



Donald J. Trump  
President-elect  
725 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY  
10022

Jan. 12, 2017

Re: Fire GM's CEO As Chair of DOT Automation in Transportation Panel

Dear President-Elect Trump,

We are writing to express our deep concern about the composition of the Department of Transportation Advisory Committee on Automation in Transportation (ACAT) whose members were just announced yesterday by outgoing Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. In keeping with your campaign pledge to “drain the swamp” and protect the interests of ordinary people, we ask that the first firing of your Administration be co-chair Mary Barra, General Motors Chairman and CEO, who should not lead a panel recommending how to deploy her company’s automated vehicles. We are also appalled that not a single consumer, citizen or auto safety survivor’s group sits on this industry-dominated panel and ask that you restructure the rest of this advisory committee so it includes members of consumer advocacy groups and true representatives of the public interest.

As you know, robot cars, trucks, drones and other technology threaten to replace tens of millions of American jobs, pose a danger to the safety of our roads and public spaces, and come with significant privacy and security threats. We should not allow the robot makers alone to oversee the safety of vehicles coming out of robot factories, but the Obama Administration’s eleventh hour appointments do just that.

Virtually every major robot car manufacturer, engineer and designer has a representative on the 25-member committee, but consumer, citizen and user groups are unrepresented. In addition to corporate representatives, several other members come from industry trade associations. We were pleased to see the inclusion of academic researchers and experts such as Dr. Mary Cummings, but clearly they are outnumbered and the committee will be dominated by representatives of companies like General Motors, Uber, Lyft, Google’s Waymo and Zoox, who are rushing to deploy robot car technology and will not offer unbiased advice. Amazon and FedEx have a vested interest in drone technology. Insurance and liability issues surround automated technologies and remain key questions that must be resolved. Jack Weekes, State Farm Insurance Operations Vice President, is on the committee, but there is no one to speak for consumers.

Uber recently refused to obtain required permits from the California Department of Motor Vehicles as 20 other companies had done to test its robot cars in San Francisco and moved thus them to Arizona. The company appeared to do so to avoid mandatory reporting of crashes and problems encountered by the technology, as DMV permits require. When Uber’s robot cars were introduced in San Francisco they were seen blasting through red lights. What meaningful advice

can the renegade company's Rachel Holt, regional general manager, possibly contribute to the Department of Transportation?

Autonomous vehicles may offer benefits in the future, but it is imperative that any testing on public highways be done in a completely transparent way to ensure the public's safety is protected. Consumer Watchdog cannot fathom how a committee dominated by companies and trade associations will advocate for safety when doing so might cost money however minimal.

At your news conference Wednesday, you warned about the dangers of hacking and said that you are asking for a report recommending necessary defensive measures the United States should take. The fact of the matter is that autonomous vehicles will offer troves of personal data with little attention so far being paid to protecting it. They also pose a serious terrorist threat if they can be hacked. How to develop measures and required standards to protect the privacy and security of data gathered by autonomous vehicles, as well as the vehicles themselves, is precisely the sort of advice the ACAT should be providing. However, the companies pushing to market and sell robot cars on us have shown little willingness to protect our data. Google executives, for instance, refused to agree to use data gathered by an autonomous vehicle only for navigating the robot car, not for other purposes.

The failure to name any member of a consumer group to ACAT, when more than half the members come from companies with a vested interest in automated technology must be corrected immediately. Ultimately it's likely to backfire, calling into question the validity of the advice the group offers and potentially setting back the development of this technology for years. Consumer Watchdog calls on you to act immediately, and fire those who don't belong on this important advisory committee, beginning with its chair, Ms. Barra, whose fealty to advancing American jobs is certainly a big question mark.

Sincerely,

Jamie Court  
President  
Consumer Watchdog

John M. Simpson  
Privacy Project Director  
Consumer Watchdog

Joan Claybrook  
Chair, Citizens  
for Reliable and  
Safe Highways

Cc: Transportation Secretary-designee Elaine Chao  
Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx