ACEC Oregon

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES OF OREGON

Since 1956

"The Engineers"

Testimony Presented to the House Committee on Transportation

February 9, 2026

In opposition to HB 4085

Subject: Operational Considerations for Autonomous Vehicle Deployment

Good afternoon, Chair McLain and members of the Transportation Committee. For the record my name is Tony Roos. I am here today representing the American Council of Engineering Companies of Oregon (ACEC Oregon). I appreciate the opportunity to speak today and to express opposition for HB 4085.

The American Council of Engineering Companies of Oregon (ACEC Oregon) represents private-sector engineering firms that design, maintain, and support Oregon's transportation infrastructure in partnership with public agencies statewide with 110 engineering firms and more than 5,000 employees. Our members work closely with the Oregon Department of Transportation, cities, counties, and special districts to deliver safe, reliable transportation systems for all users.

ACEC Oregon recognizes the evolving role of emerging vehicle technologies, including autonomous and driverless vehicles. However, any policy decision expanding their operation must fully account for the practical and operational impacts placed on public transportation agencies and the infrastructure they manage.

Autonomous vehicle systems depend heavily on the consistent presence, clarity, and condition of traffic control devices—particularly pavement markings and signing. Unlike human drivers, automated systems may be less tolerant of faded striping, temporary or seasonal signage, construction-related changes, or weather-related degradation. Meeting the visual and operational expectations of these systems would likely require **more frequent inspections, accelerated maintenance cycles, and tighter tolerances** for roadway markings and signs than are currently achievable under existing budgets and staffing levels.

These impacts are especially pronounced in **school zones and other sensitive areas**, where roadway conditions are dynamic by design. Time-of-day signing, flashing beacons, temporary signs, portable traffic control devices, and seasonal striping introduce variability that transportation agencies actively manage to enhance child safety. There was recent, widely reported incident involving a driverless vehicle that injured a child in a school zone. This underscores the importance of exercising caution and ensuring roadway environments are interpreted correctly by all users—including automated systems. While investigations into such events, like the recent Santa Monica school zone crash, continue, they highlight the stakes involved when technology interacts with complex, high-risk roadway contexts.

From an engineering and operations perspective, expanding the presence of driverless vehicles would introduce **additional and ongoing maintenance burdens** for public agencies. These include heightened expectations for striping retroreflectivity, sign visibility, obstruction management (vegetation, snow, debris), and rapid response to changes in roadway configuration. Without clearly identified funding mechanisms or implementation responsibilities, these added burdens risk diverting limited resources away from other critical safety improvements and infrastructure preservation needs.

ACEC Oregon believes that any legislative action addressing autonomous vehicle deployment should carefully consider:

- The operational and maintenance responsibilities placed on state and local transportation agencies
- The availability of sustainable funding to meet increased infrastructure performance expectations
- The need for agency discretion in sensitive environments, including school zones and active work zones
- Realistic assumptions about statewide maintenance capabilities and regional variability

Oregon's consulting engineers are committed to advancing safety, innovation, and stewardship of public infrastructure. Thoughtful, measured policy development—grounded in engineering judgment and operational reality—is essential to ensure that emerging technologies enhance, rather than compromise, the safety and reliability of Oregon's transportation system. Until additional research into road maintenance needs and required additional funding, we stand in opposition to HB4085.

5319 SW Westgate Drive, Suite 224, Portland, Oregon 97221
phone (503) 292-2348 ◆ www.acecOregon.org
Member of the American Council of Engineering Companies, Washington, D.C.