



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

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Chairman

Washington, DC 20515

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Ranking Member

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November 7, 2017

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The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

In a speech commemorating the U.S. Department of Transportation's 50th anniversary, Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao rightfully called out safety as the core mission of the Department, stating "[s]afety will continue to be a priority— it's the core of the Department's mission ... The goal is to prevent accidents and fatalities before they happen."

I could not agree more. After decades of declining highway traffic deaths, there has been a recent spike in highway fatalities. In 2011, traffic fatalities reached an all-time low of 29,867 deaths. In the five years since, traffic fatalities have climbed 25 percent to 37,461 deaths in 2016.

While it is difficult to pinpoint why fatalities continue to rise, we know that 94 percent of these traffic fatalities are caused by human error. New technologies offer great potential to eliminate most highway fatalities. While the Trump Administration has been active on autonomous vehicle policy, it appears the Administration is prepared to leave connected vehicle technologies on the side of the road. In 2016, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to bring connected vehicle technology, known as Dedicated Short Range Communications (DSRC) to all vehicles. To date, the Trump Administration has not moved this rulemaking forward and recent press reports suggest it is being abandoned.

Connected and autonomous vehicles are not in competition with each other; rather they will complement each other to achieve maximum benefits in safety and congestion relief. In fact, connected vehicles offer more comprehensive situational awareness than autonomous vehicles, and could eliminate or mitigate the severity of up to 80 percent of non-impaired crashes, including crashes at intersections or while changing lanes.

I recognize that the Trump Administration is focused on reducing regulatory requirements, but in this case, the automakers who will have to comply with these requirements are supportive of the rulemaking because it will bring interoperability. This rulemaking follows decades of hard work

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to develop a unifying communication standard for the auto industry, assuring that new vehicles can seamlessly communicate. That technology is now ready for deployment, potentially saving tens of thousands of lives per year. All that is needed is a rule to finalize the standards.

Safety advocates and automakers agree on the need for the NHTSA connected vehicle rulemaking. Technology companies oppose the rule because they would like to increase their spectrum allocation to boost profits. Faster access to Snapchat should not be a higher priority than the prevention of tens of thousands of traffic deaths per year.

While I am excited about the safety advances that autonomous vehicles will bring, they will not be a complete replacement for human-driven cars anytime soon. I, like many Americans, still want to drive my car. Vehicle-to-vehicle communication can provide dramatically improved safety benefits to all cars, autonomous or human-driven. This safety benefit only becomes a reality if the Office of Management and Budget allows the DSRC rulemaking to move forward.

Sincerely,



PETER DeFAZIO
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary of Transportation