

On behalf of ATU Local 1005, which represents 2,700 public transit workers across Minnesota, including bus drivers, light rail operators, and other frontline transit employees who keep our transportation system running every day, we write to express our concerns regarding SF4010 / HF3513, legislation that would explicitly authorize expanded use of autonomous vehicles on Minnesota's roads.

As a union of transit workers, we are not opposed to innovation or new technology. Our members have adapted to decades of technological change in the workplace. However, allowing widespread deployment of autonomous vehicles before we fully understand the impacts on public safety, infrastructure, and working people is premature.

Public transportation workers are particularly concerned that this legislation opens the door to automation within our industry. Many of our members are already working under intense pressure due to workforce shortages, long hours, and the growing complexity of the job. Transit operators are not simply drivers, they are safety professionals, first responders, and caretakers for riders, including seniors, people with disabilities, and passengers leaving medical appointments.

Our members are also concerned about how autonomous vehicles may interact with existing transit routes in dense metropolitan areas, potentially creating new delays or disruptions to service. Numerous publicly available examples have shown driverless vehicles malfunctioning or blocking traffic.

Transit workers already navigate some of the most challenging working conditions imaginable, serving the public through extreme winter weather while dealing with issues like addiction, mental health crises, and violence on buses and trains. They perform this work with professionalism and dedication every day, helping keep our communities moving.

Given these realities, we believe the legislature should pursue a more measured and common-sense approach. Before making sweeping changes to Minnesota's transportation system, lawmakers should take the time to fully study the impacts autonomous vehicles may have on public safety, infrastructure, and the transportation workforce.

Transit workers and the riding public deserve a thoughtful and transparent process that ensures new technology strengthens our transportation system rather than undermining it.

We urge you to consider common-sense proposals that allow time to study these impacts before moving forward with legislation such as SF4010 / HF3513.

Sincerely,  
David Stiggers