

Senate Transportation Committee Hearing  
Platooning and Automated Work Zone Vehicles Legislation

S.B. 1096 / H.B. 1958

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Major James Basinger  
Director, Bureau of Patrol  
Pennsylvania State Police

Good morning, Chairmen Rafferty and Sabatina and Committee members. I am Major James Basinger, Director of the Bureau of Patrol, Pennsylvania State Police (PSP). With me today is Captain Robert Krol, Assistant Director of the Bureau of Patrol. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony this morning on PSP's perspective regarding the proposed legislation for the platooning of highly automated vehicles (HAVs) in the Commonwealth.

Ensuring highway safety is a core function of policing. The PSP and municipal police officers from all across the Commonwealth work hard every day enforcing traffic laws to prevent crashes and improve highway safety. The duty to enforce the law is an obligation taken very seriously by all police officers. Today's hearing on Senate Bill 1096 and House Bill 1958 to regulate the practice of platooning is an important step forward to ensuring that the Commonwealth's law enforcement officers are provided with the statutory authority they need in order to keep our highways safe. Currently there are no laws that enable, prohibit or regulate platooning on Commonwealth highways. The absence of legislation creates an enforcement void that our existing statutes do not address. Establishing a legal framework is necessary for the safe and responsible practice of platooning on our highways both now and into the future.

Recognizing that this rapidly evolving industry will reach Pennsylvania highways, the Department of Transportation (PennDOT) took the initiative to establish an Autonomous Vehicle Task Force. At the invitation of PennDOT, PSP joined with many other public and private stakeholders to formulate recommendations to develop policies which would

regulate the testing of HAVs. The Task Force met monthly and worked diligently toward this goal. Although comprised of a variety of different stakeholders, each with their own separate interests, the group never lost sight that public safety was paramount and had to remain the focal point of all the policy recommendations. Although the initial recommendations have been completed, the work of the Task Force will continue into the future as this new and innovative technology evolves.

The PSP recognizes that platooning addresses the issues of safety and fuel usage. Simultaneous braking between the platooning vehicles virtually eliminates reaction time which improves safety. Following closely reduces aerodynamic drag which improves fuel economy and emissions. Although fuel economy, emissions, and traffic congestion are very significant issues, it's imperative that any program instituted in Pennsylvania be conducted with the utmost levels of safety in mind.

The PSP recommends that the power units of the platooning vehicles be labelled or marked with lettering which would be clearly visible to law enforcement officers conducting traffic enforcement. This would alert the officer to the fact that the vehicles were platooning and not violating Title 75 Section 3310, Following Too Closely. PSP recommends the visual identifiers be similar to those used on school buses or oversized loads. The visual identifiers should be placed on the front and sides of the power unit as these are locations where law enforcement officers are accustomed to looking for such designations. The marking requirements should address a minimum height and be all capital block-style lettering of a contrasting color to the background on which it is placed.

PSP again points to the current standards for school bus markings which states, "Every school bus body shall bear the words "SCHOOL BUS" in black letters at least 8 inches high on both the front and the rear of the body, or on signs attached thereto. Lettering shall be placed as high as possible without impairment of its visibility." Unlike the school bus standards, the PSP further recommends the labels be placed on the sides of the power units which would allow law enforcement officers the ability to identify platooning vehicles while observing traffic flow from a position perpendicular to the roadway.

Proponents of platooning indicate the process works best on relatively flat, divided highways outside of populated areas. Pennsylvania's topography, which may be described as mountainous, may pose a challenge to platooning in areas with steep grades and winding roads. The terrain and safety of the public must be considered when legislation is formulated.

As this bill limits platooning to limited access highways or interstate highways, the legislation may also need to address entering and exiting the highway via the acceleration and deceleration lanes. Traffic merging on and off the highways can be difficult for one vehicle, let alone three vehicles.

We live in an interesting and exciting time in history. While new and innovative technologies continue to provide new opportunities that were difficult to conceptualize just a few years ago, they also bring about many new challenges. No matter what those challenges may be the PSP remain committed to protecting and serving the citizens and

visitors of this Commonwealth just as they have since 1905. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our perspective and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.