

**TESTIMONY
HOUSE BILL 1614
SENATE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MARCH 20, 2025**

Chairman Clemens and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, my name is Scott Meske. I appear on behalf of the North Dakota Motor Carriers Association (NDMCA) in support of HB 1614 as passed by the House of Representatives.

The NDMCA represents the hundreds of companies and thousands of professionals who efficiently and safely move goods and services in North Dakota across our highways and roads. The motor carrier industry is one of the most regulated sectors of our transportation system. According to a recent NDSU Challey Institute study, North Dakota is THE most freight dependent state in our country, with 60% of our economy relying on surface transportation in one form or another. In fact, in October 2024, an autonomous transportation conference was held in Bismarck, bringing together experts from the industry, companies who are employing autonomous trucks in other parts of the country, insurance specialists, and law enforcement. The curious point of that conference is that there were possibly more questions raised than answers given.

Without question autonomous technology is an emerging field in the freight delivering business. There are tremendous advancements being made to ensure that the use of such technologies actually improves efficiency and reliability while remaining safe for the traveling public. Other testimony has been submitted that details some of the trials currently being conducted by or being considered by North Dakota companies. We must allow these companies to innovate in a way that makes sense for them. We are encouraged by the Department of Transportation's efforts to work with the industry to fairly allow for the innovation of this sector, while maintaining safety standards expected by the motoring public.

Employing autonomous trucks shows promise of addressing workforce shortages and even reducing motor vehicle accidents. But we have to allow the industry to continue their research and testing.

Going forward, the NDMCA would gladly be a part of the discussion that helps update our motor vehicle laws to include autonomous trucking, including all stakeholders and law enforcement in that effort. As a point of reference, the National Council of State Legislatures reports that in 2015, 2017, and 2019 the North Dakota Legislative Assembly passed bills related to autonomous vehicle operations, including several studies (attached below). Technology continues to advance in this field at a rapid pace, and we DO need a definition and reasonable regulatory framework to keep the traveling public safe, while allowing our companies to employ this exciting technology.

This concludes my testimony. NDMCA urges the Committee to issue a DO PASS recommendation on HB 1614 as passed by the House.

North Dakota	HB 1065 (2015)	Provides for a study of autonomous vehicles. Includes research into the degree that automated motor vehicles could reduce traffic fatalities and crashes by reducing or eliminating driver error and the degree that automated motor vehicles could reduce congestion and improve fuel economy.
North Dakota	HB 1202 (2017)	Requires the department of transportation to study the use of vehicles equipped with automated driving systems on the highways in this state and the data or information stored or gathered by the use of those vehicles. Also requires that the study include a review of current laws dealing with licensing, registration, insurance, data ownership and use, and inspection and how they should apply to vehicles equipped with automated driving systems.
North Dakota	HB 1199 (2019)	<p>Defines "platoon" to mean a group of motor vehicles using vehicle - to - vehicle communications to travel in a unified manner at close following distances on a multilane, limited-access, divided highway. Clarifies that the “following too closely” law does not apply to the operation of a non - lead vehicle in a platoon.</p> <p>The department of transportation, in coordination with the state highway patrol superintendent, must develop an operational plan that provides guidelines for operating a platoon. The plan must include operational information that must be provided by a platoon technology provider or commercial motor vehicle operator. The department may restrict platooning operations in accordance with the guidelines or the operational information provided in the plan.</p> <p>2. A platoon may not operate unless the platoon technology provider or the commercial motor vehicle operator files an operational plan with the department and the plan is approved for general platoon operations. If the department does not approve the plan, the department shall inform the platoon technology provider or commercial motor vehicle operator of the reason for the disapproval and provide guidance on how to resubmit the plan to obtain approval. 3. A person operating a motor vehicle in a platoon without an approved plan must be assessed a one hundred dollar fee. 4. A person operating a motor vehicle in violation of the guidelines in an operational plan must be assessed a fee of one hundred dollars.</p>
North Dakota	HB 1418 (2019)	Defines key terms. An autonomous vehicle must be capable of operating in compliance with all applicable federal and state law, except to the extent exempted under applicable

federal or state law, and may operate on the public highways of this state in full compliance with all vehicle registration, title, insurance, and all other applicable requirements under this title. An autonomous vehicle with automated driving systems engaged does not require a human driver to operate on the public highway if the autonomous vehicle is capable of achieving a minimal risk condition in case a system failure occurs which renders the automated driving system unable to perform the entire dynamic driving task relevant to the vehicle's intended operational design domain. An individual using an autonomous vehicle is not driving or in actual physical control of the autonomous vehicle and, therefore, is exempt from licensing requirements if a. The automated driving system is completing the entire dynamic driving task; and b. The autonomous vehicle is capable of achieving a minimal risk condition if a system failure occurs that renders the automated driving system unable to perform the entire dynamic driving task relevant to the vehicle's intended operational design domain.

Defines "On-demand autonomous vehicle network" to mean a transportation service network that uses a software application or other digital means to dispatch or otherwise enable the prearrangement of transportation with autonomous vehicles for purposes of transporting persons or goods, including for-hire transportation, transportation for compensation, and public transportation. Clarifies a person may operate an on-demand autonomous vehicle network. An on-demand autonomous vehicle network may provide transportation of persons or goods, including a. For-hire transportation; b. Public transportation; and c. Transportation for multiple passengers who agree to share the ride.