

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**REGARDING SENATE BILL 546
RELATING TO PROVIDING FOR THE USE AND REGULATION
OF AUTONOMOUS MOTOR VEHICLES**

March 10, 2022

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I am Julie Lorenz, and I am the Secretary for the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). I am here today to provide testimony about Senate Bill 546. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and to provide comments. It is important for the State of Kansas to be engaging in the technology of connected and autonomous vehicles. Advancement in technology is increasing at an exponential rate and we see the impacts every day in our personal lives.

KDOT is neutral regarding this bill. This bill is advancing Kansas in that technology adoption; however, we note a few safety concerns and have recommendations which we think will increase safety and make this a better bill for our citizens, visitors, and users of the transportation system.

Many states have enacted legislation introducing and allowing connected and automated vehicles (CAVs) on their streets and highways. While Kansas is unique from other states, we also recognize proven concepts in their legislation which has helped the success of CAV implementation. The following are suggestions to enhance safety for our highway users and for long-term sustainability.

Recommendations - Each recommendation has balloon language drafted and submitted as part of KDOT testimony.

- The Bill should **align state agency authorities to reflect Kansas realities** by adding provisions requiring each state agency with jurisdiction over human controlled vehicles maintains that jurisdiction over autonomous vehicles (AV). Each agency needs rule and regulation authority to implement the legislation.
- The Bill should include language that add a **human safety driver** in the AV for all trips on identified routes for the first year of technology deployment.
- The Bill should include **weight limits of an AV** to not exceed more than 34,000 pounds and meet all applicable state and federal gross and axle weight laws. This maximum vehicle weight would sunset after 3 years allowing larger AVs to operate thereafter.
- The Bill should provide for the **law enforcement action plan** to be received by a law enforcement agency that has 24 hour a day/7 days a week operations and can make the information available to first responders when necessary. KDOT does not have 24/7 operations.
- The bill should remove the section that provides KDOT the ability to grant an **exception to traffic and motor vehicle safety laws** for an AV. This is a federal standard controlled by The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). All exemptions to safety laws should be left with NHTSA.

- The Bill should extend the term of the **Autonomous Vehicle Advisory Committee** to allow more data to be collected from a rapidly changing technology, consider associated operational changes, and provide better education and outreach to stakeholders, communities, and transportation system users. We would recommend 5 years.
- The Bill should provide language allowing **AV operations** to occur only on highways where at least a three-foot shoulder is present, or the vehicle can be moved off the roadway except within city limits.
- The Bill should provide language to require a **minimum of \$500,000 for liability insurance** on an AV. This could alleviate concerns regarding an AV causing harm to other travelers.
- The Bill should clarify language that the **human safety driver should take over when it is reasonably foreseeable** that the human driver should take over. Currently the Bill states the vehicle is to inform the human to take over before the human takes over operations

This is truly an exciting time in Kansas and in the transportation industry as we take steps to increase the safe mobility of people and goods across our great state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 546. I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.