CHAMBER OF PROGRESS

March 18, 2026

The Honorable Meg Froelich
Chair, House Committee on Transportation, Housing and Local Government
Room 307, Colorado State Capitol
200 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1784

RE: Oppose HB26-1286

Dear Chair Froelich and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Chamber of Progress, a tech industry association supporting public policies to build a society in which all people benefit from technological advances, I **respectfully urge you to oppose HB26-1286.** If passed, this bill would effectively prevent the meaningful deployment of autonomous trucking in Colorado by sending a ballot measure that requires a human commercial driver's license (CDL) holder to be physically present in any autonomous commercial vehicle on a highway.

Chamber of Progress supports the development and deployment of autonomous vehicles because they directly advance core public interests. Autonomous trucking has the potential to reduce deadly crashes, strengthen supply chains, reduce harmful emissions, and lower the cost of moving goods at a time when reliability and affordability matter more than ever. It can also expand economic opportunity by creating new, high-quality jobs and helping the United States remain globally competitive in transportation and logistics. **By blocking this technology, the measures in HB26-1286 would deny Coloradans these concrete safety and economic benefits and put Colorado on the sidelines of a critical innovation.**

Technical transportation policy does not belong on the ballot

We encourage the committee to be cautious about delegating complex safety and transportation regulation to a yes or no vote. Ballot measures tend to lock in rigid mandates and limit Colorado's legislature from the ability to respond to new evidence, federal guidance, or implementation lessons. Ballot measures deviate from how Colorado has historically advanced highway safety. **Core frameworks, such as seat belt and child restraint requirements, were enacted through deliberative lawmaking informed by crash data, medical expertise, and enforceability – not statewide initiatives**.

Transportation policy is best developed through the legislature's expert, evidence-driven process, which includes stakeholder engagement, consultation with agencies like Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), and the flexibility to update rules as technology and safety data evolve. Putting a technical motor-vehicle operating standard on the ballot bypasses this process.

Autonomous trucks can make Colorado roads safer for everyone

Safety is an urgent reason to act. Even with recent progress, nearly 40,000 people were killed on U.S. roads in 2024.[1] In 2023, crashes involving large trucks killed more than 15 people every day.[2] **According to CDOT's 2024 crash data, Colorado recorded a total of 4,715 accidents involving medium and heavy trucks, leading to 88 fatalities and left 1,153 individuals injured, many of which were due to human error or negligence.**[3] Luckily, autonomous trucks do not suffer from fatigue, distraction, or impairment. Early deployments are already proving this point.

Aurora, a U.S.-based autonomous trucking company, is already demonstrating the real-world potential of these safety gains. As of October 2025, the company has logged more than 100,000 driverless miles with a perfect safety record[4] under a comprehensive safety case that combines millions of virtual simulations with extensive closed-course and on-road testing.[5] In critical scenarios, autonomous trucks outperform human drivers. For example, Aurora's trucks can detect hazards hundreds of meters away seconds before the naked eye, even at night.[6] Taken together, these results show that autonomous trucking can be deployed carefully and responsibly, improving road safety rather than undermining it.

Autonomous trucking offers safety even in Colorado's toughest conditions

Autonomous trucks are also built to handle adverse weather more consistently than human drivers because they operate only within a validated Operational Design Domain (ODD) and are engineered to detect deteriorating conditions early, adjust behavior immediately, and, if needed, execute a minimal-risk fallback.[7]

