



## Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association

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February 6, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590

### **Re: Federal Advisory Committee on Automation**

Dear Secretary Chao:

On January 11, 2017, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced the launch of a new federal advisory committee focused on automation. The committee will provide the Department insight and guidance on the development and deployment of automated vehicles, while identifying research, policy and regulatory opportunities to help advance the technology in a safe and responsible manner. While the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) commends the Department for assembling this important committee, we are disappointed by the lack of representation from the nation's large professional driver community. We are equally concerned by the absence of a voice for American small businesses. As such, we hope you'll consider reopening the nominating process to include these important demographics.

As you are aware, OOIDA represents small business truckers, who comprise 90% of the trucking industry, with single truck enterprises accounting for approximately 50% of total carriers in the United States. Encompassing such a large portion of the trucking industry, OOIDA's members will be deeply affected by the promulgation of autonomous technology. In the short-term, our members are concerned advanced automation will diminish the quality of their jobs. Not only will the fragmented introduction of technology make the operation of heavy trucks more unpredictable and stressful, but professional drivers will also face inconsistent driving conditions as passenger car owners adjust to the new features of their own vehicles. Additionally, drivers will likely be the first to experience the technology's shortcomings or deficiencies outside controlled testing scenarios, creating serious safety concerns for our members and the driving public. In the long-term, truckers worry the introduction of driverless vehicles will one day render their profession obsolete, displacing the jobs of 4 to 6 million hard-working American drivers.

Unlike many of the industries currently represented on the advisory committee, professional drivers are unlikely to experience significant economic gain under the looming autonomous revolution. Absent the unique perspective of small business truckers, the panel will struggle to appreciate the full impact automation will have on our economy and achieve its goal of making our transportation network more fair, reliable and efficient.

While the Department has made a strong effort to ensure the panel is comprised of a wide variety of stakeholders, the omission of a representative of professional drivers and small trucking businesses is surprising. Considering the sheer number of truckers required to meet the needs of our nation and the extremely critical nature of what they do, it is crucial they are represented in a significant way on this committee. We encourage you to reopen the nominating process to expand the committee's membership to include one or more participants who represent our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Todd Spencer".

Todd Spencer  
Executive Vice President  
Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association

cc: Members of the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation