

Submitter: Tracy Boyd
On Behalf Of: Blind Oregonians
Committee: House Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4085

My name is Tracy Boyd and I am writing to you as a blind Oregonian and a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Oregon. I am writing to urge your "Yes" vote on House Bill 4085. For many, the debate over autonomous vehicles (AVs) is about technology. For me, and for the thousands of blind Oregonians I represent, it is about safety and civil rights. I would like to highlight why this bill is essential for our community.

1. Reducing the "Human Error" Crisis According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 94% of motor vehicle crashes are caused by human error, including distraction, impairment, and fatigue. As a blind pedestrian, I experience the consequences of these statistics every day. When I stand at a crosswalk with my cane or guide dog, I am at the mercy of human drivers who may be looking at their phones or failing to yield. Unlike humans, an autonomous driving system does not get distracted. It is equipped with 360-degree sensors that never "blink." By supporting HB 4085, you are supporting a transition toward a transportation system where "human error" is no longer a life-threatening risk for vulnerable pedestrians.
2. Protecting the Rights of Service Animal Users One of the most significant barriers to our independence is the routine discrimination we face from rideshare and taxi drivers. It is a heartbreaking reality that many blind Oregonians are refused rides or harassed simply because they travel with a guide dog. Autonomous vehicles remove this human bias entirely. An AV will never "cancel" a ride or drive away when it sees a service animal, ensuring our rights under the ADA are finally upheld in practice, not just on paper.
3. A Statewide Standard for True Independence HB 4085 provides a necessary, unified statewide standard. A "patchwork" of local regulations would effectively trap blind citizens within municipal borders. To hold a job or visit family, we must be able to travel across city lines with the same predictability as any other driver. Furthermore, AVs provide "on-demand" freedom that paratransit—with its 24-hour notice requirements—simply cannot match.

Conclusion Autonomous vehicles are no longer a science fiction dream; they are a 21st-century mobility tool. I urge you to prioritize the safety of all road users and the independence of the blind community by voting yes on HB 4085. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to a safer, more accessible Oregon. Sincerely,
Tracy Boyd National Federation of the Blind of Oregon