

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2020

John Bozzella
President and CEO
Alliance for Automotive Innovation
1050 K Street, Northwest
Suite 650
Washington, DC 20001

Bill Long
President and CEO
Motor and Equipment Manufacturers
Association
1030 15th Street, Northwest
Washington, DC 20005

Peter Welch
President and CEO
National Automobile Dealers Association
8484 Westpark Drive
Suite 500
Tysons, VA 22102

Gary Shapiro
President and CEO
Consumer Technology Association
1919 S. Eads Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Tom Quaadman
Executive Vice President
Chamber Technology Engagement Center
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
1615 H Street, Northwest
Washington, DC 20062

Dear Messrs. Bozzella, Long, Welch, Shapiro, and Quaadman:

We join the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in commending the automotive sector for using innovative technologies to meet new challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful to see such extraordinary collaboration and resourcefulness across a number of sectors, including yours, in response to this crisis. The automotive community has stepped up in a number of ways, producing much-needed ventilators, respirators, and personal protective equipment, providing support for first responders and others affected by the pandemic, and ensuring that employees remain safe on the job.

In some ways, we are reminded of the industry's response to World War II, when all automotive factories in the U.S. were retooled to build vehicles and equipment for the military. In the years following the war, new technologies ushered in a golden era for the industry that benefitted our entire nation. As we now confront the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis and work to restore our economy, innovation and ingenuity across the auto sector will be critical to building a safer, more efficient, and more resilient future in transportation.

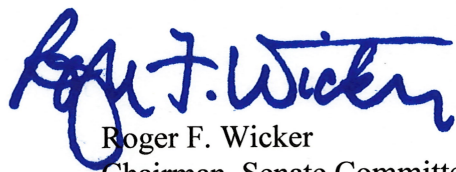
The current crisis has shown what the industry could look like moving forward. As highlighted by NHTSA,¹ the industry is exploring a host of new innovations in response to the crisis, including the use of automated driving systems to transport COVID-19 tests between a testing site and laboratory and ride-hailing vehicles to transport essential goods—such as medical supplies, mail, and groceries.

As encouraging as these developments are, our global competitors are racing to gain the upper hand in automotive innovation. China is on the path to becoming the world’s leading manufacturing power by 2049, a year that would mark 100 years of Communist rule in that land. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, China is moving full speed ahead with its focus on critical technologies, with Chinese companies going so far as to test automated vehicles on American roads. Beijing is also preparing to release “China Standards 2035,” which will aim to influence international standards for next-generation technologies. All of this comes at a time when global investments in automotive research and development may fall, according to a recent survey.²

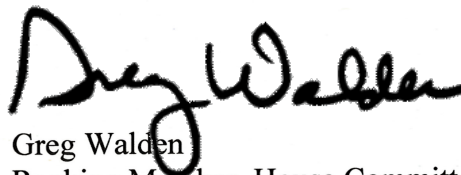
Our current crisis underscores the need for the United States to continue leading in automotive innovation, including in automated vehicle technology. We therefore request that you provide details of any plans your organizations may have to assist in the recovery from the pandemic, including ways that you are using new innovations. We would also appreciate your views regarding what policies or additional authorities are needed to provide additional support to the automotive sector in unforeseen circumstances.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker
Chairman, Senate Committee
on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation



Greg Walden
Ranking Member, House Committee
on Energy and Commerce

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, “Coronavirus: Innovative Automotive Technologies,” Apr. 10, 2020, available at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/coronavirus/innovative-automotive-technologies-address-crisis-challenges>.

² In particular, it found an average 17 percent reduction in 2020 advanced research budgets primarily due to technology deployment delays. IHS Markit, “COVID-19 Automotive R&D Impact Survey – Results,” Apr. 15, 2020, available at <https://ihsmarkit.com/research-analysis/covid19-automotive-r-and-d-impact-survey-results.html>.