

Hello everybody, my name is Beth Osborne and I'm the Director of Transportation for America, a program of Smart Growth America. I'm here today because this legislation does nothing to ensure that the roads we have today are well-maintained, safe for all users, nor that they connect people to the destinations they need to reach, all much [more urgent needs](#).

I've often said that AVs are the rorschach test of transportation. Tell me what you think they will improve and I can tell what problems you are most worried about but not fully ready to tackle.

So much of the U.S. transportation safety approach is blaming people for misbehavior, in which case replacing them with computers makes sense. What it ignores is the many [mistakes](#) made on roadways due to bad design or inappropriately high speed limits in complex areas full of potential conflict spots. We knew 70 years ago that it wasn't safe to accommodate high speed vehicle travel in our cities, which is why we built the Interstates and separated that higher speed traffic from development. But today we continue to avoid talking about the underlying conditions and just promise that a computer can do better. Apparently, a computer will be able to stop a car faster than the laws of physics permit or know how to handle a slip lane that says "go fast" at the same time it says "immediately stop in the crosswalk within the slip lane." Promising tech will save us while making no changes to the underlying problem is a distraction so that many of our leaders can avoid the changes all other developed nations have made to their transportation systems that have allowed them to save lives while U.S. roads continue to get more dangerous.

We also hear that automated vehicles promise to reduce congestion and emissions relief. For most of my life, the transportation industry has promised that expanding highways would do that. They haven't. [Research suggests](#) that the [adoption](#) of [AVs](#) could actually lead people to spend even more time behind the wheel than we do today, just like the expansion of highways has. But now you could sit in traffic with vehicles that are empty!

In addition to ensuring we spend more time in our cars, a future with more driving would have significantly [more extraction of natural resources](#) and more [pollution from tires and brakes](#) as well as the pavement. AVs can exist in an environment with less traffic and emissions the same way we would accomplish that today—shortening trips and allowing people to get around outside a car.

We have seen the promise of automated transportation in this country and around the globe in the form of automated metros and people movers. However, these are systems with significantly more regulation accomplishing much less complicated tasks than self-driving cars seek to. Automated mass transit also not only reduces operating costs while increasing how many people transit can move, it better achieves AVs stated goals of reducing congestion and emissions. But they come with downsides too in terms of jobs and the assistance a driver can provide. If AVs were being pursued because they were the most effective way to achieve these goals and maintain safe mobility for all members of our communities, the industry and elected leaders would welcome similar regulation and more reporting on the results of testing and performance—in which case, we would welcome these next steps.

However, this bill leaves AV companies mostly unregulated and the results of their operation hidden from the public. If this legislation were a serious attempt to improve safety, cities would have a more prominent role and there would be much stronger reporting requirements and accountability. Instead, it seems we continue to be more interested in protecting IP than lives.