

Autonomous and Connected Vehicle Study Committee
Hearing 1: “Autonomous and Connected Vehicles 101”
Opening Statement – Rep. Michael Sheehy
October 4, 2017

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Autonomous and Connected Vehicle Study Committee,

I am thrilled to have this opportunity to discuss such a timely and intriguing topic. This hearing is the first in what will be a long and hopefully thoughtful series on the coming generation of Autonomous and Connected Vehicles.

I have always enjoyed working with Chairman Green and I would like to thank him for arranging these hearings. It will be nice to step away from the partisan analysis of legislation that dominates most committees (although Transportation is often drama-free) and depart on a fact-finding mission.

Over the summer, I had the opportunity to visit Ohio’s own Transportation Research Center in East Liberty and to learn about the impressive work done at the industry-leading “proving ground.” Many legislators also visited the Center for Automotive Research at Ohio State and learned how government investment in universities can contribute to all sorts of innovations. Transportation policy may sound dry, but it is a truly wide-reaching and vital area of public policy that touches so many other areas, including public safety, the environment, research and innovation, and economics.

This Study Committee’s existence is a testament to the new innovation occurring in our country in the Autonomous Vehicle field. These are the vehicles of the future. It is also indicative of the role Ohio has played throughout the history of American manufacturing.

In Ohio, we always need to be part of the innovative process. It’s in our DNA, a thread of progress that began with the Wright Brothers in Dayton and lives today in the Ohio State students who engineer the Buckeye Bullet, an all-electric that just last year set the world land-speed vehicle record.

I will be focusing in particular during this Committee on how we can utilize new Autonomous and Connected Vehicle technology to increase economic mobility. With every advancement in technology comes new challenges, and as legislators responsible for the well-being of our constituents, we must ensure that these innovations are implemented wisely and broadly, and that no community is excluded from the benefits enjoyed by others.

Connected vehicle technology, for instance, holds the potential to improve fleet efficiency, reduce pollution, and deliver goods cheaper and faster than ever before. Autonomous vehicles can significantly reduce the amount and severity of routine car accidents, saving lives and protecting families. At the same time, we must remember the hundreds of thousands of Ohioans who are able to feed their families because of jobs in the transportation industry. What becomes of these workers must be our top concern.

I would like to thank the witnesses for speaking with us today, and again thank the Members of the Committee and our Chairman for giving us this opportunity to look to the future.