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May 12, 2026

The Honorable Jesse Bjorkman, Chair
The Honorable Löki Tobin, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Transportation
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: HB 217 An Act regulating autonomous vehicles.

Dear Chair Bjorkman, Vice-Chair Tobin and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share TechNet's perspective on HB 217 and the regulation of autonomous vehicles.

TechNet is a national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and state level. Our diverse membership includes companies ranging from startups to some of the world's most recognized brands, representing more than five million employees across information technology, e-commerce, advanced energy, cybersecurity, transportation, and finance.

Safety is the top priority for TechNet and our members when it comes to the deployment of autonomous vehicles (Avs). Our members invest heavily in testing, monitoring, and compliance to ensure their vehicles meet or exceed all applicable federal safety standards. We share the Committee's commitment to protecting Alaskans and ensuring that new technologies are introduced responsibly.

While we appreciate the intent of HB 217 to promote safety, we believe the bill would have the opposite effect by limiting the use of safe, proven AV technology on Alaska's roads. Additionally, we are concerned that certain provisions would have the unintended effect of preventing autonomous vehicles from operating in Alaska altogether. Clearly, Alaska highways are different than the highways in the lower-48. HB 217 would prevent companies from even working to make AVs workable in Alaska not just the commercial vehicles but also likely passenger vehicles.

The requirement that an interstate commerce autonomous vehicle include a "human safety operator" is inconsistent with how this technology is designed and currently deployed. Autonomous commercial vehicles are already operating safely in other parts of the country without an onboard driver, under existing federal oversight.

Autonomous commercial vehicles have the potential to provide meaningful benefits to Alaska. With ongoing workforce shortages in the trucking industry, this technology could help support more reliable delivery of goods across the state, particularly in hard-to-reach and remote regions. It could also create new opportunities in fleet management, logistics,

maintenance, infrastructure support, and related technology services, while strengthening Alaska's broader transportation network.

At the same time, the Committee should recognize that HB 217 would effectively prohibit the testing and eventual deployment of autonomous commercial vehicles in Alaska. As drafted, the bill would close the door on the opportunity before the technology has the chance to be evaluated or adapted for Alaska's unique conditions. While Alaska's geography and road conditions present distinct challenges, those challenges are precisely why companies should have the ability to test and determine how this technology could safely operate in the state.

The economic implications of this approach should not be overlooked. Autonomous commercial vehicle technology is increasingly being viewed across the country as part of the future of freight movement and supply chain reliability. For a state like Alaska, where transportation access is critical and many communities depend on long and complex supply routes, limiting the ability to even explore these technologies could place the state at a competitive disadvantage over time.

Importantly, legislatures across the country have considered similar proposals, and states have ultimately chosen not to prohibit autonomous vehicle testing and deployment outright. Policymakers in other states have recognized that while strong safety standards and oversight are necessary, completely foreclosing innovation before it develops could prevent their states from benefiting from future economic investment, transportation efficiencies, and infrastructure opportunities. Even states that have taken a cautious regulatory approach continue to allow testing and development under structured oversight frameworks.

TechNet and our members strongly support thoughtful, data-driven policymaking that prioritizes safety while still allowing innovation to develop responsibly. We would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Committee, regulators, and other stakeholders to develop a framework that ensures strong oversight without creating de facto prohibitions on autonomous vehicles in Alaska.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee not to advance HB 217 in its current form and instead consider alternative approaches that promote both safety and opportunity for Alaska.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rose Feliciano
Executive Director
Washington + Northwest

CHAMBER OF PROGRESS

May 5, 2026

The Honorable Jesse Bjorkman
Co-Chair
Senate Committee on Transportation
Room 427, State Capitol
120 Fourth Street
Juneau, AK 99801

The Honorable Loki Tobin
Co-Chair
Senate Committee on Transportation
Room 115, State Capitol
120 Fourth Street
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Oppose HB 217 - "*Autonomous Vehicle Regulations*"

Dear Chair Bjorkman, Chair Tobin, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Chamber of Progress – a tech industry association supporting public policies to build a more inclusive society in which all people benefit from technological advancements – I respectfully urge you to **oppose HB 217**.

This bill will not make Alaska's roads safer. It will lock the state into a human-driver status quo that already costs Alaskans their lives each year, while shutting the door on safer transportation, lower freight costs, greater mobility for seniors and Alaskans with disabilities, as well as stifle the development of a new industry that could create jobs and economic opportunities.

