



March 5, 2025

The Honorable William Smith
Chair, Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings
Room 2 East Wing, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support SB 949 and a comprehensive AV Deployment Framework for Maryland

Dear Chair Smith and members of the committee:

On behalf of Chamber of Progress – a tech industry association supporting public policies to build a more inclusive society in which all people benefit from technological advancements – I write in **support of SB 949**.

Chamber of Progress is a strong supporter of autonomous vehicles because of their enormous social, economic, and environmental benefits. Autonomous vehicles have the potential to save thousands of lives and expand mobility for thousands of people across Maryland. They also have the potential to create hundreds of thousands of high-paying jobs and connect people to millions of other jobs. Finally, autonomous vehicles will reduce roadway emissions and help Maryland reach its goals of net-zero emissions by 2045.¹

By creating a pathway for the deployment of autonomous vehicles, this bill will unlock these benefits for Maryland residents.

Autonomous vehicles will bring safer streets and reduce the number of accidents

¹ Priority Climate Action Plan State of Maryland. Maryland Department of the Environment. (Mar. 2024).
<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-03/mde-state-of-maryland-cprg-priority-climate-action-plan.pdf>

The National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) released crash data reporting for the first half of 2023, with over 19,000 lives lost.² So far this year, 61 people have died in Maryland alone.³

Research shows that at least 90% of car crashes are caused by human error.⁴ By removing human error from the roads, autonomous vehicles can help eliminate the leading causes of crashes and fatalities. A series of studies from 2023 found that autonomous ridesharing services in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Phoenix experienced 57% fewer police-reported crashes and 85% fewer crashes involving injuries compared to human drivers.⁵ Our organization applied that research to traffic data in New York⁶ and California⁷ and found that 1,800 traffic-related deaths could have been avoided in the last 5 years if autonomous vehicles had been widely deployed.

Autonomous vehicles will also increase transportation options for Marylanders who are currently underserved or face mobility challenges

In neighborhoods where public transit options are scarce, autonomous vehicles can increase transportation options and connect residents to mobility hubs.⁸ For example, in Maryland, areas such as Baltimore City experience a significant transit gap.⁹ For people living with disabilities who cannot drive or are underserved by public transit, AVs can increase mobility.

² National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *NHTSA Estimates Traffic Fatalities Continued to Decline in the First Half of 2023*, US Department of Transportation (Sept. 2023).

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/2023-02-traffic-fatality-estimates#:~:text=The%20National%20Highway%20Traffic%20Safety,to%20make%20their%20streets%20safer.%E2%80%9D>

³ Zero Deaths Maryland Highway Safety Office *Maryland Crash Data* (Mar. 2025).

<https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/>

⁴ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Traffic Safety Facts: Critical Reasons for Crashes Investigated in the National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey*, US Department of Transportation (Feb. 2015).

<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812115>

⁵ Gupta, Raghav, et. al. *Benchmarks for Retrospective Automated Driving System Crash Rate Analysis Using Police-Reported Crash Data*, Cornell University (July 2024). <https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.12675> ;

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.13228>

⁶ Harger, Kaitlyn. *AVs Could Have Saved Over 500 Lives and Stopped 83,000 Injuries in New York Over The Last Five Years*, Medium. Chamber of Progress (May 2024).

<https://medium.com/chamber-of-progress/avs-could-have-saved-over-500-lives-and-stopped-83-000-injuries-in-new-york-over-the-last-five-cf843e86ff49>

⁷ Harger, Kaitlyn. *Analysis: AVs in California Could Have Saved Up to 1,300 Lives, Prevented Up to 5,000 Major Injuries Over Past Three Years*, Chamber of Progress (Mar. 2024).

<https://progresschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/AV-Safety-Research-California-Traffic-Fatality-Analysis-03-24.pdf>

⁸ Andrews, Jonathan. *How AVs are transforming public transportation*, Cities Today. PFD Publications Ltd. (2023.)

<https://media.maymobility.com/May-Mobility-Cities-Today-AVs-Transforming-Public-Transportation-Case-Study.pdf>

⁹ *Transit Deserts: Baltimore City*, Maryland. Transportation Research Board. (Mar. 2021).

<https://trid.trb.org/View/1573232>

Further, only 24% of Americans with disabilities participated in the labor force in 2021.¹⁰ Mobility challenges and inaccessible transit options present significant obstacles for people with disabilities trying to reach jobs and education.¹¹ Public transit and paratransit options do not fully meet these communities' needs, with unreliable service times and longer commutes to access pharmacies, hospitals, and schools.¹² According to the Urban Institute, AVs can improve paratransit services, making them more affordable and flexible for riders because they can provide customizable, curb-to-curb service.¹³ A study by the National Disability Institute found that widespread adoption of AVs could connect people with disabilities with over 4 million jobs.¹⁴

Autonomous vehicles will also create jobs and fill labor gaps.

