

My name is Henry Claypool and I am the policy director of the Community Living Policy Center at the University of California, San Francisco. I've had the privilege of working as a public servant on behalf of individuals with disabilities, older adults and disadvantaged populations for the better part of my career.

Autonomous vehicles hold enormous potential to improve the lives of millions of Americans like me who because of a disability, age, or other condition are not able to enjoy easy access to personal transportation. I applaud the commitment of Secretary Foxx and Administrator Rosekind to making sure the benefits of autonomous vehicles will be shared by all.

In particular, the policy that passengers in fully autonomous vehicles would not be required to have a driver's license is a critically important step. National leadership is required to set a tone of inclusion and prevent discriminatory policymaking at the state and local levels. This is hopefully the beginning of a process of identifying and addressing transportation barriers faced by underserved populations. While there is much work to do, today marks an important milestone and rallying call to move ahead.

Autonomous vehicles can and will promote access to mobility for individuals unnecessarily isolated at home, which is about 4 million Americans, most of them with disabilities. A much greater number would like to travel more than they are

currently able to. It has been incredibly exciting to watch the unfolding of new technology options with the potential to enable more Americans to participate fully in essential civic activities, engage in community life, and access health care and related services. This is above and beyond the other benefits of autonomous vehicles, including saving lives and improving national energy security.

We must expand public discourse to include the real costs incurred by millions of Americans simply because they cannot operate a car on our roads today. This overlooked population is heterogeneous and touches virtually every family in the nation. From a person living with epilepsy, a young adult with a developmental disability, to an older adult worried about being able to see as day turns to night, to the veteran with a brain injury —The real costs range from not being able to get and hold a job, to not being able to pick the kids up at school, to the civil rights implications of being isolated and segregated away from one's community simply because there are no viable transportation options.

As a fair and just society, we must address barriers to transportation for this population and commit to the principles of universal design, where vehicles are made accessible to all. It is critical to get policies and design right at this stage before the technology is designed a potentially exclusionary fashion. There is much work ahead to meet the challenging design issues that will make it possible for blind people and those that rely wheelchairs to use fully autonomous vehicles.

This may require an innovative collaboration of the public and private sectors to remedy the issues – now is the time to develop a plan to ensure access to those whose needs present the greatest challenge.

Once again, I'd like to thank the Department and Administration for making sure that the public discourse includes an appropriate focus on the needs of those in our society that need access to fully autonomous vehicles as soon as is safely possible. Only this innovative technology can curb the number of compromised lives and create new opportunities for those who have waited too long.