

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

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

March 29, 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. At the same time, it is important to ensure the safety of this new technology for all Kansans. 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 intended to ensure that Kansas is not behind the curve in technology adoption; however, we note concerns below and have included technical recommendations at the end of this testimony which we think will increase safety and make this a better bill for our citizens, visitors, and users of the transportation system. KDOT would be happy to work with the Reviser's Office on technical corrections.

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 other states' legislation which has helped the success of CAV implementation. KDOT has reviewed the changes made in the Senate. The following are suggestions to provide technical cleanup of some language in the bill and enhance safety for our highway users and for long-term sustainability.

The safety of the traveling public is of paramount importance to KDOT. Primary item of interest relates to the operation of vehicles without a safety driver. The Senate made a change in section 2(a)(6) that provides for exception to the requirement of a safety driver in a vehicle not designed, intended, or marketed for human occupancy, or an AV that lacks manual controls for operation by a human driver. KDOT is concerned with this exception for safety reasons and because the citizens of Kansas have not had the time to learn about nor gain experience with these vehicles in either community or highway environments.

Change is a constant feature of the transportation industry, and at every step we support taking appropriate 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.

Technical Recommendations - Section 2(b) needs to contain the name of an agency that operates 24 hours a day seven days a week who will take safety plans and distribute the necessary information when needed.

Section 4 contains a grammatical error in that it says, “accident crash” and should be one or the other.

Section 4(c) has added language that governmental departments regulate those areas where they currently have jurisdiction over human controlled vehicles. However, this language is currently in a section concerning what happens in a crash and needs to be moved to Section 6 where regulatory authority is established.

Section 6(a)(2) provides that autonomous vehicles shall be regulated by the “department” without specifying which department. This provision needs to be removed and replaced with the language that each governmental department keeps their areas of current jurisdiction.

No agency currently has jurisdiction over the area of safety drivers being present for 12 or 24 months. The bill should specify which agency will have regulatory authority over that area.