



**ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY**

**STATEMENT OF
Cathy Chase
President, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
Autonomous Vehicles Tenets Rollout Virtual Press Conference Remarks
November 30, 2020**

Thanks very much for joining us today. I'm Cathy Chase, President of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety. We are a unique alliance of consumer, medical, public health, law enforcement, and safety groups and insurance companies and agents working together to make America's roads safer.

As today's moderator I'd like to just mention a few housekeeping items before I kick things off. First, American Sign Language interpretation is being provided by "Interpret This." Second, we have an outstanding line up of speakers representing a variety of organizations and perspectives. To make certain they all get a chance to speak, we will hold your questions until the end, and we aim to keep today's event within an hour time period. Third, this event is being recorded, will be posted on saferoads.org for a limited time and subsequently can be made available upon request. Additionally, the Autonomous Vehicle Tenets, a summary of the tenets, and a contact list of the speakers will be posted on our website, in case you have questions about issues not covered today or any follow up questions we don't have time to respond to. Lastly, the topics covered in the Autonomous Vehicle Tenets document and discussed today do not represent all of the views held by participating organizations on autonomous vehicles, which I will refer to as AVs for the rest of my remarks.

Let me begin by saying that without question this is a transformative time in road transportation safety. Lifesaving technologies are evolving and entering the marketplace at a critical time. In 2019, more than 36,000 people were killed and millions more were injured on our roadways. Annually crashes impose a financial toll of over \$800 billion in total costs to society and \$242 billion in direct economic costs. This is equivalent to a "crash tax" of \$784 on every American.

The good news is that proven solutions are readily available now. Research performed by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has demonstrated that systems like automatic emergency braking or AEB, lane departure warning, blind spot detection and others prevent and reduce the severity of crashes.

The problem is that these safety systems are often sold as part of an additional, expensive trim package along with other non-safety features, or included as standard equipment only in high end, luxury vehicles. Additionally, there are no minimum performance standards to guarantee these systems are working as expected and as needed. To date, the U.S. Department of

Transportation has failed to act. Instead, it has mistakenly relied on weak and ineffective voluntary industry agreements to equip vehicles with essential safety technology. This departmental inertia has slowed progress when urgent leadership and innovation are needed. History has demonstrated that when the Department issues safety regulations that require technology as standard equipment on all new cars, like rearview cameras, the benefits are immediate – the price drops and so do deaths and injuries.

Instead of advancing proven safety technology, a fervor has been whipped up about AVs. Unsupported claims have added fuel to this fire including statements that the U.S. is behind other countries in AV development and that tens of thousands of exemptions to existing safety requirements are needed to be competitive. Neither claim is true.

Nonetheless, there have been signals that next year Congress will once again try to advance an AV bill. In preparation, we have been reaching out and working with numerous stakeholders to develop the document we are releasing today -- the AV Tenets. These are positions we all share on the essential provisions in any future legislation addressing the development and deployment of AVs. I'd like to note that this is a "living" document, as more and more groups become involved and offer recommendations. The Tenets are divided into four main categories of:

- Prioritizing Safety of All Road Users
- Guaranteeing Accessibility for All
- Preserving Consumer and Worker Rights, and
- Ensuring Local Control and Sustainable Transportation

Within the first category of prioritizing safety, we enumerate safety rulemakings to develop baselines – not ceilings – for different components of AVs. We also call for critical safety and performance data to be collected and publicly available to accurately assess the performance as well as identify problems of AVs on our neighborhood streets and roads.

Not only are these concepts commonsense, they are strongly supported by the public. A survey commissioned by Advocates earlier this year found nearly 70% of respondents said they would feel more comfortable about AVs if they knew manufacturers had to meet minimum performance standards before selling them to the public.

In conclusion, we look forward to working with Congress to develop and pass legislation that seriously addresses highway fatalities by advancing proven technologies. We urge the U.S. DOT and Congress to use these AV Tenets as their "GPS" to "guarantee public safety" for the continuing development and future deployment of AVs.

Before I introduce our terrific panel, I'd like to thank the more than 55 organizations that support the AV tenets - and this list continues to grow, the numerous experts who offered their advice and recommendations, and the incomparable staff of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

We will hear first from William Wallace, Manager of Safety Policy at Consumer Reports.

Then, addressing the historically overlooked issues of accessibility and equity will be Carol Tyson, Government Affairs Liaison for the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund; and Dara Baldwin Director of National Policy at the Center for Disability Rights.

They will be followed by Sam Loesche, Legislative Representative with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and Jack Gillis, Executive Director of the Consumer Federation of America, to talk about consumer and workforce rights with regards to AVs.

Next, looking at issues of sustainability, including congestion and climate impact will be Scott Goldstein, Policy Director at Transportation for America.

Then to discuss making AVs safe for all road users will be Dr. Stephen Hargarten of the Medical College of Wisconsin, where he serves as Professor of Emergency Medicine at the Comprehensive Injury Center and Associate Dean at the Office of Global Health; and Ken McLeod, Policy Director at the League of American Bicyclists.

Addressing the perspective of localities who are concerned about how AVs will change neighborhoods and roadways is Marco Conner DiAquoi Deputy Director of Transportation Alternatives.

WRAP UP REMARKS

Thank you again to our expert panel. While we are talking about the future of surface transportation, I think today's remarks are captured well by a quote by Benjamin Franklin, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." We all see the promise and possibilities of AVs in the long term, but to ensure success, the essential safeguards we outlined today all need to be put into place.

I will now open up the conversation to questions. Use the Q&A function in Zoom to post your question. And please be sure to include your name and affiliation.