The permanent in-vehicle operator mandate and the complete absence of any pathway for commercial deployment will amount to an outright ban, preventing autonomous vehicles (AVs) from ever operating in Alaska. By hard-coding a human driver requirement into every commercial AV operation, with no pilot program, no permit pathway, and no sunset clause, HB 217 would effectively ban the commercial deployment of a technology that is already operating safely at scale in other states – a decision that will have real consequences for safety, cost of living, and access to mobility.

Alaska should reject permanent barriers to autonomous vehicle deployment

Alaska should not move forward with HB 217. The bill locks Alaska into a regulatory framework that bears no relationship to how AV technology actually works today and shuts down the path to commercial deployment.

Autonomous vehicles are already providing over half a million paid rides each week in U.S. cities.[1] HB 217 would keep Alaska stuck in a pre-deployment mindset, cutting Alaskans off from safety improvements and cost savings that residents in other states are already experiencing today.

Rather than allowing a performance-based path to deployment, HB 217 hard-codes barriers that limit competition and delay access to a technology already in daily commercial use elsewhere. Other states are already moving forward: California recently adopted new regulations that pave the way for autonomous trucks to test and deploy statewide.[2] Montana enacted an AV framework in 2025,[3] Pennsylvania adopted performance-based guidelines for driverless operation in 2024,[4] Louisiana authorized driverless commercial truck operations in 2019.[5] **Alaska risks becoming an outlier, one of the only states to entirely block itself from this technology.**

AVs can make Alaska's uniquely dangerous roads safer

Alaska's roads pose hazards unlike anywhere else in the country. For example, the state experiences more than 800 moose vehicle collisions each year, the highest number in North America, accounting for over 20% of rural crashes.[6] Alaska also faces prolonged seasonal darkness, icy road surfaces, and an impaired driving rate that contributes to more than one-third of traffic fatalities.[7]

These are precisely the kinds of conditions where advanced vehicle technology can outperform human perception. Autonomous vehicle sensor systems can detect obstacles hundreds of meters away,[8] even in low-light conditions. Lidar, a core component of these systems, can see farther than the human eye or conventional cameras in fog.[9] The technology is also evolving quickly. Waymo's sixth-generation autonomous platform, launched in February 2026, is designed with expanded capabilities

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[1] Kirsten Korosec. "Waymo's skyrocketing ridership in one chart." *TechCrunch*, Mar. 27, 2026. https://techcrunch.com/2026/03/27/waymo-skyrocketing-ridership-in-one-chart/

[2] California Department of Motor Vehicles. "New Autonomous Vehicle Regulations Strengthen Oversight and Enforcement, Authorize Trucks and Transit." Apr. 28, 2026. https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/news-and-media/new-autonomous-vehicle-regulations-strengthen-oversight-and-enforcement-authorize-trucks-and-transit/

[3] Montana State Legislature. *SB 67*. 2025. https://legiscan.com/MT/bill/SB67/2025

[4] Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. "PennDOT Adopts New Automated Vehicle Guidelines for Driverless Operation." Oct. 23, 2024. https://www.pa.gov/agencies/penndot/news-and-media/newsroom/statewide/2024/penndot-adopts-new-automated-vehicle-guidelines-for-driverless-operation

[5] "Louisiana's Autonomous Truck Rules Will Take Effect Aug. 1." *Transport Topics*, 2025. https://www.ttnews.com/articles/louisianas-autonomous-truck-rules-will-take-effect-aug-1

[6] Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities. *Moose-Vehicle Study*.https://dot.alaska.gov/stwddes/dcstraffic/assets/pdf/misc/moosestudy.pdf

[7] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Alaska FY2024-2026 Highway Safety Plan*.https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2024-01/AK_FY24-26HSP-tag.pdf

[8] Aurora. "Detecting a pedestrian running across the highway." https://aurora.tech/capabilities/detecting-a-pedestrian-running-across-the-highway

[9] University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies. "Can Automated Vehicles 'See' in Minnesota? Ambient Particle Effects on LiDAR." Apr., 2023. https://www.cts.umn.edu/news/2023/april/lidar

for extreme winter environments, with upgraded sensors and integrated cleaning systems designed to maintain performance in snow and ice.[10]

While Alaska's overall traffic fatalities declined 27% from 2022 to 2023, 60 Alaskans still lost their lives on the road that year, many of which are entirely preventable and can be attributed to driving impaired, distracted, or fatigued.[11] Early data from Anchorage suggests the decline may not hold, with fatal crashes up 93% and pedestrian deaths up 150 percent in 2024.[12] These sharp reversals point to persistent safety challenges rather than lasting improvement.

