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Testimony of Arthur Towers

In Support of

House Bill 4063

House Committee on Transportation Committee

February 12, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 4063. Highway safety and autonomous vehicles deserve the level of study called for in the bill.

OTLA members fight for Oregonians who are injured or killed in car crashes. We see first-hand the human tragedy caused not only by car crashes but also by the unwillingness of the insurance industry to properly and quickly pay claims.

We want the carnage on the roads to stop. We have a great deal of hope that the emerging technology of autonomous vehicles could make Oregon roads much safer. However, we know that the intense pressure manufacturers are feeling to be first to market could lead to corner-cutting measures that compromise safety. We have seen this before with side saddle gas tanks, exploding airbags, defective tires, etc. that have caused deaths and injuries before they were safely re-designed.

We want to play a role in decreasing the time period between initial roll-out and the development of problem-free technology.

While we are enthusiastic about the prospects for autonomous vehicles, we are also aware that this technology may go the way of 3-wheeled ATVs. That product is off the market because it was inherently unstable and unsafe.

We hope that as ODOT constructs the task force, that it encourages the involvement of a strong consumer voice and the involvement of local government, particularly local law enforcement.

Finally, while the issue is not central to OTLA, our members who fight for the rights of workers are very concerned about the job loss that could be caused by this technology. As a state, we need to do better by truckers, shuttle bus drivers, and taxi drivers than we did by workers in the timber industry. This task force as composed will probably not have the capacity to do a great job in this area. That issue needs to be addressed now, before the jobs are lost.