Waymo SB909 Testimony.pdf
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Position: FAV

WAYMO

Testimony before the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee In support of SB909: Autonomous Vehicle Authorization Legislation

March 4, 2026

Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Anthony Perez and I serve as the Northeast Policy Manager for Waymo. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Senate Bill 909.

What began in 2009 as a Google moonshot is now a safer and more accessible transportation option for millions of Americans. Today, Waymo operates a 24/7, fully autonomous ride-hailing service in major metro areas including Phoenix, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Austin, Atlanta, and Miami. Last week, we launched in Orlando, Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio, and announced our intention to serve Charlotte and Chicago. We are investing in several more communities across the U.S., including Baltimore, where we hope to serve the public in the near future. We're proud of the support we've received to date from Governors, city, and state officials across the country.

Every week, Waymo provides more than 400,000 rides, and last year, our lifetime total exceeded 20 million rides. As of this year, our automated driving technology, which we call the Waymo Driver, has traveled nearly 200 million miles on public roads without a human behind the wheel. .

Safety is core to our mission to be the world's most trusted driver. There is a persistent road safety crisis that claims 40,000 lives annually in the U.S., but we believe our technology can help make roads safer by eliminating human errors—like impairment, distraction, and speeding—that contribute to the vast majority of these preventable deaths.

Our peer-reviewed analysis of our driving data shows this is working. Based on 127 million fully autonomous miles, the data shows Waymo vehicles are involved in 90% fewer serious injury or worse crashes, and 92% fewer injury crashes involving pedestrians compared to human drivers where we operate.

Our technology is also delivering new opportunities for those who face transportation barriers. For those who are blind or low-vision, neurodivergent, elderly, epileptic or otherwise cannot drive themselves, Waymo provides a reliable, independent mobility experience. We have partnered with community groups across the country representing many Americans with different needs to build a more inclusive product. We're proud of the efforts we've made

alongside the Waymo Accessibility Network and hope to build many new relationships with new partners in Maryland.

As we speak today, thousands of Americans – many of whom cannot drive themselves – will use our service in their daily lives. By passing SB 909, Maryland can lead the way in securing a safer, more accessible, and more competitive future for transportation.

I urge a favorable report on this bill.

Thank you

Chamber of Progress_MD_ SB 909_Support.pdf
Uploaded by: Brianna January
Position: FAV

March 4, 2026

The Honorable William "Will" Smith
Chair, Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings
Room 2-East, Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: Support SB 909 – *Automated Driving Systems*

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Chamber of Progress, a tech industry association supporting public policies to build a society in which all people benefit from technological advances, I **respectfully urge you to support SB 909**, which establishes a clear, statewide framework for the safe deployment of autonomous vehicles in Maryland.

We are strong supporters of autonomous vehicles (AVs) due to their significant social, economic, and environmental benefits. AVs have the potential to save thousands of lives and expand mobility for thousands of people across Maryland. They also have the potential to create hundreds of thousands of high-paying jobs and connect people to millions of other jobs. Finally, AVs will reduce roadway emissions and help Maryland achieve net zero emissions by 2045. By creating a pathway for AV deployment, this bill will unlock these benefits for Maryland residents.

AVs will bring safer streets, reduce the number of accidents, and save lives

The National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) released crash data reporting for the first half of 2023, with over 19,000 lives lost.[1] In 2022, nearly 43,000 lives were lost in traffic-related fatalities.[2] Between 2019 and 2023, 2,858 people lost their lives in vehicle crashes and 208,587 people were injured in Maryland.[3]

[1] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "NHTSA Estimates Traffic Fatalities Continued to Decline in the First Half of 2023." Sept. 28, 2023. https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/2023-Q2-traffic-fatality-estimates
[2] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "NHTS,A Estimates for 2022 Show Roadway Fatalities Remain Flat After Two Years of Dramatic Increases." U.S. Department of Transportation, Apr. 20, 2023. https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/traffic-crash-dto more than,eath-estimates-2022
[3] Zero Deaths Maryland. "Maryland Crash Data." n.d. https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/

Research shows that at least 90% of car crashes are caused by human error,[4] and around 30% of traffic deaths involve alcohol impairment,[5] meaning thousands of lives are lost each year to a behavior we already know how to stop. Over 82% of traffic deaths in Maryland between 2019 and 2023 were due to drug or alcohol impairment, aggressive driving, speeding, and distracted driving – all entirely preventable.[6]

By removing human error from the roads, AVs can help eliminate the leading causes of crashes and fatalities. A series of studies from 2023 found that autonomous ridesharing services in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Phoenix experienced 57% fewer police-reported crashes and 85% fewer crashes involving injuries compared to human drivers.[7][8]

With more than 200 million autonomous miles logged nationwide, some AV operators report ~90% fewer serious-injury or fatal crashes.[9] **If that reduction translates to Maryland, advancing their large-scale adoption could prevent over 2,572 deaths and 187,728 injuries in the next five years**.

Likewise, in 2023, crashes involving large trucks killed more than 15 people every day.[10] Autonomous trucks do not suffer from fatigue, distraction, or impairment. Early deployments are already proving this point. Aurora, a U.S.-based autonomous trucking company, is already demonstrating the real-world potential of these safety gains. As of October 2025, the company has logged more than 100,000 driverless miles with a perfect safety record[11] under a comprehensive safety case that combines millions of virtual simulations with extensive closed-course and on-road testing.[12] In critical scenarios, autonomous trucks outperform human drivers. For example, Aurora's trucks can detect hazards hundreds of meters away seconds before the naked eye, even at night.[13] Taken

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[4] Santokh Singh. *Critical Reasons for Crashes Investigated in the National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey*. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Feb., 2015. https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812115
[5] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "Drunk Driving." n.d. https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving
[6] Zero Deaths Maryland. "Maryland Crash Data." n.d. https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/
[7] Kristofer D. Kusano et al. *Comparison of Waymo Rider-Only Crash Data to Human Benchmarks at 7.1 Million Miles*. arXiv, Oct. 24, 2024. https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.12675
[8] John M. Scanlon et al. *Benchmarks for Retrospective Automated Driving System Crash Rate Analysis Using Police-Reported Crash Data*. arXiv, Jul. 24, 2024. https://arxiv.org/abs/2312.13228
[9] Waymo. "Safety." n.d. https://waymo.com/safety/
[10] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2023*. Apr., 2025. https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813705
[11] Aurora Innovation, Inc. "Aurora Expands Driverless Trucking Service from Fort Worth to El Paso." Business Wire, Oct. 28, 2025. https://ir.aurora.tech/news-events/press-releases/detail/128/aurora-expands-driverless-trucking-service-from-fort-worth-to-el-paso
[12] Aurora. *Aurora's Safety Case Framework*. Jan., 2023. https://safetycaseframework.aurora.tech/gsn
[13] Aurora. "Detecting a pedestrian running across the highway." https://aurora.tech/capabilities/detecting-a-pedestrian-running-across-the-highway

together, these results show that autonomous trucking can be deployed carefully and responsibly, improving road safety rather than undermining it.