Research shows that at least 90% of car crashes are caused by human error.[13] Across more than 127 million rider-only miles in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Austin, autonomous ridesharing services recorded 92% fewer serious or fatal crashes, 82% fewer airbag-deploying crashes, and 81% fewer injury crashes than human drivers.[14] Every year this bill delays deployment is another year Alaska accepts preventable traffic crashes and deaths.

AVs will expand transportation options for underserved communities

Even in Alaska's road-connected areas, public transportation is virtually nonexistent outside Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. For Alaskans in rural areas who cannot drive, whether because of age, disability, or cost, reliable transportation is virtually inaccessible.

For the 13.2% of Alaskans living with a disability, this lack of transit makes it difficult to reach jobs, medical appointments, and basic services.[15] Rural ADA paratransit is effectively unavailable for most Alaskans, since the service is typically required only within three-quarters of a mile of a fixed transit route.[16] **AVs could improve paratransit by making it more affordable and providing curb-to-curb service on demand.**[17] A study by the National Disability Institute found that widespread AV adoption could connect people with disabilities to over 4 million jobs.[18]

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[10] Waymo. "Beginning fully autonomous operations with the 6th-generation Waymo Driver." Feb., 2026. https://waymo.com/blog/2026/02/ro-on-6th-gen-waymo-driver

[11] Federal Highway Administration. *State Highway Safety Report 2023 - Alaska*.https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tpm/reporting/state/safety.cfm?state=Alaska

[12] Alaska's News Source. "Anchorage Police Department details 2024 traffic fatality increase." Aug. 6, 2025. https://www.alaskasnewssource.com/2025/08/06/anchorage-police-department-details-2024-traffic-fatality-increas/

[13] Santokh Singh. *Critical Reasons for Crashes Investigated in the National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey*. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Feb., 2015. https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812115

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[16] National RTAP. *ADA Toolkit for Rural Transit*.https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/ADA-Toolkit/Welcome

[17] Olivia Fiol and Sophia Weng. "Shared Autonomous Vehicles Could Improve Transit Access for People with Disabilities If Regulated Appropriately." *Urban Wire*, Oct. 4, 2022. https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/shared-autonomous-vehicles-could-improve-transit-access-people-disabilities-if-regulated

[18] Dominic Modicamore et al. *Economic Impacts of Removing Transportation Barriers to Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Through Autonomous Vehicle Adoption*. National Disability Institute and ICF, Dec. 30, 2022.

Alaska's senior population has doubled since 2010 to over 107,000 residents, and the 85-and-older cohort is projected to grow 500% by 2050.[19] **Many seniors become isolated when they can no longer drive, particularly during Alaska's long, dark winters, and some are forced to relocate solely because they cannot get around.** In areas without public transit, autonomous vehicles could fill that gap and connect residents to mobility hubs.[20] By mandating a human driver in every commercial AV, HB 217 would shut the door on these benefits for the Alaskans who need them most.

AV trucking can make Alaska's freight network safer and more affordable

No state depends more on its freight network than Alaska. 95% of Alaska's food is imported from outside the state at a cost of roughly $2 billion per year.[21] Those costs hit hardest in remote communities: a basket of groceries in a village like Unalakleet costs nearly 80% more than in Anchorage.[22] One in nine Alaskans struggles with hunger, with the rate twice as high in rural and Alaska Native communities.[23]

The trucking industry that moves this freight is in crisis. Alaska DOT and the University of Alaska Anchorage identified truck drivers as a "top occupation of concern," with a five-year retention rate of just 30% across transportation priority occupations.[24] Companies are paying $95,000 to $170,000 per year and still cannot fill positions from the in-state labor pool.[25] Nationally, the trucking industry faces 90% annual turnover among large truckload carriers and a projected 160,000-driver shortage by 2028,[26] costing the freight industry $95.5 million weekly.[27]

Around 5,500 people were killed in crashes involving large trucks nationwide in 2023, about 15 people a day, and most of these incidents were due to human error.[28] **In the first**

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https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ndi-economicimpactsofremovingtransportationbarriers.pdf

[19] Alaska Commission on Aging. *Senior Snapshot 2024*. 2024. https://www.akleg.gov/basis/get_documents.asp?session=33&docid=30786

