Subcommittee on Vehicle Code Amendments and Public Safety

Statement of Intent: Definitions for Automated Vehicles

Oregon’s existing statutes governing conventional vehicles were established long before the advent of highly automated vehicles. This new technology creates new concepts and roles never anticipated. Oregon law will need to incorporate new definitions or amend existing definitions to address the changes brought about by automated vehicles.

The Task Force on Autonomous Vehicles has relied on definitions established by the International Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE). SAE published and later revised “Surface Transportation Recommended Practice J3016: Taxonomy and Definitions for Terms Related to Driving Automation Systems for On-Road Motor Vehicles,” which provides common terms and definitions used across the automated vehicle industry. The document was designed to serve several purposes, including “answering questions of scope when it comes to developing laws, policies, regulations, and technical requirements.”

However, the terms and definitions in J3016 were not designed with the Oregon Vehicle Code or other Oregon laws in mind. The Subcommittee recognizes that any new or amended definitions must align with Oregon’s existing statutory language. It is also vital that any definitions created or amended to accommodate automated vehicle operation do not undermine the existing definitions that apply to conventional vehicles.

Therefore, the Subcommittee makes the following recommendations:

1) As Oregon crafts definitions for automated vehicles, look to recommended practice from the International Society of Automotive Engineers for concepts related to driving automation systems.

2) Special consideration should be given when defining terms, such as “driver,” which have different meanings under Oregon law, depending on the context.

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1 Society of Automotive Engineers. 2018. “Taxonomy and Definitions for Terms Related to Driving Automation Systems for On-Road Motor Vehicles.” Available at: https://www.sae.org/standards/content/j3016_201806/