

**Statement of  
Sam Loesche, Legislative Representative  
International Brotherhood of Teamsters  
Roundtable on Automation and its Impact on Workers of Color:  
Transportation and Autonomous Vehicles  
April 11, 2018**

Ranking Member Scott, other distinguished members, thank you for convening this panel. My name is Sam Loesche, I represent the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the nation's largest transportation labor union. We are a large labor union and we are also a diverse union. We are diverse in terms of the color, ethnicity, and nationalities of our members. And we are diverse in terms of the work our members perform across the transportation industry. You might wonder why I bring up the latter. The reason is that we believe that the specific industry a driver of color works in, the type of work they perform, and even where they are geographically located will likely be one of the most significant indicators of whether that person is likely to face some sort of dislocation from self-driving vehicles.

According to BLS, driving a vehicle for a living is one of the most common professions in nearly every state in the country and people of color work in *significant* numbers in nearly every driving profession that exists. And yet, not all of these jobs will be equally at risk by self-driving technology. Risk will be determined by what type of load a driver carries, how far they travel, whether they are a direct employee or an independent contractor, whether they live in an area with inclement weather, whether that area has good roads, whether they are hauling people or freight, whether they are in a union, and a host of other factors. That is what makes predicting job dislocation from this technology so difficult.

But even when accounting for those factors, there are several industries which have continued to bubble up on our radar as potentially early disruptors for communities of color. Our nation's ports are one example. Ports have faced a deluge of automation technology over the years on the longshoring side especially. We expect truckers who work at those ports to face similar pressures. Many drivers at the ports of LA and Long Beach are first generation immigrants from El Salvador and Mexico, and much of the driving they do within the port itself is the type of straight line, terminal-terminal moves that industry has been clear in their desire to automate.

Taxi drivers and chauffeurs represent one of the least white-dominated driving jobs in the country according to BLS. The focus on self-driving cars threatens not only their work, but also the tens of thousands of people of color who work in related industries like parking lot attendants and valets. We believe traditional transit bus operations are safer from automation than other modes in the short term, but those industries are likely to face increased pressure from new entrants into the market over time. Automated shuttle vans and an increased reliance on ride-sharing performed by autonomous vehicles could undercut the market share of traditional transit companies and put these good-paying transit jobs at risk. Of course, some of these technological shifts will provide benefits to workers and their families in the form of increased mobility and potentially safety. But if left unaddressed, many of the consequences from this technology could

prove to be so damaging to people's livelihoods that any benefits could be moot to the same people that technology was intended to benefit.

While the focus on future job loss is necessary and correct, there is unfortunately less attention being paid to the impact of automation on job quality. Some of the industries I mentioned, especially taxi drivers, have already experienced some of the worst symptoms of technological disruption first hand; the downward pressure on wages and working conditions across their industry. We fear self-driving vehicles could have the same legacy unless action is taken. Under the guise of "efficiency" trucking carriers could chip away at job quality and labor standards by demanding that drivers essentially live out of their truck as it runs from coast to coast, since a driver will only be responsible for driving a fraction of the time. Companies who ask drivers to operate in a platoon, or a "train on wheels" may only want to pay them a fraction of their current wages since they that driver is not responsible for all of the same driving movements they once were. Fortunately, our fears do not have to be predictive. We can take action now to ensure that the quality of jobs and the safety of transportation workers is not a trading piece blindly sacrificed in order to bring these vehicles to market as quickly as possible.

I applaud you for holding this discussion because it is incumbent upon this body to address these challenges. We must learn from technological disruptions of the past and ensure that the benefits this technology promises to hold in terms of mobility for underserved communities, increased fuel efficiency and reduced emissions, and potential increases in safety, don't come as trade-offs for the good jobs that many members of those same communities rely on. We are eager to work with you to accomplish those goals, and I look forward to today's discussion.