July 6, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

On behalf of NAFA Fleet Management Association, I am writing in response to a June 3rd letter you received from the Alliance for Automotive Innovation (AAI).

NAFA has more than 2,000 individual fleet manager Members who are employed by corporations, universities, government agencies (federal, state, municipal), utilities, and any other entity that uses vehicles in its normal conduct of business or needs to move people or goods from one place to another. The fleets managed by NAFA’s Members run the gamut from light-, to medium-, and even heavy-duty vehicles, including sedans, vans, emergency response vehicles, utility trucks, delivery vehicles, buses, and specialized equipment. NAFA Members are in control of more than 4.2 million vehicles and manage assets in excess of $92 billion. These vehicles travel more than 84-billion miles each year. In addition, NAFA is supported by more than 1,000 associate members who represent companies that support fleet managers in their jobs. These include vehicle manufacturers, leasing companies, aftermarket equipment suppliers, telematics firms, service providers, and others.

In their letter, AAI seeks “your assistance to help protect the motoring public.” From NAFA’s perspective, the companies and public agencies with vehicle fleets used to carry out their missions are a significant portion of the “motoring public.” I am sure that you will agree that a corporate or government fleet is well positioned to protect their portion of the motoring public.

Fleets maintain and repair their vehicles under several scenarios: at a central maintenance facility owned and operated by the fleet; under contract with an independent repair facility; or at the local dealer. Regardless, the ultimate maintenance decision on when and where to repair a fleet vehicle is made by the fleet manager and not by the manufacturer, independent repair facility or the dealer.
NAFA has not yet expressed a formal position on the pending ballot question in Massachusetts but will shortly because of the national implications of the ballot question. The current ballot question amends the Motor Vehicle Right to Repair law that was approved by Massachusetts voters in 2012. That initiative required vehicle manufacturers to provide fleets and independent repair shops with access to the same information, tools and software that they provide their franchised dealers at a fair and reasonable cost. The Memorandum of Understanding that followed passage of the legislation allowed fleet maintenance facilities nationwide access to the tools and software nationwide.

AAI suggests in its letter that there is a need to limit access to data generated by the vehicle. Fleet managers of owned and leased vehicles see no basis for the manufacturer to limit access to data generated by the vehicle. Fleet managers dispute any suggestion that the vehicle manufacturers are in a better position to protect data.

Vehicle-generated data is a critical part of fleet management. Whether vehicles are owned or leased, the fleet manager relies on direct access in real time to the data to monitor the engine, the vehicle and driver. Fleet managers do rely on third parties, whether a leasing company or a telematics provider.

A fleet manager relies on telematics system to collect vehicle data in order to efficiently manage the fleet. Telematics is the general term referring to any device or system that uses telecommunications to create, store, find, share, or manipulate data. Today’s vehicles rely more and more on this type of technology for both performance and convenience.

For example, telematics can monitor the location, movement, status and behavior of a vehicle. Telematics can tell you when a vehicle starts and shuts down, as well as its idling status, location and speed. From across all fleet segments – from both corporate and government, university to utility – the requirements of fleet managers tend to fall along the same four lines: safety, productivity, utilization, and fuel savings.

By monitoring driving behaviors as well as vehicle health and maintenance intervals, telematics helps minimize collisions, speeding tickets and downtime. Improved driver safety is the goal of every fleet manager. Telematics can help identify unsafe driving practices and then target those habits for training, rather than giving a general safety speech. Frequent incidents of harsh braking, speeding, and jackrabbit starts can all be indications of distracted driving. Telematics excels in helping fleet managers ensure drivers and the public are safer, and every vehicle is properly maintained and is running at peak efficiency at all times.

With the ability to track fleet vehicles in real time comes the ability to track vehicles that are stolen, used without authorization, or cross a predetermined geographic boundary. Fuel savings is where a major return-on-investment for these systems will ultimately be realized. Reduced idling and speeding are the typical areas that facilitate fuel
reductions. A case in point is Sacramento County, California which reduced its fuel costs by 25 percent.

Access to vehicle generated data in real time provide vital sources of data that fleet managers can use to improve performance, better maintain vehicles, and increase safety. NAFA supports enactment of legislation that:
  o Emphasizes vehicle generated data belongs to the owner of the vehicle and that said owner has the right to securely access and control their vehicle data (including authorizing access by third parties);
  o directly, through in-vehicle access, in real-time;
  o through a technology-neutral, standards-based, secured interface;
  o that provides interoperable and bi-directional communication with the vehicle.

NAFA would be pleased to discuss this further with you and your staff; and to engage with the AAI. please do not hesitate to contact me or Patrick O’Connor, NAFA’s U.S. Legislative Counsel, at (703) 351-6222 or patoconnor@kentoconnor.com.

Sincerely,

Bill Schankel
Chief Executive Officer