AVs will also increase transportation options for communities that are currently underserved or face mobility challenges

In neighborhoods where public transit options are scarce, autonomous vehicles can increase transportation options and connect residents to mobility hubs.[14] Many Marylanders do not have reliable access to a car. In Baltimore alone, roughly one in three residents lives in a household without a vehicle, making it harder to reach work, school, healthcare, and other essential services.[15] Autonomous vehicles can widen access to safe, reliable transportation.

For people living with disabilities who cannot drive or are underserved by public transit, AVs can increase access to mobility. 12.4% of Maryland residents have a disability.[16] Further, only 1 in 4 Americans with disabilities participated in the labor force in 2025.[17] Mobility challenges and inaccessible transit options present significant obstacles for people with disabilities trying to reach jobs and education.[18] Public transit and paratransit options do not fully meet these communities' needs, with unreliable service times and longer commutes to access pharmacies, hospitals, and schools.[19] According to the Urban Institute, AVs can improve paratransit services, making them more affordable and flexible for riders because they can provide customizable, curb-to-curb service.[20] A study by the National Disability Institute found that this shift could generate an estimated 4.4 million additional jobs for people with disabilities.[21]

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[14] Jonathan Andrews. *How AVs are transforming public transportation*. May Mobility; Cities Today. Jan. 3, 2024. https://media.maymobility.com/May-Mobility-Cities-Today-AVs-Transforming-Public-Transportation-Case-Study.pdf

[15] Daniel Zawodny. "Baltimore Transit Bike Car Free." *The Baltimore Banner*, Oct. 28, 2025. https://www.thebanner.com/community/transportation/baltimore-transit-bike-car-free-RBTLSGOYPBAMTHJQRPKTWSXLBM/

[16] Maryland Department of Planning. *Percent of People With a Disability in Maryland and its Jurisdictions, 2024*. Sep., 2025. https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Documents/American_Community_Survey/2024/Charts/Disability-Sep-2024.pdf

[17] Society for Human Resource Management. "Workforce Participation Among People With Disabilities Reaches Historic High, Addressing Labor Shortages – New SHRM Study Finds." Press release, Oct. 16, 2025. https://www.shrm.org/about/press-room/workforce-participation-among-people-with-disabilities-reaches-h0

[18] Dominic Modicamore et al. *Economic Impacts of Removing Transportation Barriers to Employment for Individuals with Disabilities Through Autonomous Vehicle Adoption*. National Disability Institute and ICF, Dec. 30, 2022. https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ndi-economicimpactsofremovingtransportationbarriers.pdf

[19] TransitCenter. *The State of Transit Equity: SF Bay Area*. n.d. https://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/BayAreaFactSheet.pdf

[20] Olivia Fiol and Sophia Weng. "Shared Autonomous Vehicles Could Improve Transit Access for People with Disabilities If Regulated Appropriately." *Urban Wire*, Oct. 4, 2022. https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/shared-autonomous-vehicles-could-improve-transit-access-people-disabilities-if-regulated

[21] Dominic Modicamore et al. Dec. 30, 2022.

The AV industry will be a powerful engine for job creation and economic opportunity

Evidence shows that AVs are poised to be a powerful force for job creation. Our research found that nationwide, replacing 13% of vehicles on the road with AVs over the next 15 years could create 455,000 jobs.[22] These positions span manufacturing, technology, logistics, and maintenance – everything from software engineers and system operators to vehicle inspectors and safety specialists.

Importantly, these are well-paying jobs. Our report found that 82% of AV-related roles pay above the national median wage, and many don't require a college degree.[23] Workers in production, maintenance, and repair occupations often enter with a high school diploma or postsecondary certificate, yet still earn solid middle-class wages, especially as AV fleets expand and demand for skilled technicians rises.

This shift also won't happen overnight. Instead, automation is expected to roll out gradually, giving workers time to retrain and transition into new roles.[24] AV deployment requires ongoing human oversight in operations, maintenance, and fleet management, meaning that even as driving tasks become automated, human workers will remain central to the technology's success.[25] Educational partnerships are already springing up to support this future workforce, from autonomous service technician programs in Pennsylvania to advanced manufacturing training in California.[26]

With the right investment and policy support, Maryland can be part of that vanguard, building on its existing tech and manufacturing strengths to capture the high-paying, accessible jobs that the AV industry brings.

AVs promote sustainability efforts

Autonomous vehicles also promote sustainable transportation systems. According to the Southwest Research Institute, autonomous vehicles can be up to 20% more fuel efficient

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[22] Steer and Chamber of Progress. *Opportunity AV: How Many and What Types of Jobs Will Be Created by Autonomous Vehicles?* Chamber of Progress, Mar., 2024. https://progresschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Opportunity-AV-How-Many-and-What-Type-of-Jobs-Will-Be-Created-by-Autonomous-Vehicles.pdf

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] John J. Leonard et al. *Autonomous Vehicles, Mobility, and Employment Policy: The Roads Ahead*. MIT Task Force on Work of the Future, n.d. https://ouravfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/WotF-2020-Research-Brief-Leonard-Mindell-Stayton.pdf

[25] April Horency. "Systems Engineering Team Reveals How Automated Vehicles Are Transforming Labor in Taxi Services." *School of Engineering & Applied Science, The George Washington University*, Nov. 17, 2023. https://engineering.gwu.edu/systems-engineering-team-reveals-how-automated-vehicles-are-transforming-labor-taxi-services

[26] Steer and Fourth Economy. Mar. 2025.

than human-driven vehicles.[27] Since autonomous vehicles are programmed to follow traffic rules and speed limits, they will ultimately use less energy. Most AVs are also predicted to be electric, making them a cleaner transportation option than vehicles using internal combustion engines.[28] Deploying autonomous vehicles can help Maryland achieve its net-zero emissions goal by 2045.[29]

AV trucking offers a more efficient and resilient freight future, lowering costs for families

As the trucking industry faces 90% turnover and a projected 160,000-driver shortage by 2030,[30] the national truck driver shortage costs the freight industry $95.5 million weekly.[31] Notably, Maryland has a tough trucking job market, with 38% daily turnover and an average 6.2-day hiring time, making driver recruitment especially challenging.[32]

Increased consumer prices and delayed shipments are both consequences of the current crisis in the trucking industry. Consequently, trucking companies have been competing to attract and retain drivers by offering greater compensation and more substantial bonuses.[33] Rising fuel and labor expenses have driven up shipping costs, which in turn have caused an increase in the price of consumer goods.[34] Low-income families are disproportionately affected by these price hikes; the cost of essential goods has risen by up to 50%.[35]

