

## Self-Driving Vehicles, Accessible Technology and the Disability Community

### BACKGROUND

United Spinal is working in concert with the public and private sectors to develop and deploy universal accessible AVs as quickly as possible to provide transportation to historically underserved populations, especially wheelchair users. That includes approximately one in every five Americans, or more than 57 million who have a disability (3.8 million are veterans with a service-connected disability). A United Spinal partner in the We Will Ride Coalition, the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), commissioned research by The Analysis Group, [Assessing the Unmet Transportation Needs of Americans with Disabilities](#), which found, along with US Census projections:

- that of the 18.5 million Americans with travel limitations (5.7% of the U.S. population), between 11.2 million and 15.4 million can afford ride-sharing options, but are currently underserved;
- the U.S. wheelchair-using population is expected to grow 120% by 2022, and the Census Bureau projects that by 2030 an additional 21.5 million over age 55 will need alternatives to driving themselves.

In short, United Spinal believes that by creating **universal accessible** AV transportation, the private sector can create new transportation markets, and the public sector can serve more people with disabilities, a growing senior population and all manner of consumer transportation needs can be met.

### REQUEST TO POLICYMAKERS:

- **Universal accessible design must receive funding for research and development to expedite vehicle design and deployment.** Funding supports United Spinal's AV Mission: A commitment to a public-private collaboration to deliver reliable, on-demand, safe and accessible AV ride sharing transportation for people with mobility disabilities, the disability community at large as well as the nation as a whole. As United Spinal President and CEO James Weisman has said, "for untold millions of Americans, a universal accessible manufactured autonomous vehicle would be a life's game changer." To this end, United Spinal endorses the [Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund's Fully Accessible Vehicle Checklist & Comments](#) and the [Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities AV Principles](#).
- **Create within US Department of Transportation (DOT) an office of universal accessibility for AVs and related technologies and infrastructure** to develop, promote and promulgate standards and technologies, including working with the US Access Board to develop "best practices" detailing accessibility and safety standards developed for vehicles seating 2-7 passengers, shuttles and buses. The office should establish working memorandums of understanding with representatives of the disability community, transit, paratransit, community and private transportation providers, the US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the US Access Board, engineers with accessibility expertise, wheelchair manufacturers, automakers and other interested parties. The office should also serve as a clearinghouse for AV and related technological initiatives and should work in concert with the DOT's Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology (NETT) Council to ensure access and safety for people with disabilities across all modes of transportation and related infrastructure. A coalition of disability organizations with United Spinal's support made a [similar request to DOT April 2019](#).
- **Request the introduction of legislation to provide national standards for AV and related technology testing, especially universal accessible testing that includes wheelchairs users.** In the last Congress, United Spinal endorsed the AV START Act as a good first legislative step. Our members should not have to contend with a patchwork of 50 state AV standards.