging autonomous vehicle technology risks heading outside of our borders, where other countries are encouraging research and deployment. But with prompt passage of your bill, we still have the opportunity to lead, rather than follow others, on these life-saving innovations.

Passage of your bill would erect clear guardrails for state and federal regulation, allow increased deployment of autonomous vehicles and streamline a framework for updating regulation in the future. And nothing in your legislation will allow a manufacturer to deploy an autonomous vehicle on public roads that has not been evaluated by NHTSA and determined to be as safe or safer than a non-exempt, traditionally regulated vehicle.

Highly automated and autonomous vehicles hold the promise of increased mobility and congestion reduction. Put simply, they will save lives. And we cannot risk America's position as an automotive leader, particularly in this regard.

Thank you again for your leadership. And do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance in the future.

Sincerely,

Ian Adams, Associate Vice President of State Affairs
R Street Institute

Sasha Moss, Federal Affairs Manager
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