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[1] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "NHTSA Estimates 39,345 Traffic Fatalities in 2024." Apr. 8, 2025. https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-estimates-39345-traffic-fatalities-2024
[2] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2023*. Apr., 2025. https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813705
[3] Colorado Department of Transportation. "Crash Data." *Colorado Department of Transportation*, n.d. https://www.codot.gov/safety/traffic-safety/data-analysis/crash-data
[4] Aurora Innovation, Inc. "Aurora Expands Driverless Trucking Service from Fort Worth to El Paso." Business Wire, Oct. 28, 2025. https://ir.aurora.tech/news-events/press-releases/detail/128/aurora-expands-driverless-trucking-service-from-fort-worth-to-el-paso
[5] Aurora. *Aurora's Safety Case Framework*. Jan., 2023. https://safetycaseframework.aurora.tech/gsn
[6] Aurora. "Detecting a pedestrian running across the highway." https://aurora.tech/capabilities/detecting-a-pedestrian-running-across-the-highway
[7] Aurora Team. "Seeing with Superhuman Clarity: The Physics and Architecture Behind the Aurora Driver's Perception System." *Aurora Newsroom*, Jan. 23, 2026. https://aurora.tech/newsroom/seeing-with-superhuman-clarity-the-physics-and-architecture-behind-the

Autonomous systems combine redundant sensors, including radar and high-resolution cameras, to maintain situational awareness in challenging conditions like dust, fog, and heavy rain.[8] When visibility rapidly decreases, the system can detect the change, slow down for safe stopping, increase following margins, and can alert fleet to avoid the area. If conditions exceed tested safety thresholds, the truck can autonomously enter a minimal-risk condition, such as safely exiting the highway or pulling over, preventing human error under pressure.[9]

Just last month, four people died and 29 people were taken to the hospital as a result of a crash on Interstate 25 near Pueblo, involving 30 vehicles, including six semi-trucks, due to low visibility from dust created by high winds.[10] That type of sudden "brownout" event is exactly where autonomous trucking can help, because these systems use redundant sensors and are designed to slow, increase space, and pull over when conditions exceed validated thresholds.

Autonomous trucks can address labor shortages, bring down the cost of shipping, and create new jobs

Across the country, the trucking industry has experienced extreme turnover and widespread job vacancies, resulting in significant delays to product shipments and rising prices for basic necessities. Though exacerbated by the pandemic, retention has been an issue in trucking for decades. The American Trucking Association reports an annual turnover rate of 90 percent and projects that the nationwide shortage of truckers will double to over 160,000 job vacancies by 2030.[11] **Notably, Colorado has a tough trucking job market, with 34% daily turnover and over a nine-day hiring time, making driver recruitment especially challenging**.[12] Autonomous vehicles offer a solution to help fill the gap left by a strained labor market and high demand for timely shipping.

The crisis facing the trucking industry hasn't just resulted in delayed shipments, but also in higher prices for consumers. To attract and retain drivers, trucking companies have raced to offer increased pay and larger bonuses.[13] The combination of growing labor expenses and rising fuel costs has resulted in a spike in the cost of shipping and a corresponding rise in the price of consumer goods.[14] Those price increases hit

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[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] Associated Press. "4 dead in crashes involving over 30 vehicles in 'brown out' conditions on Colorado interstate." *AP News*, Feb. 17, 2026. https://apnews.com/article/colorado-crash-pileup-blowing-dust-dirt-385bd14a4267365bea8d0d2995d7878d
[11] Michelle Fleury. "How will the US deal with a shortage of 80,000 truckers?" BBC News, Dec. 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/business-59136957
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] Don Lee. "Facing record labor shortages, trucking firms battle fiercely for drivers." LA Times, Dec. 2021. https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-12-07/facing-record-labor-shortages-trucking-firms-battle-fiercely-for-drivers
[14] Alex Longley, Catherine Bosley, and Deirdre Hipwell. "Out-of-Control Shipping Costs Fire Up Prices From Coffee to Toys." Bloomberg Business, Dec. 2021.https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-06-12/out-of-control-shipping-costs-fire-up-prices-from-coffee-to-toys

low-income families the hardest, with the cost of some everyday groceries increasing by as much as 50 percent.[15] Continuous, efficient AV freight operations reduce delays, congestion, and deadhead miles,[16] cutting logistics costs that raise prices for families. With freight running around the clock, AV trucks help stabilize the cost of groceries and everyday goods.

