

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

REGARDING SENATE BILL 379 RELATING TO PROVIDING FOR THE USE AND REGULATION OF AUTONOMOUS MOTOR VEHICLES

February 2, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Julie Lorenz, and I am the Secretary for the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). I am here today to provide testimony about Senate Bill 379. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and to provide comments. It is important for the State of Kansas to be engaging in the technology of autonomous and connected vehicles. Advancement in technology is increasing at an exponential rate and we see the impacts every day in our personal lives.

KDOT is neutral regarding this bill. This bill is advancing Kansas in that technology adoption; however, there are a few concerns which we think will increase safety and make this a better bill for our citizens, visitors, and users of the transportation system.

Many states have enacted legislation introducing and allowing connected and automated vehicles (CAVs) on their streets and highways. While Kansas is unique from other states, we also recognize proven concepts in their legislation which has helped the success of CAV implementation. The following are suggestions to enhance safety to our highway users and for long-term sustainability.

Recommendations

Safety –

- The Bill should address safe operations to ensure Kansas motorist feel safe operating in and around these vehicles.
- Under Section 1. 2. (d) (1) (B) – cross out “related actions” and add: ***driving functions related to the K.S.A. 8 article 15, and amendments.***
- Under Section 3. (b) 2 – add after railroad crossings: ***and all roadway features.*** The vehicles need to safely negotiate many other types of complex intersections and traffic control devices.
- The bill should establish a pilot where a safety driver is in the vehicle during operations.

Partnerships –

- The Bill should establish some oversight or partnership with a public agency to ensure that Kansas motorist safety is the top priority. This could be through establishment of a statewide advisory committee. The role of the committee would be to help guide public information and make recommendations on needed CAV actions that reflect well-vetted private- and public-sector CAV policies and to support partnerships, policy development, research, and program oversight.

- We also suggest a requirement of a report back to the Legislature and the Governor on the progress, impacts and possible next steps for future automation deployments.

This is truly an exciting time in Kansas and in the transportation industry as we take steps to increase the safe mobility of people and goods across our great state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 379. I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.