



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 949 - Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, it is my pleasure to present Senate Bill 949 - Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles. If enacted, this bill would authorize the use of autonomous vehicles on Maryland's roads.

Fully autonomous vehicles are operated without a human driver. SB 949 creates a robust set of rules an autonomous vehicle would need to meet in order to legally use the roads in Maryland and authorizes the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) and the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) to establish the standards and requirements necessary for autonomous vehicles to operate safely here in Maryland. There are also provisions – worked out with law enforcement - to include our first responders and public safety officers, so they have the training, protocols, and understanding of how these vehicles work and what interactions with autonomous vehicles would look like.

We will have two sets of amendments: the first was developed alongside the MVA and MIA to ensure that the bill will allow them to effectively regulate what for Maryland will be a new industry, including the ability to pull them off the roads if they are found to be unsafe.

Second, we will have amendments to guard the privacy of both the users of these vehicles and of the others around these vehicles. By necessity AVs have a lot of cameras and take in a lot of data in order to operate safely. These amendments will ensure that the data collected is not sold or transferred, that no facial recognition is run on any faces that are captured, and that data that is not necessary is not kept.

To date, 25 states have passed substantially similar legislation, including our neighbors Pennsylvania and West Virginia, as well as states such as Michigan, Florida, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. A complete list is attached to my testimony. In addition, Virginia and DC are also looking into passing such a law. By passing SB 949, we would join those states in creating the conditions necessary to allow for autonomous vehicles on our roads.

AVs are a part of everyday life for hundreds of thousands of Americans every month. Whether they be passengers who cannot drive themselves or do not wish to, they can access autonomous vehicles providing them freedom of movement and an additional choice in how to interact with the world.



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An autonomous vehicle doesn't drive drunk, read its phone, get tired, or respond emotionally to other road users conduct; they don't speed or break the law. As a result, in states where they currently operate, data show that autonomous vehicles are significantly safer than a human driver.

Waymo, who is here with me today, currently operates in 6 markets; their fleet, operated as a wholly owned ride-hail service, provides rides for more than 200,000 customers per week, covering more than 1 million miles on public roads in the United States. Their data show: 81% fewer rashes involving airbags, 78% fewer injury-causing crashes, and 62% fewer police reported crashes compared to a human driver.

There has never been a fatality resulting from an interaction with an autonomous passenger vehicle. Waymo has never been the initiator of a crash involving one of their vehicles. Under the bill the vehicles can get a speeding ticket (the cars can respond to officers like you or might via cameras and microphones) and are required to meet the same insurance standards as any other road user.

Autonomous vehicles offer a safer alternative for those who could be subject to the biases of a human driver, including members of the blind community, who have many stories of other ride-sharing drivers refusing to pick them up.

Autonomous vehicles will come to our roads having gone through rigorous testing, mapping, and small-scaled deployment that grows responsibly and responsively to local communities. This bill is a foundational piece in the puzzle of expanding transportation options for all Marylanders.

For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 949.