



House Bill 1295

Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

MACo Position: **LETTER OF
INFORMATION**

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: March 5, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

MACo respectfully submits this Letter of Information on HB 1295, which would establish a framework to allow fully autonomous vehicles to operate in Maryland.

Maryland counties maintain most of the state's road miles, especially the streets residents use every day. As autonomous vehicle (AVs) use expands, counties will feel the impacts first because AV safety and performance depend on local infrastructure and day-to-day operations—from lane markings and signage to work zones, intersections, curbside activity, and incident response. Even if state rules govern vehicle technology, many of the practical costs and implementation challenges will fall to counties. While counties do not take a position on whether Maryland should proceed with this broad policy regarding AVs, MACo offers several considerations for the Committee:

Unpaved and low-volume roads: Many county-maintained roads—particularly in rural areas—are unpaved or have limited striping, signage, and shoulder definition. A statewide AV framework should account for these conditions and avoid creating implicit mandates or new liabilities that pressure counties to retrofit roads to accommodate specific technologies.

EV growth and firefighting readiness: As vehicle fleets electrify alongside automation, counties will face increased demands on fire and rescue services, including specialized training, equipment for battery-related incidents, updated response protocols, and, in some cases, investments in water supply and apparatus. Resource-limited counties cannot absorb these costs without meaningful state support.

Safety and local operations: Counties need clear authority and timely coordination tools to manage AV activity in work zones, incident scenes, school zones, and during special events. Legislation should include strong data-sharing and emergency coordination requirements, clarify enforcement roles, and preserve local operational flexibility to protect public safety.

HB 1295 is an important starting point as Maryland considers this emerging technology. Counties remain focused on ensuring that any framework is practical to implement and prioritizes safety, coordination, and sustainable local capacity.