

Testimony of Kimberly Lucas, Acting Director of the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure for the City of Pittsburgh

House Transportation Committee Hearing on HB2398 to Authorize Highly Autonomous Vehicles

March 17, 2022

Good afternoon, Chair Hennessey and Members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Kim Lucas. I am the Acting Director of the City of Pittsburgh Department of Mobility and Infrastructure, the department responsible for the transportation of people and goods throughout the city and the department responsible for managing the operation of and access to the public right-of-way. On behalf of the City of Pittsburgh and Mayor Ed Gainey, I would like to thank the members for holding this hearing on HB 2398, legislation that is important to me personally and to the residents of Pittsburgh.

In 1979, U.S. Steel announced the closure of 15 steel mills, an event which sent shockwaves through our regional economy and presaged the rapid decline of the industry that put Pittsburgh on the map. In that same year, CMU Professor Red Whittaker built a small autonomous vehicle to help with the clean up after the 1979 nuclear reactor meltdown at Three Mile Island, beginning our transition from a Steel City to a Robotics City.

The importance of autonomous vehicles to Pittsburgh's future can't be overestimated. It's estimated that the global market for the autonomous vehicle industry will reach about \$7 trillion dollars by 2050, with the potential to create countless jobs for workers of all education and skill levels. The manufacturing and tech associated with AVs also occupy and give new life to the massive facilities that were a part of the past industrial economy. "Robotics Row" in Lawrenceville and the Strip District began with the redevelopment and transformation of a former steel mill and chocolate factory and have been home to companies like Uber, Aurora Innovation, Seegrid, Carnegie Robotics, Caterpillar's Pittsburgh Automation Center, HEBI Robotics, RedZone Robotics, nanoGriptech, and Helomics. In addition to the impact autonomous vehicles can and will have on our economy, AVs, and HAVs in particular, also have the potential to enhance quality of life for our city's residents by helping us to reduce emissions, increase mobility, and just free up time for people who use vehicles.

We know that our ability to grow this industry for the workers and residents of Pittsburgh depends on our ability to offer an adaptive and integrated environment that supports the communication and data needs of AVs. At DOMI, we invest every day in innovative technology that helps to support and amplify the benefits of automation. We are also supportive of creating a regulatory environment that facilitates research and testing and we know that means updating our laws to keep pace with innovation in the sector, while also protecting the safety of the public.

One aspect of the bill that concerns us, however, is the provision stating that "a political subdivision of the Commonwealth may not adopt or enforce a policy, rule or ordinance that sets

standards or otherwise burdens, prohibits, limits or regulates the operation of a highly automated vehicle.”

In the first place, we believe that this language is overbroad and could be construed to prohibit regulation of any kind. Our state’s motor vehicle code has always recognized the need for municipalities to have the ability to set vehicular policy. Indeed, elsewhere the code explicitly states that the provisions of the motor vehicle title shall not be deemed to prevent local authorities from prohibiting or regulating the use of designated streets by any class or kind of traffic. HAVs should be no exception.

The need for municipal government to regulate the use of streets will, we believe, become more important as time goes on. In fact, the promise of HAVs depends on our ability to do so. For instance, to reap the benefits of HAVs, we will need to pay close attention to the predicted increase in vehicular traffic that HAVs will induce so that we can balance AV usage demand driven by greater vehicular safety and convenience alongside our plans for widened and protected bicycle and pedestrian paths in our right of way, another transportation segment seeing rapid demand growth.

The people of Pittsburgh are keenly aware that our future depends on the success of new industries. We are committed to supporting the development of the AV industry. But we also know that the effects of any new and revolutionary technology are by definition unpredictable and that government must have the ability to adapt these much-needed guidelines to local conditions. We therefore respectfully ask that the provision pre-empting local regulation be removed from this important legislation, so that HAVs can be regulated in the same manner as non-autonomous vehicles.

Thank you.