



**Testimony of Erik Jones, on behalf of
the Self-Driving Coalition for Safer Streets**

**Committee on Business and Transportation
Oregon Senate
Public Hearing on SB 981
March 29, 2017**

Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee on Business and Transportation, my name is Erik Jones, and I am a Partner in the regulatory practice at Venable LLP. I also serve as Counsel to the Self-Driving Coalition for Safer Streets (“Coalition”), and I am pleased to submit this written testimony on behalf of the Coalition.

The Coalition was founded in April of last year by Ford Motor Company, Waymo (formerly Google’s self-driving car project), Lyft, Uber, and the Volvo Car Group. We are focused on enabling the safe and swift development and deployment of fully autonomous vehicles (“AVs”). This cross-section of companies representing technology, automobile manufacturing, and transportation network companies demonstrates the widespread interest in developing this technology across different sectors. Despite their different backgrounds, the companies came together to form the Coalition because of their commitment to bring the tremendous potential safety and mobility benefits of self-driving cars to consumers in the safest and swiftest manner possible.

The Coalition believes fully autonomous vehicles have great potential to make our roads safer and more accessible. Data from the National Safety Council estimates that more than 40,000 Americans died in motor vehicle crashes last year. Since an estimated 94 percent of all crashes are the result of a human decision (whether driving drunk, distracted, fatigued, or at excess speeds), fully autonomous vehicles have the potential to dramatically reduce fatal traffic accidents because they remove human error from the driving process entirely. In addition to these potential safety benefits, self-driving vehicles hold the promise to enhance mobility for the disabled and elderly, reduce congestion, and improve productivity.

Given the Coalition’s enthusiasm for fully autonomous vehicles (more specifically, those vehicles defined as Levels 4 and 5 by the Society of Automotive Engineers) and our strongly held view that self-driving vehicles have the potential to change the country for the better, we support efforts at the state level to facilitate their rapid testing and deployment. Likewise, we have concerns with legislation in any state that unduly limits or impedes the advancement and public use of this technology.



States will play a critical role in the deployment of fully autonomous vehicle technology, and the Coalition is encouraged that legislators in Oregon recognize the significance of AV technology. The fact that two committees are holding a hearing on AV technology is encouraging and a step in the right direction.

The Coalition wholeheartedly supports Oregon's interest in fully autonomous vehicles, but is deeply concerned that SB 981 would severely restrict the development and deployment of self-driving technology in the state. The Coalition believes that this legislation is a well-intended effort to achieve the laudable goals of improved safety, mobility, congestion, and productivity but falls short for several fundamental reasons. As a result, we respectfully call upon the legislature to shift its consideration with respect to AV technology to explicitly include measures and steps that would facilitate greater testing and the rapid deployment of self-driving vehicle technology.

As a foundational matter, our view is that, if a state does choose to take legislative or regulatory action with respect to fully autonomous vehicles, such action should be premised on removing impediments to the safe testing or deployment of such vehicles and preserving a competitive, level playing field for companies developing the technology.

We are concerned that SB 981 would create substantial obstacles to the deployment of self-driving vehicle technology in Oregon. The bill imposes substantial regulatory hurdles for entities seeking to operate AV technology, including by (1) precluding any entity except a "manufacturer" from operating an automated motor vehicle in Oregon, thus proscribing personal vehicle ownership in the future; (2) restricting the definition of "manufacturer" so that it implicitly excludes entities which do not specifically manufacture vehicles or automated driving systems (*e.g.*, ridesharing networks, city transit networks, *etc.*); (3) placing restrictions on the kinds of vehicles that can be used for testing and deploying AV technology; (4) limiting the geographical boundaries where AV technology can be tested and deployed; (5) placing vague data collection requirements on the vehicles; and (6) mandating a \$10 million insurance requirement that is a significant deviation from current Oregon law.

It is important to note that the bill also calls for the Department of Transportation to promulgate rules in a number of areas. Forcing companies to wait until additional rules have been promulgated and finalized before deployment would further delay the development of self-driving vehicles in Oregon.

The restrictions, combined with the time needed for the agency rulemakings the bill requires, will delay testing and deploying self-driving vehicle technology in Oregon, causing Oregon to fall behind other states that are taking steps to encourage development.



The Coalition appreciates the opportunity to share our views on the deployment of fully autonomous vehicles in Oregon. We look forward to working collaboratively with you on reasonable policies that support safety and innovation moving forward.