

May 27, 2020

Chairman Roger Wicker
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Senate

Ranking Member Greg Walden
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Walden,

Thank you for your letter on May 12, 2020 regarding the efforts of the automotive industry in response to COVID-19. The Consumer Technology Association (CTA) represents those molding the future. Our more than 2200 member companies include many working to make the driving experience safer by automated driving technologies and assisted and self-driving cars. Many of our members are helping avoid disease spread by using automation to serve consumers.

As you rightly noted, the pandemic has highlighted how technology and data can improve public safety, provide consumers access to supplies and connect them remotely when staying at home literally saves lives, both by ensuring social distancing and lowering the number of fatal car accidents. Technology is helping deliver food, medicine and household goods to millions of isolated Americans. Self-driving vehicle companies are converting their vehicles to deliver supplies. I have enclosed a list of actions taken by CTA member companies to provide such solutions.

This crisis has shown how self-driving vehicles and automated delivery technologies can help people get what they need, avoid disease and save lives. Now we need the policies to match. While these limited projects are great, we risk falling behind as public policy lags. As the technology for self-driving vehicles evolves, testing and deployment of automated technologies are hitting roadblocks due to a collection of confusing and conflicting state rules and testing restrictions and federal limitations.

I testified in February before the House Consumer Protection and Commerce subcommittee on the potential for self-driving vehicles to boost the economy, save lives, aid seniors and those with disabilities and provide critical services. CTA has worked closely with your committees to advance the SELF DRIVE Act and AV START Act last Congress and continues to work to advance a bill this year. CTA's top priorities were laid out in our letter to the committees on August 23, 2019 (enclosed). We remain committed to advancing legislation that addresses the key issues of federal preemption, expanding testing exemptions, lifting the cap on deployment exemptions, and expediting federal rulemaking.

While we must be deliberate when safety is involved, Congress remove barriers holding up innovative technologies and protect the public. Adapting outdated laws and rules to fit innovation will require creativity and flexibility. If we make innovation and beneficial uses a priority, we can enable technology to flourish and solve problems we face today.

As Congress considers longer term solutions in response to this crisis, there is an opportunity to broaden the reach of contactless and driverless delivery. Congress should pass a self-driving bill to enable broader testing and deploy automated technologies. Let's remove unnecessary roadblocks and create a regulatory path to enable this technology to come to fruition, so it is ready for everyone who needs it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Shapiro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" being more prominent than the last name "Shapiro".

Gary Shapiro
President and CEO

CTA Members Automotive/Delivery Efforts on COVID-19

- A partnership between **Beep**, **NAVYA**, and the **Jacksonville Transportation Authority** is using driverless vehicles to deliver medical supplies and COVID-19 tests to the Mayo Clinic in Florida.
- **Cruise** repurposed a portion of its all-electric self-driving fleet in San Francisco and have provided over 20,000 autonomous, contactless deliveries across the city in partnership with the SF-Marin Food Bank and the SF New Deal, which connects local small businesses to at-risk communities impacted by COVID-19. Cruise has also continued supporting the local workforce development initiative Humanmade, providing job seeker training to underserved communities, and is working with the Pro Bono for Education initiative to help schools across California meet critical needs due to school closures.
- **Ford's** U.S. plants started producing vehicles again on May 18, including restarting vehicle production at key plants and bringing back approximately 12,000 employees who are not able to do their jobs off-site. Ford parts distribution centers resumed full operations in North America this week, supporting Ford dealers in providing service to keep cars and trucks – including first responders' vehicles – on the road. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Ford has focused on the safety and health of its workforce, implementing robust safety and care protocols, including health assessment measures, personal protective equipment provisions and facility modifications to increase social distancing at all its facilities. Initially, the company's communications focused on being "Built to Lend a Hand," offering payment relief for existing customers. Ford then shifted to an initiative for new customers that allowed up to six months of payment relief with the purchase of a new vehicle – all while working with volunteer autoworkers to produce and deliver life-saving medical and personal protective equipment from its auto factories. Ford has developed new powered air-purifying respirators approved by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Ford has produced more than 400,000 reusable surgical gowns manufactured from material used to make airbags and other durable fabrics, and shipped them around the U.S. In addition, the company makes more than 1.5 million face shields a week and has shipped more than 14 million shields to all 50 states plus Puerto Rico and Guam.
- **Honda** has been involved in the COVID response in a significant way, making face shields, converting an office to produce compressors for ventilators, and the modification of Odyssey Minivans to protect the driver while transporting potentially COVID-19 patients.