Autonomous trucking offers a solution to address the gap created by a strained labor market, retention and overhead costs, and high demand for timely shipping. Continuous,

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[27] Southwest Research Institute. "SwRI Achieves 20% Improvement in Vehicle Fuel Efficiency With Connectivity, Automation." Oct. 6, 2020. https://www.swri.org/newsroom/press-releases/swri-achieves-20-improvement-vehicle-fuel-efficiency-connectivity-automation

[28] Richard Nunno. *Issue Brief | Autonomous Vehicles: State of the Technology and Potential Role as a Climate Solution*. Environmental and Energy Study Institute, Jun. 24, 2021. https://www.eesi.org/papers/view/issue-brief-autonomous-vehicles-state-of-the-technology-and-potential-role-as-a-climate-solution

[29] Maryland Department of the Environment. "Climate Pollution Reduction Plan." *Maryland Department of the Environment*, n.d. https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/CPRP/Pages/Overview.aspx

[30] Michelle Fleury. "How will the US deal with a shortage of 80,000 truckers?" *BBC News*, Nov. 8, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/business-59136957

[31] Pamella De Leon. "Report shows truck driver shortage costs freight industry $95.5 million weekly." *Commercial Carrier Journal*, Feb. 10, 2025. https://www.ccjdigital.com/business/article/15736724/truck-driver-shortage-costs-freight-industry-955-million-weekly

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] Don Lee. "Facing record labor shortages, trucking firms battle fiercely for drivers." *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 7, 2021. https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-12-07/facing-record-labor-shortages-trucking-firms-battle-fiercely-for-drivers

[34] AFP Global Logistics. *The Impact of Fuel Prices on Supply Chain Transportation*. AFP Global Logistics, Feb. 3, 2025. https://afplus.com/impact-fuel-prices-supply-chain-transportation/ afplus.com

[35] Frost & Sullivan Institute. "*The Unequal Burden of Inflation: Implications for Vulnerable Populations and Strategies for Resilience*." Frost & Sullivan Institute Blog, Aug. 26, 2025. https://frostandsullivaninstitute.org/the-unequal-burden-of-inflation-implications-for-vulnerable-populations-and-strategies-for-resilience

efficient AV freight operations reduce delays, congestion, and deadhead miles,[36] cutting logistics costs that raise prices for families. With freight running around the clock, AV trucks help stabilize the cost of groceries and everyday goods.

Autonomous vehicles present tremendous opportunities to make Maryland's roads safer and cleaner while expanding transportation options and economic opportunities, and this bill would ensure that. For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to **support SB 909**. We are more than happy to be a resource as you continue working on this issue, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brianna January
Director of State & Local Government Relations, Northeast US

[36] Truckstop. "Deadhead Miles: Definition, Costs and How to Avoid Them." May 28, 2025. https://truckstop.com/blog/deadhead-miles/

SB909
Uploaded by: Dana Stein
Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN PARTIAL SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 909

Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicle

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Professor Will Hubbard, University of Baltimore School of Law
DATE: March 2, 2026 (minor correction on March 3, 2026)
POSITION: Favorable with Amendment

I am a professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law. My academic research focuses on legal aspects of innovation, including the regulation of autonomous vehicles under state law.[1] I offer this written testimony in my capacity as an academic researcher. **I support Senate Bill 909 with an amendment.**

This bill authorizes the use of "fully autonomous" vehicles on Maryland roads, provided that certain conditions are met. SB 909 4:22-24. As an innovation scholar, I applaud Maryland's efforts to support the deployment in our state of new technologies, like autonomous vehicles ("AVs").[2] These vehicles have the potential to offer great benefits. Computerized drivers eventually may be safer than average humans, and self-driving technologies may extend the benefits of driving to people who otherwise cannot drive, including those with disabilities. Nevertheless, like any motor vehicle, AVs pose dangers to many people, including passengers, other drivers, and pedestrians. Consequently, AVs should still be subject to some legal oversight. The regulation of AVs thus involves a delicate balance: providing sufficient regulation to ensure safety while also encouraging the development and deployment of new technologies. I am concerned that SB 909 needs amendment to strike the right balance.

Every state has enacted laws designed to ensure that motor vehicles are operated safely. These laws, like speed limits and obeying traffic signals, are familiar to anyone who drives. Importantly, many of these laws target the conduct of "drivers" and "operators." For instance, Section 21-302 of the Maryland Transportation Code states, "Drivers of vehicles that are going in opposite directions shall pass each other to the right." By targeting the conduct of "drivers" and "operators" these laws identify a person who will be responsible for violations. Holding that person responsible encourages lawful behavior.

Unfortunately, the identity of the "driver" or "operator" of an AV is unclear. In AVs, the person in the driver's seat may not be performing the kinds of tasks we traditionally think of as driving. That person may behave more like a passenger. In some AVs, there may not even be a

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[1] Two of my articles directly address automated vehicles. William Hubbard & Colin Starger, *The Collision Course Between Outdated State Laws and Automated Vehicles*, 46 CARDOZO L. REV. 2319 (2025), The Collision Course Between Outdated State Laws and Automated Vehicles | Cardozo Law Review; William Hubbard, *Drivers of Effective Laws for Automated Vehicles*, 70 VILLANOVA L. REV. 115 (2025), Drivers of Effective Laws for Automated Vehicles | Published in Villanova Law Review.

[2] I consider the terms "autonomous" and "automated" interchangeable in this context and use the term "AV" to address both.

person in the driver's seat at all. As a result, our traditional notions of "driver" may not make sense with AVs. After all, the basic goal of these technologies is to relieve humans of the burdens of driving. Current statutory definitions do not help to identify the "driver" or "operator" of an AV. The Maryland Transportation Code defines "driver" as "any individual who drives a vehicle."[3] Maryland law defines "operator" simply as being equivalent to "driver."[4] With no clear "driver" or "operator" for an AV, the application of laws addressed to "drivers" and "operators" is likewise unclear. For instance, if an AV does not have a "driver," is it subject to the law that states that "[d]rivers of vehicles that are going in opposite directions shall pass each other to the right"? This is no small problem. My scholarship has identified more than 680 Maryland laws that rely on the term "driver" or "operator."[5]

SB 909 acknowledges this problem with identifying the "operator" of an AV and provides a definition. Specifically, the bill defines "operator" as the "automated driving system," which in turn is defined to be "the hardware and software that are collectively capable of performing the entire dynamic driving task on a sustained basis." SB 909 3:15-18, 5:29-33. However, this approach to defining the "operator" of an AV is flawed in that it substantially undermines the enforcement of vehicle laws regarding AVs. Critically, the "automated driving system" is not a legal person. A pedestrian who is hit by an AV cannot bring a lawsuit against a collection of "hardware and software." Likewise, a law enforcement officer cannot issue a ticket to the electronic brain of an AV. A law that identifies the "automated driving system" as the "operator" makes about as much sense as declaring that the steering wheel of a traditional vehicle is a "driver" of that vehicle.[6]

Enforcement mechanisms need to target a legally responsible actor, not a part of a car. By defining the "operator" to be the "automated driving system," the proposed bill substantially undermines the consequences of violating Maryland Rules of the Road and thereby limits the enforcement of these laws regarding AVs. This is particularly troubling given that the bill does not require that an AV demonstrate any level of capability before being deployed on Maryland roads, requiring only that AVs be "capable of operating in accordance with the Maryland Vehicle Law." *Id*. at 5:29-30. In contrast, to be licensed to operate motor vehicles on Maryland roads, human drivers must actually demonstrate their ability to operate motor vehicles in accordance with Maryland law by passing various tests.

