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**Testimony to the House Transportation Committee
Neutral on SB546
March 29, 2022**

Chairman Proehl and Committee Members:

We admit autonomous vehicles are outside our area of expertise, and we are maintaining a neutral position since the core question on whether this legislation is passed rests on the issue of whether the technology is ready for Kansas to approve the operations in our state. While that is beyond the law enforcement scope, if the policy decision is approved there is clearly law enforcement interest in policy that sets a standard to assure appropriate enforcement actions can be taken. Just as important is assuring adequate public safety requirements and safety provisions for first responders in the event of collisions or other events involving the autonomous vehicle. We provided neutral testimony in the Senate Transportation Committee pointing out issues we saw in the original bill (SB379) impeding appropriate enforcement of traffic laws and other law enforcement and public safety issues.

During the Senate process, our associations and some of the proponents worked together to resolve our concerns. We are happy to report that this cooperative effort resulted in amendments made in SB546 by the Senate Committee addressing our immediate concerns. Those amendments are in the bill as passed by the Senate.

Some of the key areas of concern that were addressed include:

- An enforcement mechanism to hold the vehicle owners accountable for traffic violations involving autonomous vehicles operating without a physical operator in the vehicle.
- The requirements of the vehicle when involved in a traffic collision and clarifying the owner responsibilities in such cases.
- Assuring local traffic ordinances, including local truck routes and weight limits, will apply to autonomous vehicles.
- Improved methods for law enforcement officers and other first responders in the field to make immediate contact with a person responsible for the operation of an autonomous vehicle. This is necessary for the officer to obtain responses to questions about the vehicle and related safety concerns.

As implementation of this new technology moves forward, if the provisions of SB546 become law, we will continue to work with our traffic safety and enforcement partners including the Kansas Highway Patrol, Kansas County and District Attorneys Association, the League of Kansas Municipalities, the Kansas Association of Counties, and KDOT to further review the provisions to make sure workable solutions are provided.

Ed Klumpp
Legislative Liaison