AV trucking also opens new, stable, tech-driven, and localized jobs in remote operations, maintenance, and logistics,[17] with apprenticeship and training programs are already preparing workers for these high-growth careers.[18]

Autonomous trucks can also reduce long-term environmental costs from pollution

While trucks represent only 6% of vehicles on the road, they produce over 35% of transportation-generated nitrous oxide and 25% of on-road greenhouse gas emissions.[19] Since autonomous vehicles can be programmed to optimize their routes and follow traffic rules and speeds, autonomous trucks will ultimately use energy more efficiently. According to the Southwest Research Institute, autonomous vehicles can be up to 20% more fuel efficient than human-driven vehicles.[20] As transportation is the state's largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emission source, autonomous trucking technology is vital for helping Colorado reach its transportation-related reduction target, including a 41% decrease by 2030 and a 90% decrease by 2050.[21] Furthermore, autonomous trucking supports the Colorado Clean Truck Strategy's objectives for transitioning medium- and heavy-duty trucks to low- and zero-emissions alternatives[22] as many are also electric vehicles.

HB26-1286 risks putting Colorado on the sidelines

Two dozen states, including neighboring and nearby states Nevada, Arizona, and Texas, have already authorized autonomous trucking, and testing and early deployment are accelerating across the Sunbelt. Those states are gaining a head start in capturing the safety, economic, and environmental benefits of this technology. The proposed bill would cut Colorado off from this emerging freight corridor, leaving residents with slower

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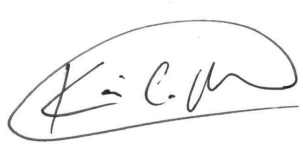
[15] Nelson D. Schwartz and Coral Murphy Marcos. "Higher Food Prices Hit the Poor and Those Who Help Them." NY Times, Dec. 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/27/business/economy/food-prices-us.html
[16] Truckstop. "Deadhead Miles: Definition, Costs and How to Avoid Them." May 28, 2025. https://truckstop.com/blog/deadhead-miles/
[17] Aurora. "What do self-driving vehicles mean for jobs and the economy?" May 18, 2023. https://aurora.tech/newsroom/what-do-self-driving-vehicles-mean-for-jobs-and-the-economy
[18] Gallatin College. "Photonics and Laser Technology." https://gallatin.montana.edu/programs/photonics-laser.html
[19] David Shepardson. "California moves to phase-out diesel-powered trucks, cut locomotive pollution." *Reuters*, Apr. 28, 2023. https://www.reuters.com/business/sustainable-business/california-moves-phase-out-diesel-powered-trucks-cut-locomotive-pollution-2023-04-28/
[20] 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
[21] Climate (State of Colorado). "Climate Goals - Mitigation: Transportation." n.d. https://climate.colorado.gov/cc-goals-transportation
[22] Colorado Department of Transportation. *Colorado Clean Truck Strategy*. Climate (State of Colorado), 2021. https://climate.colorado.gov/colorado-clean-truck-strategy

access to goods and businesses with less reliable supply chains than competitors in neighboring states. At a time when logistics efficiency drives growth, banning autonomous trucks would sideline Colorado from future economic development and position the state as a regional outlier.

Colorado can and should pursue rigorous safety oversight, but it should do so through an expert-led, adaptable framework that responds to demonstrated performance rather than locking in a one-size-fits-all mandate through the ballot. We respectfully ask the Committee to keep this issue in the legislative process, protect Colorado's ability to update policy as evidence evolves, and ensure the state remains competitive in safety, supply chain resilience, and clean transportation innovation through autonomous trucking.

For these reasons, **we urge you to oppose HB26-1286.**

Sincerely,



Kouri Marshall
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ALLIANCE FOR AUTOMOTIVE INNOVATION

March 17, 2026

Representative Meg Froelich
Chair, House Transportation, Housing, and Local Government
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

RE: HB 1286 – Autonomous Vehicles – Oppose

Chair Froelich, Vice Chair Stewart, and members of the Transportation, Housing, and Local Government Committee,

The Alliance for Automotive Innovation[1] (Auto Innovators) appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments on HB 26-1286, which will make Colorado a national outlier and will greatly curtail automated vehicle (AV) investment, development, and operations in the state.