Other provisions of the bill do not offset this reduction in enforcement mechanisms for Maryland vehicle laws. For instance, while the bill requires that an AV be "capable of operating in accordance with Maryland law" it does not provide any verification mechanism or certification for that "capability." *Id*. Moreover, the safety enforcement mechanisms described in the bill either (1) are substantially less robust than those for conventional vehicles or (2) will require a substantial expansion of oversight by the Maryland Department of Transportation. Notably, the bill nowhere addresses the ticketing of AVs for violating traffic laws or lawsuits by accident victims. For instance, the required First Responder Interaction Plan does not address ticketing or victim recovery. *Id*. at 5:12-24.

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3 Md. Code Ann., Transp. § 11-115 (West 2024).

4 *Id*.§ 11-142 (West 2024).

5 Hubbard & Starger, *supra* note 1, at 2319.

6 I discuss additional concerns with defining the "driver" or "operator" to be the "automated driving system" in one of my articles. Hubbard, *supra* note 1, at 154-56.

Instead, the bill states, "If the Administration has information … indicating that an autonomous vehicle … may endanger persons on the highway, the Administration may issue a request for relevant information to the person who submitted the first responder interaction plan." *Id*. at 7:23-28. Based on that information, the Administration may ultimately revoke the AV's permission to operate in Maryland, but only after (1) giving an AV provider "a reasonable time" to respond, (2) "considering and evaluating all responses," and (3) potentially holding a hearing. Naturally, because AVs are new technologies Maryland officials currently have a limited capacity to scrutinize and oversee sophisticated AV companies. Substantial investment would be required to expand those administrative resources to provide oversight on par with the traditional application of Rules of the Road by law enforcement.[7]

For all of these reasons, I recommend that a provision be added to the bill stating that (1) the person who submitted the first responder interaction plan ***certifies*** that the autonomous vehicle is capable of operating in accordance with the Maryland Vehicle Law, and (2) the person who submits this certification may be issued a traffic citation or other applicable penalty if the vehicle fails to comply with traffic or motor vehicle laws. This type of approach has already been adopted in three states: Arizona, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania.[8] Under this approach, the enforcement of Maryland vehicle laws regarding AVs would more closely align to that for conventional vehicles.

In sum, given the problems with identifying the "driver" or "operator" of an AV, it is vital that Maryland update its laws to support the deployment of AVs. As a Maryland citizen and a legal scholar, I am excited to see lawmakers working on these issues. However, Maryland's AV laws should also ensure that AVs obey Maryland's Rules of the Road by identifying an entity that is responsible for violations. **For the foregoing reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 909 with the amendment described above**.

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[7] The bill also prohibits local governments from stepping in to fill this enforcement gap. The bill prohibits any "state agency or local political subdivision" from prohibiting the operation of fully autonomous vehicles or adding any requirements regarding "the operation of fully autonomous vehicles." SB909 7:12-17.

[8] Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 28-9702(C)(2) (2025); La. Stat. Ann. § 32:400.3-400.4 (2025); 75 Pa. Cons. Stat. § 8510.1 (2025). I discuss further the merits of this approach in one of my articles. *See* Hubbard, *supra* note 1, at 163-66.

SB0909_FAV_MTC_Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Veh

Uploaded by: Drew Vetter

Position: FAV

MARYLAND TECH COUNCIL
ADVANCING LIFE SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 4, 2026
Senate Bill 909 – *Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles*
POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Tech Council (MTC), with over 800 members, is the State's largest association of technology companies. Our vision is to propel Maryland to be the country's number one innovation economy for life sciences and technology. MTC brings the State's life sciences and technology communities into a single, united organization that empowers members to achieve their goals through advocacy, networking, and education. On behalf of MTC, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 909.

Senate Bill 909 would create a legal framework in Maryland for fully autonomous vehicles (AVs), creating a pathway for motor vehicles to operate without a human driver. The bill sets standards for how these vehicles can be used on public roads and highways in Maryland and addresses necessary safety and data privacy issues.

AV technologies are a major area of research and investment nationwide. States that create predictable and forward-looking regulatory environments are best positioned to attract capital investment, high-skilled jobs, research partnerships, and pilot programs. AV providers, such as Waymo, are already safely serving customers in cities across the United States. Data from the sites where Waymo is currently operating is highly encouraging. Over 127 million rider-only miles driven through the end of September 2025 shows that, compared to benchmarks for human driving, Waymo Driver has been involved in 90% fewer serious injury or worse crashes, 82% fewer airbag deployment crashes, and 81% fewer injury-causing crashes. Senate Bill 909 sends a strong signal that Maryland intends to compete in this rapidly evolving sector.

Importantly, the bill prioritizes safety. Requirements that autonomous vehicles be capable of achieving a minimal-risk condition, comply with applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards, and provide detailed first-responder interaction plans demonstrate a balanced approach that promotes innovation without compromising public welfare. The inclusion of accessibility requirements further ensures that emerging mobility solutions can benefit all Marylanders.

The bill's provisions preventing inconsistent local restrictions also provide necessary uniformity. A statewide framework is critical for companies developing and deploying autonomous technologies, as patchwork regulations would significantly hinder deployment and investment.

Maryland is home to world-class research institutions, federal laboratories, cybersecurity firms, and advanced technology companies. Senate Bill 909 builds on that foundation by modernizing our transportation laws to accommodate emerging automated mobility systems.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 909.

