

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Autonomous vehicles hold great promise to deliver significant benefits for all Americans—but only if the federal government puts the necessary policies in place to achieve these benefits. The federal government has the opportunity and responsibility to foster a domestic autonomous vehicle industry that is as safe as it is innovative, and that provides high-quality jobs across the economy, including in transportation. Our shared aim in meeting those goals were reflected in the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) recently announced Innovation Principles. Like you, we believe that innovation, good American jobs—including union jobs—safety, equity, and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive, but should instead be our goal as we strive to shape technological progress in this country.

Over the last hundred years, innovation in the transportation industry has been one of the largest drivers of human progress, providing tens of millions of jobs in all fifty states, supporting working families, enhancing safety, and strengthening environmental protections. This has required a collective effort of the public and private sectors, including the federal government, industry, unions, and other stakeholders.

As we look to the century ahead, the pace of innovation will only continue to accelerate, with significant implications for mobility, workers, the economy and society at large—especially when it comes to our goals for growing the economy, increasing the number and quality of manufacturing and frontline transportation jobs, and maintaining existing good jobs in transit, freight, logistics, and passenger transportation. Yet, we lag behind in shaping a regulatory framework that will foster this innovation while simultaneously protecting and encouraging all of the important benefits we believe autonomous vehicles are capable of delivering.

As you know, the data shows that deaths on the nation's roadways were up 12 percent in the first nine months of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020. This is a trend in the wrong direction. With an appropriate regulatory framework, autonomous vehicles have the potential to help reduce deaths and injuries from crashes, especially since they are not susceptible to one of the biggest safety risks on the road: impaired driving. And they can play a role in advancing numerous aspects of your recently announced National Roadway Safety Strategy.

Autonomous vehicles may also improve equitable access to transportation by opening up options for people with disabilities or mobility challenges, as well as for areas that lack adequate transportation services. Furthermore, autonomous vehicles can reduce the need for parking in towns and cities, giving communities greater flexibility to provide more bike lanes, wider sidewalks, safer streets, and other features that improve quality of life for all road users.

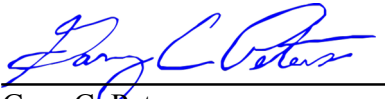
None of these benefits can be taken for granted; nor can we assume the United States will remain a leader in this arena. Our competitors on the global stage—particularly the Chinese government—have significantly invested in autonomous and connected vehicle technologies. That’s why securing the benefits associated with autonomous vehicles while lifting up our communities and workers will require a nuanced—and proactive—approach to policymaking. There are significant technical and economic challenges at hand. But that is all the more reason why the federal government must engage on these issues now.

To that end, we respectfully request your insights regarding the following questions about how USDOT plans to address autonomous vehicles:

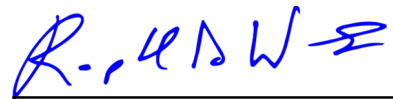
1. What specific actions is USDOT considering in the near term regarding autonomous vehicles? What existing statutory authorities will USDOT consider using to maintain the nation’s leadership in developing and manufacturing autonomous vehicles here in the United States?
2. In concert with other agencies as well as workers and relevant stakeholders, how and when will USDOT consider how transportation policy, especially around automation, will impact jobs and the future of work?
3. What are your plans to modernize Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) to account for the rise of autonomous vehicles? What tools does USDOT have, or need, to enable data collection activities in order to inform future standards around autonomous vehicles?
4. Regarding your current authority to exempt motor vehicles from FMVSS, how will you evaluate applications from manufacturers seeking to leverage this authority as an interim solution? What is USDOT doing to provide clarity about the timeline and procedures for the review process so stakeholders can plan accordingly?
5. How and when will USDOT collaborate with state and local governments, in addition to legal experts and relevant stakeholders, to contemplate the implications of federal autonomous vehicle policies for State law regarding licensing, liability, and related issues?

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. We look forward to continuing to work with you in building on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to craft transportation policy that improves the lives of the American people.

Sincerely,



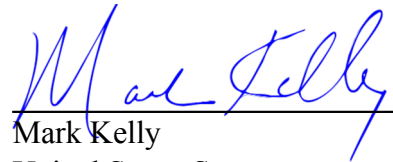
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator



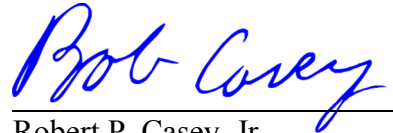
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



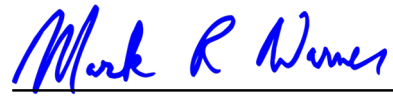
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator




Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator




Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



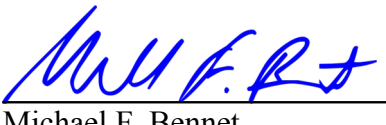
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator




Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator