



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

August 31, 2020

*via Email Submission*

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Docket Operations  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Comments Concerning Agency Information Collection Activities: Automated Vehicle Transparency and Engagement for Safe Testing (TEST) Initiative  
Docket Number: DOT-NHTSA-2020-0070

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Transportation Task Force Co-Chairs thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in response to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) information collection activities for the Automated Vehicle Transparency and Engagement for Safe Testing (AV TEST) Initiative. CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for Federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society.

The promise of increased mobility and safety will only be realized if vehicles equipped with automated driving systems (ADS) and without steering wheels are fully accessible, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) upheld, and safety elements take into account the needs of people with disabilities. We view this time of innovation and reimagining as an opportunity to improve the levels of safety and accessibility that they afford. To that end, we ask you to consider the following regarding the AV TEST Initiative proposed information collection.

**I. Whether the AV TEST Initiative is Necessary for NHTSA's Performance and Function and its Practical Utility**

NHTSA was established by Congress to "save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce economic costs due to motor vehicle crashes through education, research, safety standards, and enforcement activity". AVs have the potential to increase vehicle and road safety for passengers and pedestrians; however, AV testing and subsequent fatal crashes prove there are is considerable work to be done to ensure and improve safety.

While AV technology is developed, NHTSA should require and collect standardized data from AV operators and local authorities. This information should be, as much as

possible, available to the general public, including academics, engineers, and safety, accessibility and community advocates. This information can lead to improvements to technology, education for community members and potential passengers, and lessons learned and best practices for local authorities.

## II. How to Enhance the Quality, Utility, and Clarity of the Information

Any information collection regarding AV testing on public roads should be required and standardized, both for AV operators and local authorities. Current AV operators may voluntarily provide self-assessments to NHTSA. Of the roughly 80 currently operating, only 23 have provided information that is often not detailed or standardized.<sup>1</sup> In addition, we recommend collaboration between NHTSA, the Office of the Secretary and other modal administrators, such as the Federal Transit Administration, to ensure quality data collection.

Whether NHTSA chooses to mandate information collection, we recommend standardizing and including accessibility in information collected.

For information from entities performing ADS testing, we recommend requiring:

- Accessibility of the vehicle for passengers with disabilities, including human machine interface accessibility for passengers who are blind or visually impaired, Deaf or Hard of hearing, or who have an intellectual or developmental disability;
- Whether the vehicle is accessible to wheelchair users who remain in their mobility device, and whether there is accessible securement and a ramp or lift;
- If the vehicle is not accessible to passengers with disabilities, whether the operator has plans to develop accessible vehicles;
- Whether the vehicle can recognize pedestrians with disabilities, including cane, service animal and wheelchair users, and bicyclists, and whether the vehicle can identify pedestrians of all skin tones;
- If the vehicle being tested is providing rides to the public, whether the service is available for the unbanked or those without a smartphone, and if the service is available through an app that is accessible to blind or visually impaired passengers;
- Whether the operator is testing with the support of USDOT or state grants or partnerships; and
- Whether the AV operator has engaged with the disability community, and members of senior, low income and limited English proficiency, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities.

For information from local authorities about requirements or recommendations, we recommend requiring:

- Vehicle requirements to ensure accessibility for disabled passengers and safety for all pedestrians, bicyclists and other road users, if any;
- Vehicle accessibility development plan requirements, if any;
- Community engagement requirements;

- Whether the local authority is working to develop infrastructure supports and plans, including increased accessibility of public rights of way and broadband access;
- Safety plan, collision and crash requirements; and
- Community impact analysis requirements, if any.

### III. Consulting with the Community

In addition, we continue to recommend that NHTSA works in consultation with the U.S. Access Board and representatives from the disability community as new technology, vehicle designs and safety features are developed to ensure full accessibility and safety for all.

### IV. Conclusion

We acknowledge USDOT's stated commitment to improving access and mobility for people with disabilities and older adults in AV 3.0 and AV 4.0, and during the Department's recent celebration in honor of the ADA's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We urge NHTSA to prioritize access and safety for all passengers and road users. Including requirements to ensure accessibility and engage with the disability and other underserved communities would be a reminder to all stakeholders of USDOT's commitment to uphold the promise of greater mobility and safety for all.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to provide comment. We look forward to continuing to weigh in and support efforts to advance the accessibility and safety of AVs.

Please contact Carol Tyson at (202) 878-9186 or [cityson@dredf.org](mailto:cityson@dredf.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

CCD Transportation Task Force Co-Chairs

Sarah Malaier, American Foundation for the Blind

Lee Page, Paralyzed Veterans of America

Claire Stanley, American Council of the Blind

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<sup>i</sup> NHTSA, Voluntary Safety Self-Assessments, Available at: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/automated-driving-systems/voluntary-safety-self-assessment> (accessed August 31, 2020)