For more information call:
Andrew G. Vetter
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Christine K. Krone
410-244-7000

SafeRoadsMD Supports SB 909.pdf
Uploaded by: John Seng
Position: FAV

SafeRoadsMD

PLEASE SUPPORT SB 909
"Vehicle Laws –
Fully Autonomous Vehicles"

MARYLAND COALITION FOR ROADWAY SAFETY, INC. URGES MD SENATE JPR COMMITTEE SUPPORT FOR SB 909

March 2, 2026

TO:
Honorable Senator William C. Smith, Chair
Honorable Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland General Assembly
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

FROM:
John Seng, Chair
SafeRoadsMD - Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.
(202) 468-7682, JSeng@SafeRoadsMD.org, SafeRoadsMD.org

Subject: Asking Your Support for SB 909 "Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles"

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Members of the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is John Seng, founder and chair of SafeRoadsMD, the Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc. We are 100 percent committed to one goal: reducing roadway deaths in Maryland to zero.

Consistent with ZeroDeathsMD and Vision Zero principles, we believe zero is not an aspiration. It is the standard and non-negotiable goal. But zero is a very low number.

More than 5,000 people have been killed on Maryland roads in the past decade. Behind each number is a family, a friend, a life permanently altered. SafeRoadsMD is not aware of any serious public or private criticism of roadway safety innovation among those families. When you have lived through preventable loss, you do not resist tools that may prevent the next tragedy. You demand them.

The single largest contributor to roadway fatalities is human behavior — speeding, impairment, distraction, aggressive driving, and failure to obey traffic laws. Maryland has spent decades and tens of millions engineering around these behaviors. We redesign intersections. We build safer crosswalks. We install signals and cameras. These efforts matter — and they save lives — but they are costly, time-intensive and constrained by limited state and municipal budgets.

We cannot reconstruct every dangerous roadway in Maryland fast enough to reach zero.

Autonomous vehicle technology introduces something different. It removes — or dramatically reduces — the most volatile variable in the system: unlawful and unsafe human driving behavior.

An autonomous vehicle does not drink.
It does not text.
It does not speed to "make up time."
It does not treat Maryland highways as a sport venue.

It moves from Point A to Point B at the legal speed, obeying signals, yielding appropriately, maintaining safe following distance.

That is not theoretical. That is observable, measurable behavior.

Autonomous vehicles are not a trade-off. They are not a substitute for infrastructure improvements. And they are not, by themselves, the solution to roadway violence.

But they may represent a significant step toward zero.

If deployed responsibly under the framework outlined in SB 909 — including minimal-risk requirements, first responder coordination, crash reporting, and insurance safeguards — autonomous vehicles will begin adding millions of safe, law-abiding driving miles to Maryland roads. Miles driven without impairment. Without distraction. Without aggression.

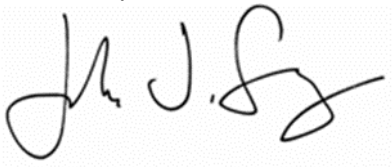
Like we have never seen before.

Much of our success will depend on public trust. The public must see — and experience — that safety comes first. Confidently assuming that autonomous systems demonstrate consistent compliance with traffic laws and measurable reductions in crash risk, they will set a powerful example of what disciplined, lawful driving looks like.

SafeRoadsMD believes SB 909 moves us forward — with urgency, but with guardrails — toward a transportation system where preventable deaths are no longer accepted as the cost of mobility.

We welcome this innovation with open arms — and with 100 percent safety in mind. We respectfully urge your favorable report for SB 909.

Sincerely,



John J. Seng
Chair
Maryland Coalition for Roadway Safety, Inc.

cc: Rev. Dr. R. Screen, R. Weiss - Route 210 Safety Committee; SafeRoadsMD Board

PDF_[MD] SB 909_AVs_FAV_TechNet.pdf
Uploaded by: margaret durkin
Position: FAV

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March 2, 2026

The Honorable Will Smith
Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland Senate
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 909 (Love) - Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles – Favorable

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of TechNet, I'm writing to share our support of SB 909.

TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50-state level. TechNet's diverse membership includes 103 dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents five million employees and countless customers in the fields of information technology, artificial intelligence, e-commerce, the sharing and gig economies, advanced energy, transportation, cybersecurity, venture capital, and finance.

Autonomous vehicles (AVs) enable tremendous societal benefits by improving road safety, increasing access to transportation for all, enhancing efficiency of goods movement, creating jobs, helping to reduce congestion, and meeting consumer demand, while promoting innovation and growth across various sectors of the economy. Accordingly, TechNet supports policies that encourage the safe and efficient deployment of AVs on public roads in the United States. States should avoid adopting policies that will create, increase, or maintain barriers to the testing, development, and deployment of this technology and the benefits that come with it.

TechNet supports SB 909 as the bill aligns with the 25 other states that have passed authorizing AV language. We support and prioritize harmonization of laws between jurisdictions to avoid a patchwork of policies that may stifle or impede innovation. We believe that this bill promotes policies that lead to a clear pathway for driverless commercial operations. Additionally, this bill is a business friendly model and technology neutral. SB 909 will foster continued innovation in the industry in Marland, avoid picking winners and losers, prioritize public safety, and protect intellectual property.

TECHNET
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TechNet views AVs and related technology as job creators, with the AV industry playing a critical role in enhancing state and local economies, economic competitiveness, and opportunity overall. Thank you for your work on this important issue and please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

Margaret Durkin

Margaret Durkin
TechNet Executive Director, Pennsylvania & the Mid-Atlantic

FINAL 2026 MD SB 909 Testimony - Robert Melvin.pdf
Uploaded by: Robert Melvin
Position: FAV

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Testimony from:
Robert Melvin, Northeast Region Director, R Street Institute

In SUPPORT of Senate Bill 909, "Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles."

March 4, 2026

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Chairman Smith and members of the committee,

My name is Robert Melvin, and I am the Northeast region director at the R Street Institute. The R Street Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy research organization. We engage in policy analysis and outreach promoting free markets and limited, effective government in a variety of policy areas, including technology and innovation policy. It is for this reason we want to share our support for Senate Bill 909.

SB 909 establishes a comprehensive policy framework to govern the deployment of highly autonomous vehicles (AVs) in Maryland, permitting their operation without a human driver so long as they meet applicable federal safety standards and comply with state traffic laws.[1] In addition to authorizing deployment, the legislation sets minimum insurance thresholds, defines accountability when automated driving systems are engaged, and requires the submission of first responder engagement protocols to ensure public safety preparedness.

To prevent regulatory fragmentation, SB 909 precludes a patchwork of conflicting local rules and ensures consistent standards across Maryland. It authorizes autonomous vehicles for transportation networks and other for-hire services, broadening consumer access and enabling full market participation. The bill also updates outdated equipment statutes by exempting vehicles designed exclusively for autonomous operation from requirements written for human drivers, allowing vehicle design to evolve without being tethered to obsolete assumptions.

Critically, risk is internalized through the private insurance market through this measure. By establishing minimum coverage requirements when automated driving systems are engaged, the bill allows insurers to serve as de facto safety regulators through pricing. Typically, insurance carriers will require performance data, evaluate system safety, and adjust premiums based on crash outcomes. As a result, systems that perform poorly will face higher costs, while safer technologies will benefit from lower premiums. This market-based accountability serves as an ongoing incentivization mechanism spurring safety improvement without relying on prescriptive government design mandates built for human-driven vehicles. In effect, it aligns innovation with responsibility and strengthens overall roadway safety.

Recent trends in Maryland indicate a troubling rise in roadway fatalities, with the number of fatal crashes climbing from 535 in 2019 to 621 in 2023.[2] While multiple factors contribute to this increase, human error remains a leading cause—including impaired driving, reckless or aggressive behavior, and distracted driving.[3] Maryland ranks 44th nationally for traffic congestion—meaning it is among the more congested states, with only six ranking worse—and the financial toll of gridlock is substantial, costing drivers an estimated $638 to $2,183 annually depending on their location..[4] Although no single policy can resolve these complex transportation challenges, SB 909 represents a meaningful step toward improving safety and mobility in Maryland.

SB 909 has the potential to reduce costs for Maryland drivers. Research indicates that when autonomous vehicles operate at the front of traffic flow, they can smooth driving patterns, reduce stop-and-go conditions, and lower overall fuel consumption by as much as 42 percent.[5] By improving traffic efficiency, AV integration could translate into meaningful savings at the pump while also easing congestion on Maryland's roadways, and considering the insurance market factors it has the potential to drive down fatalities.

A recent analysis conducted by Swiss Re, one of the world's leading reinsurers, examined liability claims associated with 25.3 million miles driven by fully autonomous robo-taxis. The findings indicate that autonomous vehicles significantly outperform human drivers in safety outcomes, showing an 88 percent reduction in property damage claims and a 92 percent decline in bodily injury claims.[6] Overall, the data suggests AVs are approximately 10.4 times safer than conventional drivers, with their safety performance improving at a rate that effectively doubles every five years.[7] In the relatively rare cases where collisions do occur, the evidence frequently points to human drivers as the primary cause rather than the autonomous system.[8]

Additional evidence further underscores the safety advantages of autonomous vehicles. Compared to the average human driver, AVs were associated with 62 percent fewer police-reported crashes, 78 percent fewer injury-related collisions, and 81 percent fewer airbag deployments.[9] These reductions have significant economic implications. According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, motor vehicle crashes generate roughly $23 billion annually in medical costs across the United States.[10] A 90 percent reduction in collision rates could translate into approximately $20.7 billion in annual savings.[11] Although improving roadway safety and easing congestion are compelling reasons to permit AV deployment in Maryland, the broader economic benefits also warrant serious consideration.

Considering that AV deployment is capital-intensive, companies will need to invest in fleet infrastructure, maintenance hubs, remote operations centers, and other areas. This legislation will help drive private investment in Maryland. One analysis projects that the autonomous vehicle sector could generate up to 455,000 new jobs nationwide over the next 15 years, with roughly 190 positions created for every 1,000 AVs deployed on the road.[12] For a state currently ranked as the sixth most innovative in the country, embracing this emerging industry presents a meaningful opportunity to reinforce that standing.[13] By establishing a supportive framework for deployment, this proposal could help draw additional private investment and further solidify Maryland's position as a hub for technological advancement.

Although some skepticism remains, autonomous vehicle technology is far from untested or speculative. It has already been deployed at scale in numerous states, and Maryland currently permits on-road testing of these systems.[14] Advancing this legislation would simply move the state from limited testing to

full authorization, aligning Maryland with the 26 other states that have already approved autonomous vehicle deployment on their highways.[15]

Ultimately, SB 909 advances multiple policy objectives at once—enhancing roadway safety, reducing congestion pressures, and supporting innovation-driven economic expansion. For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 909.

Thank you,

Robert Melvin
Northeast Region State Government Affairs Director
R Street Institute
rmelvin@rstreet.org

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Favorable SB0909 AV Standards.pdf
Uploaded by: Ronza Othman
Position: FAV

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to give a favorable report to SB0909. This bill establishes standards for the use of fully autonomous vehicles in Maryland. This bill also ensures that the mobile application interface for such services are accessible to those with disabilities and that individuals with disabilities are able to use such AVs free from discrimination.

Blind and low-vision Marylanders depend on transportation options including rideshare to move about our communities, attend medical appointments, go to and from work, and so on; we do not drive ourselves, and thus we depend on other means besides our own vehicles. Rideshare is one major method we use to travel. However, we have experienced significant discrimination when using rideshare services where there is a human operator. Our members report regular, sometimes daily, rideshare denials from individual drivers of companies like Uber and Lyft. Though these denials tend to be regular and frequent for guide dog users, they are alarmingly common for those who use a long white cane as well. Inherent in a system that depends on people is a system that is capable of discrimination. AV technology eliminates this discrimination, because an AV doesn't know or care if I have a guide dog or a long white cane, and it won't bring its preconceived notions or incorrect stereotypes when deciding whether or not to leave blind and disabled passengers standing at the curb, causing them to miss doctor's appointments or be late to work.

The NFB has been working with the autonomous vehicle industry to ensure that AV technology is nonvisually accessible. Washington, DC, and other nearby jurisdictions have laws and regulations in place that enable their residents to use AV technology, or they are in testing phases meaning this technology will be coming to an end user soon. In fact, Baltimore City has begun testing autonomous vehicles so such vehicles can learn the traffic patterns and transportation culture in Baltimore.

Virginia and the District of Columbia are also working to enact legislation that would bring AV technology to those jurisdictions; if Maryland does not also do so, an individual would have to switch vehicles at the state line, but with Maryland, the District, and others being part of a single transportation system and community, this would be frankly silly and disruptive. We believe Maryland should have the same access for AV users as nearby jurisdictions.

Some may raise concerns about this technology with regard to safety. The reality is that AV technology is safer than human-operated vehicles, because an autonomous vehicle will not drive drunk, or text while driving, or fall asleep while driving, or drive while distracted.

A recent media story about an AV that got lost in an airport parking lot discounts that human operators routinely get lost in parking lots, drive the wrong-way on a one-way street, and so on. The benefit of an AV is that the monitors can get it straightened out fairly quickly, whereas human operators will continue to be lost, etc.

Another common objection relates to AV's that experience mechanical difficulty simply dying on the road with no way to move them. Modern human-operated vehicles die on the road all the time, and the controls of such vehicles these days make it so those vehicles lock up in the same way as AVs; the difference is that someone is monitoring the AV all the time and can send help right away.

Another common criticism of AVs is that individuals have been injured in collisions involving AVs. One commonly cited incident involves a child who was run over by an autonomous vehicle. What the critics conveniently leave out of the story is that a human-operated vehicle actually caused the collision, forcing the child into the pathway of the AV. No human operator would have been able to avoid that particular collision either. Moreover, these critics fail to account for the safety records and the comparably very low incidents of collisions involving AVs compared with human drivers.

Another criticism of AV technology is potential job losses for human drivers. There will always be a role for human drivers, including for those who prefer a human, for food delivery services, for functions requiring security, for medical transport, and so on. It is simply unacceptable to hold the disabled community and others hostage to an industry that has consistently failed us, particularly due to discriminatory practices and behavior. This bill is essentially about giving riders choices.

The bottom line that those who subscribe to the theory that a human is necessary to operate a vehicle are out of touch. Farm equipment, airport equipment, construction equipment, and other industries have been using AV technology for years.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report on SB0909. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
Ronza Othman, *President NFBMD* | 15 Charles Plaza, #3002, Baltimore, MD 21201 **|** 443-426-4110**|** www.nfbmd.org

SB 909 Fully Autonomous Vehicles Love wttn.docx.pd
Uploaded by: Sara Love
Position: FAV

Sara N. Love
Legislative District 16
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Judicial Proceedings Committee

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 909 - Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, it is my pleasure to present Senate Bill 909 - Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles.

Fully autonomous vehicles are operated without a human driver. SB 909 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.

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. By passing SB 909, 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.

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.

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.

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 909.

SB909 HB1295 AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES 2026 - MAJ Writte

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Position: FWA

2026 WRITTEN TESTIMONY

VEHICLE LAWS - FULLY AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

SB909/HB1295 - FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

The Maryland Association for Justice (MAJ) supports the concept of this legislation, but would like to discuss the matter in further detail to make sure the rights of consumers and injured Marylanders are protected. Virginia recently enacted similar legislation with collaboration between all stakeholders. MAJ would encourage a similar approach to make certain legislation of this magnitude is appropriately crafted.

Our concerns include the following:

- Clarity is not provided regarding the "driver" or "operator" of the autonomous vehicle. While responsibility falls upon the Automated Driving System, under the bill, further detail must be provided regarding what entity is responsible for the ADS safe operation – perhaps a certificate holder or the manufacturer, all of which must demonstrate the financial ability to respond to a judgment or judgments for damages arising from the operation on Maryland roads. A court must be able to determine jurisdiction and other disputes when a claim is filed subsequent to vehicle law violations. Further, a certificate holder and manufacturer must submit to the jurisdiction in Maryland prior to the operation on Maryland roads, otherwise foreign companies operating vehicles in Maryland would be able to avoid the jurisdiction of the Maryland courts.

- Regarding "Automated Driving System":
  - The definition must also account for the reasonable expectations of the user so that the onus remains on the manufacturers and third-party retailers to provide accurate information to users on what a system can and cannot perform; and
  - The bill should make clear that a violation of Maryland Vehicle Law or Regulation regarding motor vehicle operations by the Automated Driving System that causes harm to another person is negligence per se.

- The Registration and permitting process for autonomous vehicles must make clear that no presumption is created in the process as to the safety of the vehicle or its equipment.

(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

About Maryland Association for Justice

The Maryland Association for Justice (MAJ) represents over 1,250 trial attorneys throughout the state of Maryland. MAJ advocates for the preservation of the civil justice system, the protection of the rights of consumers and the education and professional development of its members.

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2026 WRITTEN TESTIMONY

VEHICLE LAWS - FULLY AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

SB909/HB1295 - FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

- The removal of Autonomous Vehicles from the Maryland Vehicle Laws which apply to "human drivers" is dangerous and, at a minimum, needs to be studied to provide to for alternative language – not removal from application.

- Fully autonomous vehicles are most akin to for-hire vehicles and commercial vehicles and therefore,
  - the appropriate level of insurance to provide for financial responsibility for liability is $5,000,000, such coverage shall be primary and also apply to uninsured motorist benefits; and
  - the terms of use should not force consumers into binding arbitration, for example Virginia law provides: No manufacturer, vehicle owner, autonomous operation certificate holder, remote operator, on-demand autonomous vehicle network, or other person subject to the provisions of this chapter shall enter into, enforce, or offer to enter into mandatory dispute arbitration agreements or forum selection clauses with any passenger, human driver, or other individual riding in, hailing, or involved in a crash or collision with a fully autonomous vehicle subject to the provisions of this chapter operated in the Commonwealth.

Maryland Association for Justice urges a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS Report on SB909 / HB1295.

About Maryland Association for Justice

The Maryland Association for Justice (MAJ) represents over 1,250 trial attorneys throughout the state of Maryland. MAJ advocates for the preservation of the civil justice system, the protection of the rights of consumers and the education and professional development of its members.

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SB909_Favorable.amendment_STEER Tech AnujaSonalke
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STEER
Your Car Needs to Park. You Don't.

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March 4, 2026

The Honorable William Smith
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Favorable with Amendment- Senate Bill 909 – Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members,

Howard County-based STEER Tech offers the following information for the Committee to consider favorably reporting Senate Bill 909 – Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles with amendment.

STEER Tech is Maryland's first automated vehicle company to receive MVA registration and won Maryland's first AV project in partnership with MTA to use AV parking solutions for over-subscribed transit stations. The company has since evolved beyond passenger vehicles into fleet and yard management, utilizing its proprietary level 4 automated vehicle hardware and software technology to improve efficiency, safety and operations for both commercial and defense clients. STEER's deployments are engineered with cybersecurity-by-design principles aligned with international automotive security standards, ensuring that autonomy is implemented responsibly within critical infrastructure environments.

SB 909 is a pivotal step toward solidifying Maryland's position as a leader in this rapidly growing field of transportation technology. The benefits of AV technology have been well documented: improved safety, better use of infrastructure, leading to reduced traffic congestion; fuel efficiency, environmental benefits and enhanced accessibility. Promoting innovation and the widespread deployment of AVs could help ensure a safer, more sustainable future for transportation.

This bill provides a process to allow the AV tech ecosystem to flourish and grow in Maryland. By the Committee favorably considering SB 909, it will create new business and job opportunities across sectors like technology, manufacturing, infrastructure, and data analysis. As demand for skilled workers in these fields increases, the technology will stimulate ongoing economic development with broad potential across both the public and private sectors.

While STEER Tech believes that Senate Bill 909 is in line with Maryland's longstanding efforts to support critical advancements in AV technology and build public trust in technology, there has been one critical oversight: a failure to include Maryland-based AV stakeholders in the regulatory establishment process. To ensure that small businesses and industries have a seat at the table to protect competition and innovation in the state, STEER Tech respectfully requests an amendment to the legislation that would direct the establish an Automated Vehicle Regulatory Framework Committee to include individuals from industry, including both small and large companies, member(s) of the CAV Working Group, member(s) of the Maryland Tech Council, and law enforcement. Suggested amendment attached.