Autonomous vehicles can also promote job growth. Our research found that nationwide, replacing 13% of vehicles on the road with AVs over the next 15 years could create 455,000 jobs. Those jobs would be high-paying and accessible without a college degree, with 59% of workers without a degree earning more than the U.S. median wage.¹⁵

Autonomous vehicles can also supplement labor when gaps exist. Across the country, the trucking industry has experienced extreme turnover and widespread job vacancies, resulting in significant delays to product shipments and rising prices for basic necessities. The crisis facing the trucking industry hasn't just resulted in delayed shipments, but also in higher prices for consumers. Autonomous, driverless trucks can mitigate these costs by filling driver vacancies, and eliminating the need for excessive recruitment, retention, and other overhead costs ultimately bringing down the price of shipping and consumer goods.

¹⁰ TED: The Economics Daily. *Labor force participation rate 24.2 percent for people with disability in 2023*, US Bureau of Labor Statistics (Oct. 2024).
<https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2024/labor-force-participation-rate-24-2-percent-for-people-with-a-disability-in-2023.htm>

¹¹ Modicamore, Dominic, et. al. *Economic Impacts of Removing Transportation Barriers to Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Through Autonomous Vehicle Adoption*, National Disability Institute and ICF (Dec. 2022).
<https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ndi-economicimpactsofremovingtransportationbarriers.pdf>

¹² Fact Sheet, *The State of Transit Equity: SF Bay Area*, TransitCenter.
<https://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/BayAreaFactSheet.pdf>

¹³ Fiol, Olivia; Weng, Sophia. *Shared Autonomous Vehicles Could Improve Transit Access for People with Disabilities If Regulated Appropriately*, Urban Wire (Oct. 2022).
<https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/shared-autonomous-vehicles-could-improve-transit-access-people-disabilities-if-regulated#:~:text=Because%20AVs%20don't%20need,and%20can't%20currently%20drive.>

¹⁴ Modicamore, Dominic, et. al. *Economic Impacts of Removing Transportation Barriers to Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Through Autonomous Vehicle Adoption*, National Disability Institute and ICF (Dec. 2022).
<https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ndi-economicimpactsofremovingtransportationbarriers.pdf>

¹⁵ Report. *Opportunity AV: How Many and What Types of Jobs Will Be Created by Autonomous Vehicles?*, Chamber of Progress (Feb. 2024).
<https://progresschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Opportunity-AV-How-Many-and-What-Type-of-Jobs-Will-Be-Created-by-Autonomous-Vehicles.pdf>

Autonomous vehicles support Maryland's sustainability efforts

Autonomous vehicles also promote sustainable transportation systems. According to the Southwest Research Institute, autonomous vehicles can be up to 20% more fuel efficient than human-driven vehicles.¹⁶ Since autonomous vehicles are programmed to follow traffic rules and speed limits, autonomous vehicles will ultimately use less energy. Most AVs are also predicted to be electric, making them a cleaner transportation option than vehicles using internal combustion engines.¹⁷ Deploying autonomous vehicles can help Maryland reach its goal of 60% reduction in emissions by 2031.¹⁸

Autonomous vehicles present tremendous opportunities to make Maryland's roads safer and cleaner while expanding transportation options and economic opportunities.

For these reasons, **we urge you to support SB 949.**

Sincerely,



Brianna January
Director of State & Local Government Relations, Northeast US

¹⁶ Press Release. SwRI Achieves 20% Improvement In Vehicle Fuel Efficiency With Connectivity, Automation, SouthWest Research Institute (Oct. 2020).

<https://www.swri.org/press-release/vehicle-fuel-efficiency-improvement-connectivity-automation-arpa-e-nextcar>

¹⁷ Nunno, Richard. Issue Brief. *Autonomous Vehicles: State of the Technology and Potential Role as a Climate Solution*, Environmental and Energy Study Institute (Jun. 2021).

<https://www.eesi.org/papers/view/issue-brief-autonomous-vehicles-state-of-the-technology-and-potential-role-as-a-climate-solution#:~:text=A%20recent%20study%20suggests%20that,keeping%20climate%20change%20in%20check.>

¹⁸ *Priority Climate Action Plan State of Maryland*. Maryland Department of the Environment. (Mar. 2024).

<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-03/mde-state-of-maryland-cprg-priority-climate-action-plan.pdf>