Oregon Task Force on Autonomous Vehicles

Internet Association appreciates the opportunity to submit comments from testimony provided at your August 15, 2018 Task Force on Autonomous Vehicles.

Internet Association (IA) represents more than 40 of the world's leading internet companies and advances public policy solutions that foster innovation, promote economic growth, and empower people through the free and open internet.

IA believes the deployment of autonomous vehicles (AVs) will significantly increase the safety of our roads, not just for drivers and vehicles but for pedestrians and bicyclists as well. IA encourages states to review their laws, regulations, and standards to lay the groundwork to ensure each state is able to take full advantage of the benefits of AVs.

IA appreciates the hard work the subcommittees and staff have put into developing recommendations, which do provide useful guidance in establishing state laws and regulations for AVs. Identifying national groups that have developed uniform standards or guidelines is useful to ensuring there is consistency, not just across the state, but also across state lines.

House Bill 4063 was very clear in the direction of (3) (a) The task force shall develop recommendations for legislation to be introduced during the next odd-numbered year regular session of the Legislative Assembly regarding the deployment of autonomous vehicles on highways. IA has concerns regarding the recommendations and the discussions at the subcommittee level that have focused on testing of AVs but not the deployment of AVs.

The recommendations do provide some guidance regarding deployment, such as stating existing traffic laws are sufficient to cover most traffic enforcement issues. However, the recommendations are silent on what barriers exist that will prevent or limit the full deployment of AVs on the streets and highways of Oregon.

While the work of the Task Force is winding down for its first report to the Legislature, IA encourages the committee to continue its work and focus its attention on barriers to entry. Oregon must ensure all aspects of transportation will be able to participate to fully capture the benefits of AVs.

For example, one of the benefits as discussed in the subcommittee and at the Task Force is the ability for persons with disabilities to be able access transportation. This will allow persons with disabilities to be able to transport themselves to and from medical appointments, the grocery story, or other daily activities, which can be very limited today. Some existing laws allow a public transportation system to be able to provide that service, however, as with most public transit systems, they may be financially limited in their ability to provide that service. Currently Oregon law has not provided a uniform licensing regime to allow Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) to operate throughout the state. This is a barrier to entry for TNCs in the AV market for Oregon. Which will limit equitable access to transportation options for those with disabilities.
IA recommends as the Task Force continues its work it focus on barriers to entry and develop recommendations to address those barriers. IA and its members are willing to work with the Task Force, the Legislature, and the administration in working through these issues and finding solutions.

Thank you for your consideration.

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