



Testimony before the
Senate Transportation Committee

Jerry Wood, President
Teamsters Local 955

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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

I'd like to thank Chairman Petersen and the Committee members for having me here today to talk about this very important issue affecting all Kansans.

My name is Jerry Wood and I'm the Principal Officer of Teamsters Local 955 with members across Missouri and here in Kansas.

I have the honor of being elected to represent hundreds of workers who start each workday in a truck.

I'm here to speak up on the issue of automated vehicles, yes for my members, but also for all working Kansans who operate commercial vehicles for a living, whether they are union or nonunion.

Driving a truck is a huge responsibility and takes tremendous skill and expertise. CDL holders go through rigorous training and testing, and rightfully so, to ensure that they are skilled enough to be out on the road operating next to your family on the highway.

It's an unpredictable profession – a tree falling on the road, a pedestrian darting into traffic, or another motorist driving in an unpredictable fashion. The quick decisions truck drivers make every day in response to these hazards save lives. While we know the statistics of truck accidents, we'll never know how many accidents are prevented due to the quick thinking of our members.

When it comes to a fully automated trucks, there are numerous issues with this legislation; but foremost is not having a human operator in the vehicle as a failsafe.

No computer program developed will be able to plan for *every* possible contingency. Whether it's navigating a busy loading dock, responding to bad weather, or weaving through complex construction zones with non-traditional or non-existent lane markings, it's our human problem-solving skills that makes these obstacles traversable.

¹ <https://www.iihs.org/news/detail/self-driving-vehicles-could-struggle-to-eliminate-most-crashes>

² <https://www.ttnews.com/articles/uber-halts-autonomous-car-testing-after-fatal-arizona-crash>

³ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2018/05/04/google-self-driving-van-involved-crash-arizona-driver-injured/582446002/>

⁴ <https://www.engadget.com/2019-07-12-las-vegas-autonomous-shuttle-crash-probe.html>

While we support any technology that helps make the job of driving a truck safer for our members, a recent study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that fully autonomous vehicles “could struggle” to prevent two-thirds of crashes that do occur¹. In other words, for the vast majority of crashes, a fully automated vehicle wouldn’t have made difference.

Truck drivers have been heroes of the pandemic, delivering the most basic of household goods to our supermarkets and grocery stores. I think I speak for not just our membership, but all working drivers, when I ask this committee to really think about what they are voting on.

We’ve seen the accidents: a self-driving Uber kills an Arizona woman², a Google Waymo van crashes into a human-driven car³, and an automated shuttle crashes in Las Vegas due to lack of manual control⁴ -- we know there are going to be accidents.

I ask the committee if they want to see the same with a 80,000 pound truck moving down the highway with their families on the road.

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