

April 1, 2013

To: Members of the House Committee On Transportation and Economic Development
Testimony regarding HB 2428 relating to autonomous vehicles

Dear Members of the Committee,

The automation of driving promises a revolution in transportation on a level with the invention of the internal combustion engine and the electric motor. From radical improvements in safety and environmental efficiency to providing freedom of mobility for people unable to operate a motor vehicle today, to the simple convenience of being able to perform activities other than vehicle operation while commuting, autonomous driving will fundamentally change transportation as we know it.

This technology, which until only recently lived in the realm of science fiction has now been developed to the point where it is in pilot testing on-road, with hundreds of thousands of accident-free miles driven under computer control. Much of the credit for the pace of the commercialization of this technology should rightfully be attributed to Google: they've applied their moon-shot thinking and top-tier technical expertise to this critically important endeavor, and have achieved truly impressive results.

The speed at which this technology has moved from the university laboratory to the open road, however, poses a particular set of challenges for state governments. It is a credit to this body that Oregon is one of the early states looking at what it will take from a regulatory perspective to drive this technology into wide adoption. Still, we should make sure that our efforts to push adoption don't accidentally hinder it instead. Rather than helping to create an early patchwork of regulations that vary from state to state, it may be more productive to engage our neighbor to the south and leverage the rule making work currently underway there to help provide a common legal framework for producers of self-driving vehicles. Directing the Oregon Department of Transportation to study this issue in depth, both from a regulatory perspective as well as through the lens of economic opportunity, could be a reasonable first step.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Frohnmayer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mark Frohnmayer
Oregon Transportation Commission