[20] Jonathan Andrews. *How AVs Are Transforming Public Transportation*. Cities Today, 2023. https://media.maymobility.com/May-Mobility-Cities-Today-AVs-Transforming-Public-Transportation-Case-Study.pdf

[21] "Alaska's Vulnerable Food Supply System." *Country Journal*, Sep., 2025. https://www.countryjournal2020.com/2025/09/alaskas-vulnerable-food-supply-system.html

[22] "The Shocking Price of Groceries in Rural Alaska." *The New Republic*, 2024. https://newrepublic.com/article/202481/shocking-price-groceries-rural-alaska

[23] U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Critical Need to Increase Food Security in Rural Alaska." Sep. 20, 2023. https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2023/09/20/critical-need-increase-food-security-rural-alaska

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[25] "Alaskan Trucking Fleets Promise $150K Salaries Amid Drilling Boom." *FreightWaves*,https://www.freightwaves.com/news/alaskan-trucking-fleets-promise-150k-driver-salaries-amid-drilling-boom

[26] American Trucking Associations. *ATA Driver Shortage Report and Forecast*. Jul., 2019. https://www.trucking.org/news-insights/ata-releases-updated-driver-shortage-report-and-forecast

[27] Pamella De Leon. "Report shows truck driver shortage costs freight industry $95.5 million weekly." *Commercial Carrier Journal*, Feb. 10, 2025. https://www.ccjdigital.com/business/article/15736724/truck-driver-shortage-costs-freight-industry-955-million-weekly

[28] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2023*.https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/813705

half of 2023, Alaska had the highest large-truck crash fatality rate in the country, the only state exceeding 10%.[29] AV commercial trucks can detect hazards hundreds of meters away, even at night,[30] and have already logged over 100,000 driverless miles with zero safety incidents.[31]

By delaying the development and deployment of autonomous freight, HB 217 would lock Alaska into an expensive, fragile, and unsafe supply chain with no path forward, keeping prices high and risks elevated for families across the state. AV freight operations reduce delays and deadhead miles,[32] cutting the logistics costs that inflate the price of groceries and everyday goods for Alaskans.

The AV industry will create jobs and economic opportunity

Chamber of Progress' research found that nationwide, replacing 13% of vehicles on the road with AVs over the next 15 years **could create 455,000 jobs**.[33] These positions range from software engineers and system operators to vehicle inspectors and maintenance technicians.

Importantly, these are well-paying jobs. Our report found that 82% of AV-related roles pay above the national median wage, and many do not require a college degree.[34] Workers in production, maintenance, and repair can often enter with a high school diploma or postsecondary certificate and still earn middle-class wages, with demand for skilled technicians growing as AV fleets expand.

This matters for Alaska in particular. The state's working-age population has fallen by more than 30,000 people since 2013, and Alaska has experienced more than a decade of consecutive net population outflows.[35] AV deployment – which requires ongoing human oversight in operations, maintenance, and fleet management – could help reverse that trend by creating steady, local careers that give Alaskans a reason to stay.[36] HB 217 shuts down that opportunity before it can take root.

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[29] Federal Highway Administration. *Alaska HSIP Annual Report 2023*.https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2024-04/AK%20HSIP%2012-18-23.pdf
[30] Aurora. "Detecting a pedestrian running across the highway."https://aurora.tech/capabilities/detecting-a-pedestrian-running-across-the-highway
[31] ACT News. "Aurora Expands Driverless Operations, Surpasses 100,000 Miles as It Scales Toward 2026." Nov. 3, 2025. https://www.act-news.com/news/aurora-expands-driverless-operations/
[32]Truckstop. "Deadhead Miles: Definition, Costs and How to Avoid Them." May 28, 2025. https://truckstop.com/blog/deadhead-miles/
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[35] Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. "The Decline in Working-Age Alaskans." *Alaska Economic Trends*, Mar., 2023. https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/trends-articles/2023/03/the-decline-in-working-age-alaskans
[36] April Horency. "Systems Engineering Team Reveals How Automated Vehicles Are Transforming Labor in Taxi Services." George Washington University School of Engineering, Nov. 17, 2023. https://engineering.gwu.edu/systems-engineering-team-reveals-how-automated-vehicles-are-transforming-labor-taxi-services

AVs support cleaner transportation

Autonomous vehicles can be up to 20% more fuel efficient than human-driven vehicles because they are programmed to follow traffic rules and maintain steady speeds.[37] Most AVs are also expected to be electric, making them cleaner than vehicles with internal combustion engines.[38] **Transportation accounts for roughly a third of Alaska's CO_2 emissions, the state's second-largest emitting sector.**[39] AV deployment can help Anchorage work toward its goal of reducing emissions 80% by 2050.[40] By blocking deployment, this bill delays meaningful progress toward those targets.