- Self-driving truck developer **Kodiak Robotics** has increased the number of commercial loads it is carrying out of its Dallas-Ft. Worth area operations hub, to help partners meet demand for critical goods during this uncertain time. In the future, self-driving trucks can play a critical role in making our freight networks more resilient to crises, including natural disasters and future pandemics.
- **Mercedes Benz-** MBRDNA is joining the effort to increase the supply of personal protective equipment by volunteering to make 3D printed components for face masks, using its industrial SLS 3D printer.
- **Nuro** is using the R2, which was granted the first autonomous vehicle exemption from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in California for contactless delivery to ensure healthcare workers at temporary COVID hospitals have the supplies they need in the safest and most efficient manner possible. Nuro has also partnered with the Houston Food Bank, Second Harvest in California, and Waste Not in Greater Phoenix to redeploy their Prius autonomous test vehicles to deliver hundreds of meals to the needy. Nuro has continued to offer grocery delivery in Houston, in partnership with Kroger's.
- **Pratt Miller** is a leading product development and technology integrator based in New Hudson, Michigan. In an effort to combat the Covid-19 virus, Pratt Miller Mobility's Large area autonomous Disinfecting robotic vehicle (LaaD) will be deployed at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, Mich. LaaD, the first-of-its-kind deployed in the U.S., is a connected, electric and autonomous disinfecting robot that will dispense FDA-approved disinfecting materials through a multi-head electrostatic sprayer array. The electrostatic technology sprays disinfectant into the air and adheres to surfaces for maximum virus protection, while the autonomous platform monitors and guarantees coverage through the use of sensors and data analysis. Our LaaD vehicle builds upon our learnings of our defense robotic platforms, motorsports programs, and our work integrating new technologies for the leading automotive, commercial truck, tier 1, and new mobility companies. This project is partially funded through a Planet M/MEDC grant for COVID-19 efforts in the state of Michigan.
- **Toyota Motor North America** has donated \$8 million in total funds across the U.S. and over 50,000 PPE supplies and by June 1 will have manufactured 500,000 face shields. Toyota used 3D printing to quickly design and scale up production of face shields. Toyota is donating consulting hours by their team of Toyota Production System experts to companies that make much-needed health and safety devices. This improves production and speeds up the delivery of new equipment where it's needed most.

- **TuSimple** implemented “Work from Home” policies for all non-essential personnel, and all TuSimple personnel in California are working from home in response to California’s order to shelter in place. For TuSimple’s essential transportation personnel, they have instituted CDC recommended social distancing policies and enhanced sanitizing standards at their operational facilities in Tucson, AZ. TuSimple’s autonomous trucks haul essential goods for their customers and are continuing transportation operations from Tucson, AZ. Their operations with the U.S. Postal Service, UPS, McLane Foods and others are important to keeping the national supply chain functioning at this critical time. TuSimple is also providing around eight pro bono loads a week to the Arizona Food Bank and their network. TuSimple currently operates a 40-truck fleet of autonomous vehicles. TuSimple believes that autonomous trucks could be a great addition to the American supply chain to keep freight moving and reduce delivery times. Autonomous trucks could make what is now a five-day cross-country trip in just two days, getting much needed supplies to their destination more quickly.
- **Volkswagen Group of America (VWGoA)** has partnered with its supplier Faurecia in mobilizing and shifting lines to produce medical grade Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). VWGoA donated the first run of 75,000 units to New York City’s Javits Center. The company is also supporting its network of dealers who wish to put their service loaner fleet to use to deliver needed supplies by covering fuel and lease costs. In addition, VWGoA is working alongside Whirlpool Corporation, Dow, and Reynolds Consumer Products to harmonize different capabilities to produce and donate 2,000 personal respirators. To support current and new customers, VWGoA announced its “Community-Driven Promise” program providing payment relief options. Current customers will have access to relief such as payment deferrals, lease extensions, and reduced monthly lease payment amounts. New customers can also defer their first payment, receive zero-percent APR financing, and – if they lose their job – be eligible for waived payments. On May 17, Volkswagen Chattanooga resumed vehicle manufacturing using a multi-phased approach. The factory implemented more than 90 new health and safety measures after voluntarily suspending operations in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The gradual ramp-up will help ensure a reliable supply base while providing workers with time to adapt to the new procedures and preventative measures. VWGoA agrees that automotive innovation will be integral to both the immediate COVID-19 response efforts and to supporting the continued strength of the US automotive industry. VWGoA is working with Congress to reaffirm existing federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Transportation when it comes to motor vehicle safety and cyber security. Recent state-level action has proposed forcing motor vehicle manufacturers to grant third parties real-time, bi-directional access to vehicle data and systems, which poses serious hacking, cybersecurity, personal safety, and privacy risks. Reaffirming the existing federal guidance will not only foster automotive innovation through regulatory certainty, but, more critically, support consumer safety and vehicle cybersecurity.

- **Walmart** Grocery pickup with **Nuro** contactless delivery vehicles: To help keep associates and customers safe, Nuro and Walmart have launched a pilot in Houston to use Nuro's R2 autonomous vehicles for grocery deliveries from the storefront to customer's cars in the store parking lot. Because of the high volumes and shorter distances compared to home delivery, this additional application of contactless goods transportation could help avoid many more social contacts.