

Submitter: Juno Suarez
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4085

Chair McLain, Vice-Chairs Boshart Davis and Gamba, members of the committee,

I am frustrated by this bill. I ultimately want AVs in Oregon, but I OPPOSE this bill and I urge you not to move it forward in its current form.

I'm a systems engineer, a professional member of the IEEE engineering society, and a Portland resident. I visit San Francisco several times a year for work and have experience both as a pedestrian on streets near AVs from multiple vendors and as a user and passenger of Waymo vehicles.

Proponents say AVs are safer than human drivers. I buy that. Proponents say AVs promise greater mobility, freedom, and independence for people with disabilities and elderly individuals. I buy that. On both counts, there's data to back it up. Moreover, I believe that every vehicle on the road equipped with advanced sensors like lidar and radar improves the safety for all users of that road segment regardless of mode - including walking, rolling, scooters, motor vehicles, and bicycles.

As a pedestrian, if I have a choice of walking next to a blacked out F150 with no plates doing 40mph on a neighborhood street or an AV which always accelerates and brakes smoothly, obeys traffic laws, and always uses its turn signal, I know which one I'd choose any day. AVs will make it to our streets because they are simply better vehicles.

HB 4085 has ODOT create a statewide "rules of the road" framework, and I find that appropriate. But the bill also pre-empts local city control to manage traffic and mitigate conflict between different road users. Since cities will bear the brunt of the effects of the introduction of AVs, this preemption is inappropriate and premature. Cities like San Francisco where similar preemption in place have expressed regret and been left without the tools necessary to respond. Oregon would do well to copy many things from California, but this is not one of them.

It's clear this is an area of impassioned feelings on all sides. The role of technology in society is being questioned. I believe the role of the state is to establish broad guidelines that permit the advance of technology with regulatory oversight. But a part-time legislature is not equipped nor responsive enough to provide proper public input, stakeholder engagement, or point-in-time oversight of emerging issues affecting city streets.

Reluctantly, I urge the committee to oppose the bill in its current form and to revisit the issue with involvement from the City of Portland and other Oregon municipalities.