The restrictions HB 217 places on autonomous vehicles are unnecessary and would delay a technology that is already saving lives elsewhere. Alaska's roads are among the most dangerous in the country, its communities pay some of the highest freight costs, and its residents face transportation gaps that AVs are well-suited to address. Other states have already put frameworks in place that allow safe AV operations while maintaining oversight. **This bill does not regulate deployment – it prevents it**.

We respectfully urge you to oppose HB 217.

Sincerely,

Robert Singleton
Senior Director of Policy and Public Affairs, California and US West

[37] Southwest Research Institute. "SwRI Achieves 20% Improvement in Vehicle Fuel Efficiency With Connectivity, Automation." Oct. 6, 2020. https://www.swri.org/newsroom/press-releases/swri-achieves-20-improvement-vehicle-fuel-efficiency-connectivity-automation
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[39] Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. *Alaska Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory 1990-2020*. 2023. https://dec.alaska.gov/media/flsblsbv/1990-2020-alaska-greenhouse-gas-inventory-final5232023.pdf
[40] Municipality of Anchorage. *Resilient Anchorage Climate Action Plan*.https://www.muni.org/Departments/Mayor/AWARE/ResilientAnchorage/pages/climateactionplan.aspx

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Testimony from:
Steven Greenhut, Western Region Director, R Street Institute

OPPOSITION to House Bill 217: "An Act regulating autonomous vehicles; and providing for an effective date."

May 12, 2026

Senate Transportation Committee

Chairman Bjorkman and members of the committee,

My name is Steven Greenhut. I am Western region director for the R Street Institute, a free-market think tank that works on a variety of issues, including ones related to autonomous vehicles and other technologies. The institute opposes House Bill 217, which would forbid AVs from engaging in "the transport of interstate commerce, goods or passengers" without a human operator. This is one of the most expansive bans introduced anywhere in the United States, as it halts all driverless operations for commercial vehicles including driverless operation of robotaxis.

This is a troubling idea that would squelch a technology that offers not only great potential for improving transportation choices for Alaskans — but for improving road safety. Although the concept of driverless cars is hard to wrap one's head around, the technology already is operating in a variety of states. There's significant enough data to analyze its potential. And it's clear that robots are safer drivers than human beings. Robots are not distracted by cellphones, don't use intoxicating substances and are programmed to follow the traffic rules. Plus the technology is improving rapidly.

Research from Swiss Re, a major reinsurance company, evaluates the safety of Waymo self-driving cars compared to vehicles driven by human drivers — based on 500,000 insurance claims. Per its 2024 report, autonomous vehicles showed "an 88% reduction in property damage claims and 92% reduction in bodily injury claims. In real numbers, across 25.3 million miles, the Waymo driver was involved in just nine property damage claims and two bodily injury claims."

Like with any technology, AVs have had some hiccups — such as stalled vehicles in San Francisco following a power outage. But in that case, the company developed a quick and successful fix. However, Alaska lawmakers shouldn't let some of the industry's growing pains — or the pleas of those who would squelch this promising technology for short-sighted job-protection reasons — detract from its vast life-saving potential. There are more than 37,000 annual motor-vehicle fatalities in the United States each

year, with 67 of them in Alaska last year. Reason Foundation explains that Alaska has the worst rural highway fatality rate in the country, so the status quo isn't working.

Obviously, requiring a human driver defeats the purpose of the technology. Supporters point to Alaska's snowy road conditions as a rationale for limiting AVs on the state's roads and note that most AV operations are focused on warm-weather locales. However, AV companies are rapidly improving their winter-weather capabilities. As the Chamber of Progress noted, Alaska's particular road conditions — winter weather, fog, prolonged darkness, wild animals — "are precisely the kinds of conditions where advanced vehicle technology can outperform human perception."

