ITS America Applauds President Obama and the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Announcement of an Automated Vehicles Policy Framework and Intent to Move Forward with Vehicle-to-Vehicle Communications

September 21, 2016 - Yesterday, the Department of Transportation released a new “Federal Automated Vehicles Policy” that establishes guidelines to ensure the safe and timely introduction of self-driving vehicles onto our nation’s roads. As a follow on action to policy, the White House announced that work would proceed with a proposed Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard for Vehicle-to-Vehicle Communications.

ITS America sees the establishment of the automated vehicle guidance as big step in the right direction. Automated vehicles will transform mobility—improve the efficiency, safety, accessibility of our transportation system—in ways previously unimagined. “Building trust and consumer confidence in the technology takes cooperation from industry and government. The Federal Automated Vehicles Policy is a good starting point for establishing more defined roles and responsibilities among industry, state regulators and the federal government in advancing this new technology” said Regina Hopper, President and CEO of ITS America.

The Automated Vehicles Policy is divided into four parts: 1) Vehicle performance guidance; 2) model for state policy; 3) current regulatory tools; and 4) new tools and authorities. The guidance describes a “Safety Assessment” that covers a range of issues, including how automated vehicles will respond to a technology malfunction, guard driver privacy, address cybersecurity concerns, and protect occupants during a crash.

Under the guidelines, states would remain responsible for licensing human drivers, enforcing traffic laws, and vehicle inspection, registration, and titling. Self-driving computer equipment and software would fall
under the jurisdiction of the federal government, which also would retain its ability to investigate safety defects and launch product recalls.

In an op-ed in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, President Obama noted: “Right now, too many people die on our roads – 35,200 last year alone – with 94 percent of those the result of human error or choice. Automated vehicles have the potential to save tens of thousands of lives each year. And right now, for too many senior citizens and Americans with disabilities, driving isn’t an option. Automated vehicles could change their lives...Safer, more accessible driving. Less congested, less polluted roads. That’s what harnessing technology for good can look like.”

“We applaud the President for his statements,” said Regina Hopper, president and CEO of ITS America. The potential improvements in safety and mobility that Self-Driving cars can deliver will be enormous. We must guard against both overly prescriptive regulations that would stifle innovative approaches and a patchwork of different rules at federal, state and local levels that will burden deployment. We think the guidelines sets the right balance between the requirements for safety assurance and flexibility needed for inventive strategies.”

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The just released Federal Automated Vehicles Policy can be reviewed here. A White House Fact Sheet and the proposed V2V rule announcement can be read here.

The Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITS America) is the nation’s largest organization dedicated to advancing the research, development and deployment of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to improve the nation’s transportation system.