



February 7, 2025

Representative Dan Ruby
Chair, House Transportation Committee
State Capitol
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Chair Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee,

The Autonomous Vehicle Industry Association (“AVIA”) writes to express our opposition to HB 1614. By requiring a human observer to be present in all “automated truck tractors,” HB 1614 would impede the ability of autonomous vehicle (“AV”) operators to bring the many benefits of AV technology to North Dakota residents. For these reasons, we respectfully encourage the Committee to ***vote against HB 1614***.

By way of background, AVIA is comprised of the world’s leading technology, ridesharing, trucking, and automotive companies. Our mission is to realize the benefits of AVs (*i.e.*, SAE Levels 4- and 5-capable vehicles equipped with automated driving systems that are capable of driving the vehicle without human intervention) and support the safe and expeditious deployment of these technologies. With its broad array of technical expertise and experience in the technology, automobile, and transportation network sectors, AVIA welcomes this opportunity to engage with the Committee to develop the right solutions that will promote the deployment of AVs on North Dakota roads.

HB 1614 would impose a permanent ban on automated truck tractors in North Dakota. A regulatory framework that supports the deployment of all AVs will better equip North Dakota’s transportation system and workforce to take advantage of the benefits presented by this technology. Unfortunately, HB 1614 jeopardizes this future by requiring a human observer in all automated truck tractors, which would effectively ban autonomous trucking operations in North Dakota in perpetuity.

HB 1614 would cause North Dakota to fall behind other states on AV innovation. The majority of states recognize the many benefits of AVs and authorize driverless AV operations, including autonomous trucks. No state that authorizes AV deployment requires a human observer to remain in the vehicle. If North Dakota were to move forward with this bill, it would become a national outlier as the *only* state to single out automated truck tractors and bar them from effectively deploying in the state.

AVs will support road safety. This data demonstrates that there has never been a fatality involving an autonomous truck and shows remarkably few incidents involving the vehicles.

Autonomous trucks are safely operating across the country, but HB 1614 would prevent North Dakota residents from reaping these safety benefits.

AVs will create new, high-quality jobs while improving our supply chain. In addition to enhancing safety on our roadways, the AV industry is currently leveraging the existing workforce to create new roles for different education and skill levels. Many of the jobs created will not require a college degree, such as service technicians, remote assistance operators, mapping data collectors, and delivery packers. Workers with experience in the trucking industry specifically, particularly as truck drivers, offer valuable skills to AV trucking employers. Unfortunately, the U.S. trucking industry is currently short of an estimated 78,000 truck drivers due to a long-term decline in new drivers entering the profession, and an annual turnover rate exceeding 90%. This truck driver shortage is estimated to reach 160,000 in 2031. We believe autonomous trucks are one part of the suite of solutions and that autonomous trucks will augment the important work that truck drivers do for our country. We also believe autonomous trucks will help to increase quality of life for workers in the logistics industry and develop a strong workforce.

Autonomous trucks will bring economic and environmental benefits. Autonomous trucks that operate in interstate commerce will fundamentally change the manner and speed in which goods move in our country while making roads safer for everyone. This technology also presents an array of environmental benefits, including greater fuel efficiency, more efficient use of physical infrastructure, reduced congestion, and reduced agricultural spoilage and related preservation of soil and water resources. Moreover, autonomous long-haul trucking has the potential to broadly benefit the economy by improving the efficiency of countless industries that rely on moving goods on trucks, such as agriculture, retail, and manufacturing. According to a study funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration, automating long-haul trucking will spur \$111 billion in aggregate investment spending across the U.S. economy, and will increase total U.S. employment by 26,400 to 35,100 jobs per year on average.

AVs will usher in a new era of mobility that will make North Dakota's transportation system safer and more efficient. We strongly believe North Dakota should support safety-enhancing policies without foreclosing a future with AVs. For the reasons described above, we respectfully strongly oppose HB 1614.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Farrah', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jeff Farrah
Chief Executive Officer
Autonomous Vehicle Industry Association