We urge the committee to reject House Bill 217.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Steven Greenhut
Western Region Director
R Street Institute
sgreenhut@rstreet.org

May 5, 2026

The Honorable Jesse Bjorkman, Chair
The Honorable Löki Tobin, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Transportation
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: HB 217 An Act regulating autonomous vehicles

Dear Chair Bjorkman and members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

Kodiak AI writes to express our strong opposition to HB 217, which would ban fully autonomous vehicle (AV) operations in Alaska. While we understand and respect the legislature's interest in promoting safety on Alaska highways, we believe HB 217 would have the opposite effect, by preventing Alaskans from accessing the potential lifesaving benefits of autonomous technology.

Kodiak is developing an industry-leading AI-powered technology stack purpose-built for driverless trucks. The company delivers freight daily for its customers across the South using its autonomous technology. As of the end of 2025, the Company operates a fleet of 20 fully driverless trucks in West Texas's Permian Basin, supporting the Texas energy industry in one of the most difficult driving environments in the United States. Kodiak also leverages its commercial self-driving software to develop, test and deploy autonomous vehicle capabilities for the U.S. Department of Defense. Since 2019, Kodiak has safely delivered freight across the Southeast and Texas for major commercial partners like JB Hunt, IKEA, and Werner Enterprises. To date, we have completed over 10,000 customer deliveries and logged more than 3 million autonomous miles with a stellar safety record—a distance equivalent to four lifetimes of driving for the average American.

This legislation represents a significant departure from the national consensus around emerging AV technologies. Indeed, HB 217 would make Alaska the first and only state in the nation to enact a total ban on autonomous trucks. In fact, over 25 states—including Texas, California, Massachusetts, and Florida—have considered similar restrictions in recent years: all have rejected them, after assessing the AV industry's impressive safety record.

The primary benefit of our technology is the enhancement of road safety. Autonomous trucks do not speed, they do get tired or check their phones, and they are capable of monitoring weather and traffic patterns with a degree of consistency that human drivers cannot replicate.

HB 217 would not only prevent Alaskans from benefiting from these safety advancements, but would also shut the door on critical economic opportunities. Kodiak is already proving the viability of driverless technology in the rugged environment of the Permian, which shares many commonalities with Alaska: remote operating conditions, difficult terrain,

and an acute lack of drivers. These experiences and capabilities have direct applications for Alaska's North Slope.

Furthermore, it is essential to clarify that "driverless" does not mean "humanless." According to the Alaska Trucking Association's 2025 Fast Facts, the qualified driver shortage remains the second most pressing issue facing the state's trucking industry. Autonomous technology is a vital supplement—not a replacement—for a workforce currently struggling with annual turnover rates between 70% and 100%. By integrating autonomous fleets, Alaska can address this shortage while creating high-tech jobs in mechanics, fleet support, dispatch, and operations. Licensed CDL drivers who wish to continue their careers until retirement will continue to have that opportunity, as autonomy will coexist with traditional trucking to meet growing freight demands.

Beyond the commercial sector, this technology is a matter of national security. Kodiak is currently on its third contract with the Pentagon, working alongside major defense manufacturers like General Dynamics Land Systems and Textron to save the lives of American servicemembers through autonomous ground vehicle technology. A state-level ban on this technology would stifle the very innovation that the U.S. military relies upon to protect our troops.

In conclusion, HB 217 would fully prohibit the testing and deployment of autonomous trucks and robotaxis, ultimately leading to increased costs and diminished safety for Alaska's carriers and shippers. Instead of a ban, we urge the Committee to consider creating a pathway for safe, deliberate deployment by leveraging regulatory concepts already proven in 25 other states. Kodiak stands ready to partner with the State of Alaska to engage in meaningful workforce development and ensure that Alaskans have access to the safest, most advanced transportation technologies available.

Sincerely,

Daniel Goff
Vice President of External Affairs
Kodiak AI, Inc.

May 5, 2026

Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
State Capitol Room 427
Juneau AK, 99801
Phone: 907-465-2828

Dear Chair Bjorkman and members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

The undersigned organizations write to express strong opposition to HB 217, which would effectively ban autonomous vehicles ("AVs") in Alaska by requiring a human observer to be present in all AVs operated for commercial use. Though the bill applies only to vehicles registered in Alaska, "every vehicle in Alaska is required to be registered unless specifically exempted by law." As a result, the bill would have a sweeping impact. By requiring all AVs operating commercially to have a human observer present in the vehicle, the bill would prevent AV operators from bringing the many benefits of AV technology to Alaska. We therefore respectfully encourage the Committee to **vote against HB 217**.

