February 12, 2025

Chair Dan Ruby
4620 46th Avenue NW
Minot, ND 58703

Dear Chair Ruby and Members of the House Transportation Committee,

The undersigned write to express our strong opposition to HB 1614. By requiring a commercially licensed human driver to be present in all "automated truck tractors," HB 1614 would effectively ban autonomous truck deployments in the state, and therefore prevent communities in North Dakota from experiencing the many benefits of autonomous trucking. Autonomous trucks will make our roads safer, enable greater supply chain efficiencies for North Dakota industries such as soybean, sugar beet as well as oil and gas, and create new, high-quality career opportunities for workers without causing significant job displacement. For these reasons, we respectfully ask the Committee to vote against HB 1614.

As the leading autonomous trucking companies in the U.S., we have come together out of a shared commitment to ensure that North Dakota does not become the first state in the nation to enact legislation that would effectively ban our companies from operating. Collectively, we are hauling freight in states like Texas, Arkansas and Arizona for some of the biggest brands in trucking, retail, and eCommerce, including Walmart, IKEA, FedEx, JB Hunt, Werner Enterprises, Tyson Foods, Kroger and many more. These household names have chosen to partner with our companies because they see the incredible safety and efficiency benefits that autonomous technology presents both today, and for generations to come. Additionally, autonomous trucks are serving oil & gas customers in the Permian Basin, and customers in the Bakken have expressed interest in similar service in North Dakota. Should HB 1614 proceed, this critical work could be shelved. We welcome the opportunity to engage with the Committee to develop the right solutions that will promote the deployment of autonomous trucks on North Dakota roads.

The vast majority of states have recognized the many benefits that autonomous vehicles (AVs) bring, and as a result, many expressly authorize driverless AV operations - including autonomous trucks. This includes neighboring South Dakota which enacted

legislation in 2024 expressly permitting driverless AV operations. Additionally, no state that authorizes AV deployment requires a commercially licensed human driver to remain in the vehicle, meaning that if North Dakota moves forward with this bill, it would become the only state to single out "automated truck tractors" and indefinitely ban their driverless deployment in the state.

The status quo for road safety is unacceptable, and HB 1614 would lock it in.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that nearly 43,000 traffic deaths occurred in 2022, which amounts to approximately 100 fatalities per day[1]. North Dakota should support driverless autonomous truck operation because autonomous trucks do not drive impaired, do not text while driving, do not fall asleep at the wheel, or recklessly speed. Indeed, for over a dozen years, AV technology has been tested on America's public roads and maintains a remarkable safety record. With every delivery, autonomous trucking technology is helping to increase safety on America's roads, and contribute to a more responsible and reliable freight ecosystem. HB 1614 would prevent North Dakota communities from reaping these benefits.

Autonomous trucks bring economic, supply chain and environmental benefits.

Autonomous trucks are fundamentally changing the manner in which goods move in our country, ensuring that every day items and America's best-loved products are available with higher frequency and closer to home. Additionally, autonomous trucking is poised to benefit the economy by improving the efficiency of countless industries that rely on moving goods. 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, increase total U.S. employment by 26,400 to 35,100 jobs per year on average, and raise annual earnings for all U.S. workers by more than $200 per worker per year. 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.

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[1] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT HS 813 428, Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2022, 1 (2023): https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813428.

Autonomous trucks are creating new, high-quality, well-paid jobs.

Our companies are currently leveraging the existing workforce to create new, well-paid roles for a wide variety of education and skill levels, including technicians, remote assistance operators, community engagement officers and data collectors. Workers with

experience in the trucking industry specifically, particularly as truck drivers, offer incredibly valuable skills to autonomous trucking employers. Unfortunately, the U.S. trucking industry is currently short approximately 80,000 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. As our customers frequently attest, autonomous trucks are one of the ways to combat this acute supply chain challenge.

Autonomous trucks will make North Dakota's transportation system safer, more efficient, and more accessible. They will create new, high-quality jobs while avoiding displacement of current drivers, and will ensure communities in North Dakota have access to the goods they need, where and when they need them. For the reasons described above, we respectfully oppose HB 1614.

Sincerely,

Rich Steiner, VP Government Relations and Public Affairs, Gatik

Dan Goff, Head of External Affairs, Kodiak

Gerardo Interiano, SVP Government Relations and Public Affairs, Aurora

Liz Fishback, Director of State and Local Affairs, Stack AV

Brian Moore, Vice President of Policy, Bot Auto

Anita Kim, Director of Government Affairs and Policy, TORC Robotics