

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

SEAN M. O'BRIEN

General President

25 Louisiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001



FRED E. ZUCKERMAN

General Secretary-Treasurer

202-624-6800
www.teamster.org

March 7, 2024

Maryland House of Delegates
Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters is pleased to support HB 1447 and applauds the Environment and Transportation Committee of the Maryland House of Delegates for giving this critically needed legislation a hearing today.

For years now, big tech companies and venture capital firms have invested millions of dollars in autonomous vehicle and truck platooning technology. As investors lose patience in the lack of progress, companies are getting more desperate to turn a profit and have been working to gain access to public roadways through legislative and regulatory means.

While these companies flood the airwaves marketing their product's alleged safety and efficiency, states and localities that have allowed these vehicles to operate on public roads have learned that these products are failing to live up to the companies' promises. In advertisements and in public testimony, many AV companies will claim that their vehicles are safe and that they have millions of miles worth of data to prove their case, yet these companies [refuse to release](#)ⁱ this data to regulators or the public.

Driverless Vehicles Causing Accidents, Blocking Traffic, and Dragging Pedestrians

We know from news reports that autonomous vehicles routinely fail to obey traffic laws, and are [causing accidents](#)ⁱⁱ, [blocking traffic en masse](#)ⁱⁱⁱ, and in one disturbing case, [pinning an injured pedestrian](#)^{iv} under the vehicle and [dragging her an additional 20-feet](#)^v. When questioned by state regulators, the company [failed to disclose](#)^{vi} the entire video of the accident, leading to the company's license being suspended and the company ultimately [suspending all operations](#)^{vii} nationwide to "rebuild public trust". Additional internal documents also show that the company knew their technology had [difficulty recognizing children](#)^{viii}, yet they decided to keep the vehicles on the road.

Driverless Vehicles Causing Issues and Crashes with First Responders

The San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) has [gone on record](#)^{ix} with multiple examples of autonomous vehicles blocking emergency vehicles, stopping for no apparent reason, and recklessly interfering with active emergency scenes. In one case, firefighters were unable to stop the vehicle until they broke its windshield, while in another case, a vehicle ran over active firehoses that were being used to suppress a fire. In another, San Francisco firefighters [reported](#)^x that two Cruise robotaxis delayed an ambulance transporting a patient with critical injuries; that patient later died at the hospital. The issue is not unique to San Francisco – records indicate that [first responders in Austin](#)^{xi} are having the same issues, putting the public at risk. Those who use our roads each and every day are becoming more aware of these failures, and they are not okay with being non-consenting test subjects for the autonomous vehicle industry.

Teamsters Respond with Commonsense Proposals, Human Safety Operators

In response to these threats to public safety, the [Teamsters are leading the charge](#)^{xii} for the creation of a legislative path forward that can deploy autonomous vehicle technology in a safer and more responsible manner. One of our major policy positions is simple -- any autonomous commercial vehicle must have a human operator, properly licensed for that size of vehicle, physically present behind the wheel. This human operator can take over in the event of a technology failure and can recognize and react to complex scenarios that computer programming has proven incapable of. As the SFCTA states in the letter linked above: *“If a human driver had made an error like the one reflected here, it likely would have caused minimal passenger impact.”*

The coalition of support for legislation that requires a human operator is a diverse and growing population; from firefighters and nurses to law enforcement officers and professional drivers, workers across the nation have stood up to demand that their lawmakers put public safety first. Lawmakers of all political stripes have responded to this call and bills similar to HB 1447 have seen bipartisan support in places like California, Indiana, Nebraska, Texas, and more.

Legislation like HB 1447 is not a barrier to new technological developments; it is an added layer of safety that will allow all of us to fully explore and examine any potential benefits or risks that may arise as autonomous vehicle technology becomes more common – both in the public safety and the workforce space. Given the industry’s recent track record and the growing concern from lawmakers across the country, it’s not surprising that investment capital into autonomous vehicle development [dropped nearly 60%](#)^{xiii} from 2021 to 2022.

The Teamsters urge you to consider this reasonable legislative response to the current problems that autonomous vehicle technology is causing. The concerns of the public regarding this technology are justified, and the rocky track record of these vehicles shows that the technology is not ready for full deployment on our roads. We applaud Delegate Lewis for his leadership on this issue and look forward to working with the entire House of Delegates as you consider this legislation. If you would like to learn more about the Teamsters' position on autonomous vehicle technology, please do not hesitate us.

John Mataya
State Legislative Director
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

-
- ⁱ <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2022-01-28/waymo-robot-taxi-sues-state-secret-black-ice>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/08/18/cruise-self-driving-car-in-san-francisco-fire-truck-crash-one-injured.html>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://sfstandard.com/2023/08/13/cruise-north-beach-stalled-robotaxis-aaron-peskin/>
- ^{iv} <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/woman-run-autonomous-vehicle-san-francisco-18403044.php>
- ^v <https://www.wired.com/story/cruise-robotaxi-self-driving-permit-revoked-california/>
- ^{vi} <https://sfstandard.com/2023/10/24/cruise-robotaxi-dmv-suspension-video/>
- ^{vii} <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/03/technology/cruise-general-motors-self-driving-cars.html>
- ^{viii} <https://theintercept.com/2023/11/06/cruise-self-driving-cars-children/>
- ^{ix} https://www.sfmta.com/sites/default/files/reports-and-documents/2023/01/2023.01.25_ccsf_23.0125_cpuc_cruise_tier_2_advice_letter_protest_002.pdf
- ^x <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/sep/05/san-francisco-cruise-robotaxi-death-ambulance>
- ^{xi} <https://www.kut.org/transportation/2023-10-30/records-show-first-responders-in-austin-struggling-to-respond-to-cruises-self-driving-cars>
- ^{xii} <https://teamster.org/2023/09/teamsters-release-av-policy-framework/>
- ^{xiii} <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkoetsier/2023/04/19/self-driving-investment-crash-58-drop-in-autonomous-vehicle-dollars/?sh=628f11f62d67>