HB 217 would impose a permanent ban on the commercial operation of autonomous vehicles in Alaska. Requiring a human observer in all AVs operated for commercial use would effectively ban commercial AV operations in Alaska in perpetuity. This requirement would apply to all such vehicles registered in the state, which could effectively capture all AVs operating in Alaska. For example, an autonomous truck generally must be registered in the state to operate because Alaska does not participate in the International Registration Plan ("IRP"), a reciprocity agreement for commercial motor vehicles that enables seamless operation in multiple states without in-state registration. As a result, autonomous trucks typically would maintain an Alaskan registration to operate in the state, including when engaging in interstate commerce. Similarly, this restriction would effectively ban the deployment of driverless ridehailing services as well, a move that could disproportionately impact vulnerable populations—including individuals with disabilities and older adults—who stand to benefit most from the increased independence and specialized mobility that fully autonomous technology provides. Therefore, by requiring AVs registered in the state to have a human observer in the vehicle, this bill would prohibit AV operations in Alaska.

HB 217 would cause Alaska to fall behind other states on AV innovation. The majority of states recognize the many benefits of AVs and authorize driverless AV operations, including for commercial use. No

state that authorizes AV deployment requires a human observer to remain in the vehicle. If Alaska were to move forward with this bill, it would become a national outlier.
AVs will support road safety. AVs have tremendous safety, mobility, and efficiency benefits, and the ongoing deployment of AVs is demonstrating how AVs will save lives and change the way we move. AV technology has been tested and deployed in states across the country and maintains an incredible safety record. Estimates from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicate that nearly 40,000 traffic deaths occurred in 2024, revealing a pattern of increasingly unsafe driving that is occurring across the country and reflecting an unacceptable status quo when it comes to safety on our roadways. Human behavior is a contributing factor to the overwhelming majority of crashes. Alaska should continue supporting AV operation because AVs are positioned to combat the trend of unsafe driving that has persisted for years on U.S. roads. AVs have unparalleled visibility of the world around them as a result of advanced technologies that work in concert to form the automated driving system. The combination of these systems leads to quicker decisions with many more inputs than a human driver. AVs also have a 360-degree field of vision which can detect, track, and react to objects and people even when they are hidden from human perception due to vehicles, buildings, and other obstructions. Importantly, unlike human drivers, AVs do not drive drunk, text while driving, fall asleep at the wheel, or recklessly speed.

AVs will create new, high-quality jobs. The AV industry is also leveraging the existing workforce to create new roles for different education and skill levels. Many of the jobs created do not require a college degree, such as service technicians, remote assistance operators, mapping data collectors, delivery packers, and more. Workers with experience in the trucking industry specifically, particularly as truck drivers, offer valuable skills to AV trucking employers. In addition, according to a study funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration, automating long-haul trucking will spur $111 billion in aggregate investment spending across the U.S. economy, increase total U.S. employment by 26,400 to 35,100 jobs per year on average, and raise annual earnings for all U.S. workers.

AVs will usher in a new era of mobility that will make Alaska's transportation system safer and more efficient. We strongly believe Alaska should support safety-enhancing policies without foreclosing a future with AVs. For the reasons described above, we respectfully strongly oppose HB 217.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Automotive Innovation - Curt Augustine

Aurora - Sydnee Journel

Autonomous Vehicle Industry Association - Jeff Farrah

Bot Auto - Brian Moore

Chamber of Progress - Robert Singleton

Kodiak - Daniel Goff

1 Alaska Department of Motor Vehicles, General Vehicle Registration, available at https://dmv.alaska.gov/vehicle-services/general-vehicle-registration/ (last visited May 4, 2026).

Gatik - Rich Steiner

Stack AV - Elizabeth Fishback

TechNet - Rose Feliciano

Tesla - Noelani Derrickson

Volvo - Aravind Kailas

Waabi - Katie Carmichael

Waymo - Annabel Chang

1 Alaska Department of Motor Vehicles, General Vehicle Registration, available at https://dmv.alaska.gov/vehicle-services/general-vehicle-registration/ (last visited May 4, 2026).

From: Dixie Banner
To: Senate Transportation Committee
Subject: No HB217
Date: Sunday, May 10, 2026 9:18:14 PM
Attachments: IMG_7466.PNG

We do not need auto pilot cars - we want you to spend your time figuring a way to protect our children and our families! This Bill is a waste of your time! Spend the money for public transportation

Sent from my iPhone