

April 14, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present our country with unprecedented challenges, we urge you to continue to focus your attention on this ongoing public health and economic crisis. In particular, we believe that continued efforts to pass automated vehicle legislation at this critical juncture in world history would be a grave mistake.

A record 16.8 million Americans have sought unemployment aid due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With rising utility costs, families who were already struggling to make ends meet will now have to decide between putting enough food on the table for their families or keeping their energy on and their water running. Many employees who have been deemed essential during this crisis—healthcare workers and corner market cashiers—are working every day without proper personal protective equipment, putting their own health and the health of their families in jeopardy. Millions of Americans remain uninsured and were already living a day-to-day health crisis before the COVID-19 outbreak, just one injury or illness away from financial ruin. And schools across the country have sent millions of children home for the remainder of the year, yet 4 million households with school-age children lack internet, leaving them unable to participate in online learning.

Despite these unparalleled challenges, Energy and Commerce Committee Republicans published an article last week entitled “[Self-Driving Cars Can Pave Way during COVID-19. Let’s do so in the U.S.](#)” While we welcome the debate on the safety and economic effects of this technology under normal circumstances, it is unconscionable to prioritize such a serious and controversial set of regulatory changes over addressing critical services like healthcare, internet, utilities, and personal protective equipment. Despite what AV boosters are claiming, there are no realistic opportunities for this technology to meaningfully ease the immediate pains Americans are facing during this crisis.

To be clear, we wholeheartedly agree that more needs to be done in Congress to properly regulate automated vehicles once we have defeated the ongoing pandemic. Their record of safety and their potential to displace millions of good American jobs demands additional hearings and a measured, appropriate legislative response from your committee. We welcome the opportunity to work with the committee on both topics to assist you in your work after the immediate and ongoing needs of the American people have been addressed.

We thank you for your time and consideration on this matter, and we look forward to having further discussions with your committee about this topic at the appropriate time.

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Sincerely,

Amalgamated Transit Union

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

SMART-Transportation Division

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Transport Workers Union of America