



Maryland Motor Truck Association

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HEARING DATE: January 14, 2021

BILL NO: SB291: Motor Vehicle Offenses – Following Too Closely – Unified Truck Travel

COMMITTEE: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

POSITION: Support

Maryland Motor Truck Association (MMTA) believes that truck platooning, which involves the use of vehicle-to-vehicle communications and sensors, such as cameras and radar, to virtually connect two or more trucks together in a convoy, has tremendous potential to improve safety and fuel economy, while reducing costs, in the trucking industry's future.

Platooning should not be confused with autonomy. The virtual link created enables all of the vehicles in a platoon to communicate with each other, allowing them to automatically accelerate together, brake together, and follow each other at a closer distance than is typically possible with unlinked trucks. However, in today's platoons, each truck has a human driver to take over the speed and braking as needed. The driver of the first truck leads the platoon and navigates the route.

Studies show that all vehicles in a platoon save fuel, ranging from 4% in the lead truck to 10% in trailing vehicles. Because trucks are "virtually" connected and remain steered by a human, they do not require the tremendous infrastructure investment needed for fully autonomous vehicles. According to the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory approximately 65% of the miles travelled by trucks could be platooned, typically for over-the-road highway operations.

The U.S. Department of Transportation recommends that states remove legal and regulatory barriers to automated vehicles, specifically identifying following distance laws that effectively prohibit automated truck platooning applications. To date, at least 26 states have taken steps to permit platooning by exempting platooning trucks from "following too closely" laws.

Companies like Volvo Trucks and FedEx are running platoon tests in states like Virginia and North Carolina. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration have expressed interest in running truck platoon tests in Maryland. The passage of this legislation would remove one barrier to doing so. As such, MMTA respectfully asks the Committee for a favorable report.

About Maryland Motor Truck Association: Maryland Motor Truck Association is a not-for-profit trade association representing the trucking industry since 1935. In service to its 1,000+ members, MMTA is committed to supporting and advocating for a safe, efficient and profitable trucking industry across all sectors and industry types, regardless of size, domicile or type of operation.

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