The cars and trucks that consumers are buying today are the safest vehicles ever built. Even so, tragically, 701 people were killed in traffic crashes in Colorado last year. Traffic deaths have surged 30% over the past decade, with nearly 10,000 more fatalities when compared to 2014 numbers.

The evidence shows that driver behavior – drivers who are impaired, unbelted, speeding, or driving recklessly – are significant factors in the increase in roadway fatalities. That is what vehicle safety is a priority and automated vehicle technology holds the promise to increase safety and reduce these numbers.

While House Bill 1286 clearly excludes light duty vehicles, Auto Innovators is concerned about the message this law would send to AV developers, technology companies, and the public. This legislation implies that some AVs require an extra level of oversight, even though the emerging data from AV testing and deployment operations shows these vehicles are much less likely to be involved in a crash compared to human driven vehicles.

Auto Innovators is also concerned that, while currently limited in scope, this law could serve as an opening to later require licensed drivers in all AVs. Undoubtedly the proponents of these laws to require licensed drivers in medium and heavy-duty commercial AVs would view the state as favorable towards a position of requiring licensed drivers in all AVs.

[1] From the manufacturers producing most vehicles sold in the U.S. to autonomous vehicle innovators to equipment suppliers, battery producers and semiconductor makers – Alliance for Automotive Innovation represents the full auto industry, a sector supporting 11 million American jobs and five percent of the economy. Active in Washington, D.C. and all 50 states, the association is committed to a cleaner, safer and smarter personal transportation future.

Finally, if passed and approved by voters, this legislation would make Colorado an outlier and the first state in the country with a permanent law that would require commercial driver's license holders in an AV. This requirement would disrupt interstate commerce, create compliance challenges, and ultimately, limit shared roadway users from benefiting by the life-saving potential ushered by AVs.

Despite these concerns, we recognize that it's been nearly a decade since the state first passed an AV framework, and since that time, states have taken a more active role in regulating AV operations. Like those states, Colorado also has every right to exercise additional oversight authority over AVs.

Unfortunately, HB 1286 is a step too far in the other direction. As such, we respectfully ask the committee to hold this legislation and allow regulators, the public, and industry stakeholders to work together and propose targeted oversight measures that balance public safety while also continuing to welcome these life-saving technologies to Colorado.

Thank you for our consideration of our position on this topic. For more information, please contact me at nsteingart@autosinnovate.org.

Kindest Regards,

Nick Steingart
Director, State Affairs

Reason Foundation Review of Colorado House Bill 26-1286 (2026)

Automated vehicle technology under development could greatly improve road safety and efficiency. Unfortunately, House Bill 26-1286 would move Colorado in the wrong direction.

1. The First State and Only State to Outlaw Driverless Trucks?

- H.B. 26-1286 would prohibit the operation on public roads of autonomous commercial motor vehicles without human operator seated within the vehicle cab.
- This would deter the introduction of safer trucks by preventing carriers and shippers from realizing their business benefits.
- If enacted, Colorado would become the *only state* in the country to enshrine in statute a blanket, preemptive ban on driverless trucks.
- Three dozen states have explicitly authorized the testing and/or deployment of autonomous trucks on public roads.

2. Based on Failed California Legislation

- H.B. 26-1286 is based on legislation first introduced in California in 2023 (A.B. 316).
- In 2023 and 2024 (A.B. 2286), California Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed the proposed ban on driverless trucks as being unnecessary and harmful to the state's reputation as a global leader in technological innovation.

3. Autonomous Vehicles Are Already Making Roads Safer

- Automated driving systems cannot drive drunk, drugged, drowsy, or distracted. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, human error is a critical factor in more than 90% of motor vehicle crashes.
- According to research by leading reinsurance company Swiss Re and autonomous vehicle developer Waymo, Waymo's automated driving system is already far safer when compared to a typical human driver—with an 88% reduction in property damage claims and a 92% reduction in bodily injury claims.
- Colorado's roads are the most dangerous in the region. According to Reason Foundation's 28th Annual Highway Report, Colorado had the 40th worst urban highway fatality rate in the country and ranked #47 in its rural highway fatality rate.

4. No New Authorities Are Needed to Prohibit Unsafe Driverless Trucks

- Colorado law already grants authority to the Department of Transportation to ensure driverless vehicles adhere to vehicle safety and traffic rules and the State Patrol is empowered to impound or immobilize unsafe driverless vehicles. (C.R.S. § 42-4-242).

Reason Transportation Policy Contact —

- Marc Scribner, Senior Transportation Policy Analyst (marc.scribner@reason.org)

Reason Foundation Comments on House Bill 26-1286: Automated Driving System Commercial Vehicles

Prepared for: Members of the Transportation, Housing & Local Government Committee
Colorado House of Representatives

Prepared by: Marc Scribner, Senior Transportation Policy Analyst
Reason Foundation

Date: March 18, 2026

Dear Chair Froelich, Vice Chair Stewart, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our organization's perspective on House Bill (HB) 26-1286 and the issue of commercial motor vehicles equipped with automated driving systems. My name is Marc Scribner, and I serve as senior transportation policy analyst at Reason Foundation. We provide pro bono consulting to public officials and stakeholders to help them design and implement policies related to transportation and infrastructure. I am also a member of the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies' Standing Technical Committee on Developments and Advancements in Transportation Technology Law.

Our assessment of HB 26-1286 is based on my more than 15 years of research on the law and policy related to driving automation. We share the goal of ensuring the safe operation of automated driving systems on public roadways, however, we believe HB 26-1286 is deficient in several key respects.

Based on Failed California Legislation

HB 26-1286 is based on legislation introduced in California in 2023 (Assembly Bill 316) and 2024 (Assembly Bill 2286). In both cases, California Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed the proposed bans on driverless trucks as being unnecessary and harmful to the state's reputation as a global leader in technology innovation. To date, no state has enacted a statutory ban on driverless trucks. In contrast, three dozen states have explicitly authorized the testing and/or deployment of autonomous trucks if certain safety requirements are met.

Banning Autonomous Trucks Won't Make Colorado Roads Safer

The major advantage of automated driving systems is that they do not behave like typical human drivers. Automated driving systems cannot drive drunk, drugged, drowsy, or distracted, and are programmed to follow the rules of the road. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, human error/misbehavior is a critical factor in more than 90% of motor vehicle crashes.

Research by leading reinsurance company SwissRe and autonomous vehicle developer Waymo found that Waymo's automated driving system is already far safer when compared to a typical human driver. Their study analyzed 25.3 million fully autonomous miles driven by Waymo alongside 500,000 insurance claims and over 200 billion miles of driving exposure. Waymo/Swiss Re found that, when compared to human drivers, Waymo's automated driving system produced an 88% reduction in property damage claims and a 92% reduction in bodily injury claims.

It is worth highlighting that Colorado's roads are already some of the most dangerous in the region. According to Reason Foundation's 28th Annual Highway Report, Colorado had the 40th worst urban highway fatality rate in the country and ranked #47 in its rural highway fatality rate.

A More Effective Path Forward

Colorado law already grants authority to the Department of Transportation to ensure driverless vehicles adhere to vehicle safety and traffic rules and the State Patrol is empowered to impound or immobilize unsafe driverless vehicles. (Colo. Rev. Stat. § 42-4-242)

Autonomous commercial motor vehicles are currently operating in commercial service on public roads in Arizona, Arkansas, and Texas, with multiple firms planning to expand these services throughout the country.

Thank you for your time. We welcome the opportunity to advise the legislature on this subject in the future.

Sincerely,

Marc Scribner
Senior Transportation Policy Analyst
Reason Foundation
marc.scribner@reason.org