STEER Tech believes a well-defined regulatory approach will not only provide the necessary clarity for companies investing in this technology but will also ensure that robust safety, cybersecurity and operational standards are established to safeguard Maryland's residents. Therefore, STEER Tech respectfully requests that the Committee give a favorable report and consider an amendment to Senate Bill 909, given the positive impact this bill could have on the future of autonomous vehicles and economic development in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Anuja Sonalker, President & CEO
STEER Tech, Annapolis Junction, MD

Suggested Draft Amendment
Purpose: To ensure small businesses have a voice as MDOT implements the provisions of SB 909

AN ACT concerning
Automated Vehicle Regulatory Framework Planning Committee

FOR the purpose of establishing the Automated Vehicle Regulatory Framework Planning Committee (the "Committee"), specifying the membership, duties, and duration of the Committee, requiring the inclusion of individuals from the automated vehicle industry, law enforcement, and technology sectors, and providing for the termination of the Committee.

BY adding to
Article – Transportation
Section [X-XX]
Annotated Code of Maryland

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Automated Vehicle Regulatory Framework Planning Committee is hereby established for a two-year term to study and develop recommendations for the creation of a regulatory framework for automated vehicles in Maryland, including safety, economic impact, public awareness, and integration with existing infrastructure; the Committee shall include members from the automated vehicle industry (both large and small companies), the Connected and Automated Vehicle (CAV) Working Group, the Maryland Tech Council, local law enforcement agencies, the Maryland Department of Transportation, the Office of the Attorney General, and any other stakeholders as appointed by the Governor; the Committee shall meet quarterly and report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly at the end of the two-year term, at which time the Committee shall terminate unless extended by the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that this Act shall take effect on [insert effective date].

MAJ_Testimony_SB909_HB1295.pdf
Uploaded by: Daniel Hinkle
Position: FWA

TESTIMONY
SB 909 / HB 1295
Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles
Maryland General Assembly, 2026 Session
Submitted by Daniel Hinkle

Senior Counsel for Policy and State Affairs
American Association for Justice
On Behalf of the Maryland Association for Justice

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland State Senate

Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates

Re: Favorable with Amendments to SB 909 / HB 1295 – Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Dear Senator Smith, Delegate Korman, and Members of the Committees:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Maryland Association for Justice in opposition to SB 909 and HB 1295 as drafted. The objection is not to the deployment of automated vehicle technology on Maryland roads. The objection is to deploying it without the accountability structures that passengers, pedestrians, and the communities these vehicles will operate in deserve—and that the technology demands.

Maryland is not the first state to grapple with these questions. Virginia Senate recently passed SB 670, a comprehensive automated vehicle law that addresses each of the gaps identified in this testimony. Maryland should look to Virginia's framework as a model. The technology is the same. The roads are similar. The accountability standards should be too.

I. When a Automated Vehicle Hurts Someone, Maryland Should Know Who Is Responsible

When an automated vehicle causes a crash, the first question every victim, first responder, and family member will ask is: **who is accountable?** SB 909 and HB 1295 do not answer that question—and that silence benefits corporations over the people they could harm.

The bills require only that someone submit a First Responder Interaction Plan before operating. That is a notification, not accountability. There is no named responsible party, no approved permit, and no one legally on the hook when something goes wrong. Without a designated

responsible party written into law, AV companies can point fingers at each other—the software developer, the vehicle manufacturer, the fleet operator—while injured Marylanders wait for answers.

Virginia's SB 670 solved this directly. It requires an Autonomous Operation Certificate issued to a named certificate holder who is legally responsible for the safe operation of every commercial AV on its roads. Law enforcement knows who to call. Injured parties know who to hold accountable. Regulators know who to investigate. Maryland's bills provide none of that clarity.

Corporations that want to profit from Maryland roads should be required to put their name on the line for the safety of every passenger and pedestrian who shares those roads.

II. Maryland Should Prohibit Forced Arbitration Clauses That Shield AV Companies from Accountability

SB 909 and HB 1295 contain no protection against mandatory arbitration. That means AV companies could quietly bury fine-print clauses in their terms of service that strip crash victims of their ability to hold these corporations accountable for personal injury or death claims.

Forced arbitration removes disputes from public courts and places them into private proceedings where the company selects the arbitrator, the process is secret, and outcomes cannot be appealed even if the arbitrator gets the law wrong. It is a system designed by corporations, for corporations. A passenger injured in an automated vehicle crash in Maryland could be forced into this rigged process—one written into a terms-of-service agreement they clicked through simply to hail a ride.

Virginia's SB 670 bans mandatory arbitration and forum selection clauses with passengers, human drivers, and crash victims outright. Maryland should do the same. If an AV company harms a Marylander, that Marylander deserves their day before an impartial decision-maker—not a process stacked against them from the start.

III. A Notification Requirement Is Not a Safety Gate–Maryland Should Require a Real Driver License System

The goal is not to make it difficult to operate in Maryland. The goal is to make sure the right people can always get the right answers. Under SB 909 and HB 1295, there is no state approval, no denial authority, and no mechanism to say "not yet" if a company's safety record raises serious concerns. A straightforward operator registration requirement—name your company, certify your system meets the standards, identify your point of contact—would accomplish everything Maryland needs without creating a bureaucratic barrier to entry.

The difference between a notification and a permit is the difference between informing the government and being accountable to it. When something goes wrong at 2 a.m. on I-95, there should be a name, a number, and a responsible party—not a void. Virginia's certificate system provides exactly that. Maryland's bills do not.

We make human drivers get a drivers license before they operate a motor vehicle—why should corporate drivers get an easier pass? Because they drive multiple vehicle at once?

IV. Maryland's Enforcement Framework Misunderstands What It Is Regulating

SB 909 and HB 1295 treat what's different about automated vehicles like it is a change in the cars. It does this by treating the remedy for a defect a vehicle registration suspension. That logic is incorrect—what's different about automated vehicles is the driver, not the car.

Suspending the registration of one vehicle while the same automated driving system continues operating in dozens or hundreds of others is not safety enforcement. Law enforcement must be empowered to hold the operator accountable when there is dangerous conduct. Consider the analogy: if a human driver causes a serious crash due to reckless behavior, the answer is not to impound that one car and allow them to drive another the next day. The answer is to suspend the driver's license—to address the driver. The same logic must apply here.

When the automated driving system is the driver, enforcement must follow the driver. Maryland should have the ability to suspend or revoke an operator's authorization to deploy that system entirely—not play whack-a-mole with individual vehicle registrations while the rest of the fleet keeps operating. Virginia's certificate revocation model gets this right. Maryland's bills do not.

VI. Virginia Senate Passed a Good Bill – Maryland Should Model It

Maryland does not need to start from scratch. Virginia recently enacted SB 670, a comprehensive automated vehicle law that addresses every gap identified in this testimony. Virginia's law:

- