

**Statement to U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection
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Good morning.

My name is Mike Ableson and I am General Motor's vice president of global mobility strategy. I want to thank Chairman Latta, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and the other subcommittee members for inviting me to tell you more about General Motor's vision for the coming transformation in mobility and the opportunities that self-driving vehicles hold for the future safety of the American public.

If I could first offer a personal story that recently hit very close to our GM family. One of our colleagues, Steve Kiefer, experienced an incredible tragedy last September. His son was returning to college after a weekend at home when he was hit by a distracted driver and killed instantly. Watching our friend and colleague experience such an avoidable and irreplaceable loss gave the technology that we will discuss today an even deeper purpose. But, unfortunately, Steve is not alone.

We often describe the over 35,000 deaths on our roadways each year as being equivalent to a fully loaded Boeing 747 crashing every single week.

10 percent of vehicle fatalities and 18 percent of injuries in crashes are due to distracted driving. More than 30 percent of fatalities involve a drunk driver, and 28 percent of fatal crashes were speed-related. Vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for children and adults ages four to 34.

With 94 percent of fatal crashes caused by human behavior, there is tremendous potential in deploying technology that can do much better.

Self-driving cars won't drive while impaired by drugs or alcohol, they won't be distracted by a cell phone, they won't drive drowsy or recklessly, and their speed will be limited to that of the local laws and conditions.

For years, auto makers have committed our resources to protecting passengers when crashes do happen. Today, through the continuing development of technology, we have the further opportunity to avoid crashes altogether.

Not only are we committed to building safe and reliable self-driving vehicles, we also believe that self-driving vehicles will provide tremendous benefits to society in terms of convenience and quality of life. Such vehicles will provide unprecedented access to transportation to those who need it most, like the disabled community and those in underserved neighborhoods with limited access to public transportation.

General Motors is incredibly optimistic about the future of mobility. Automakers are faced with a tremendous opportunity to create a new model for personal transportation that changes the way society thinks about the automobile, and we are rising to the challenge.

In June of last year, GM began testing self-driving Chevrolet Bolt EVs on public roads in Scottsdale, Arizona, and the challenging urban center of San Francisco. In December, we announced that we would begin testing in Metro Detroit, which will serve as GM's primary location for testing in cold weather and winter-driving conditions.

We have more than 50 self-driving vehicles testing in these three states today.

We also announced that GM will produce the next-generation of our self-driving test vehicles at our Orion Assembly facility in Michigan. They will be fully equipped with self-driving technology, including redundant systems of LiDAR, cameras, sensors and other hardware and software designed to assure safety. The vehicles produced at Orion will allow us to accelerate the testing and validation of this exciting safety technology.

Expansion of our real-world self-driving vehicle testing program will allow us to deploy self-driving vehicles within carefully defined parameters and boundaries

through controlled ride-sharing projects. We believe deploying in such a deliberate and controlled way will help to ensure that our self-driving vehicles meet the same strict standards for safety and quality that we've been building into our traditional vehicles for generations and help us gather additional performance data necessary to prove safety and inform policy making.

Our test vehicles currently have a person behind the wheel to monitor and evaluate performance. The safety data gathered by these test vehicles will lead to better, smarter self-driving vehicles. When we have gathered enough data to fully prove the safety benefits and are fully confident in the vehicle's ability to operate more safely than a human driver we plan to deploy vehicles without a human driver.

To truly realize the benefits of this opportunity, we have to ensure public policies and regulations match the rapidly changing pace of innovation that this technology has demonstrated.

Current FMVSS have served the motoring public well for years. However as technology has evolved, standards, which take years to develop, have lagged behind. As we have seen in many other industries of rapid technological change, the pace of regulation has not kept pace with rapid innovation. For instance, current Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) do not contemplate

vehicles without human drivers. Without changes to those regulations, it may be years before the promise of today's technology can be realized and thousands of preventable deaths that could have been avoided will happen.

At the same time, we understand that we must be able to prove to our customers, our regulators and the American public that our vehicles are safe.

NHTSA has already begun a collaborative process with stakeholders to facilitate the safe testing and deployment of self-driving vehicles. While important regulatory work continues, it is imperative that manufacturers have the ability to test these vehicles in greater numbers to gather the safety data that will be critical to inform large-scale deployment of life-saving self-driving vehicles. One good way to accomplish this goal is to grant the Secretary of Transportation authority to grant specific exemptions for highly automated vehicle development. This authority would be similar to authority currently provided under existing law. While we have more to learn, our self-driving Bolt EVs are getting smarter and better each week, and we are anxious for the public to be able to experience the technology first-hand. But let me be clear: our priority is, and always will be, the safety of our passengers and fellow road users.

During this hearing alone, another eight people will have died in vehicles on U.S. roads. Eight more families that have to experience the painful loss that our colleague and friend Steve did. This is far too great of a cost to our nation and our citizens, and we are within reach of a solution. We look forward to working with the committee to help create the right policy framework to bring this life-saving technology to our roads as quickly and safely as possible.

Thank you for your time today and I look forward to answering any questions that the members of the committee might have.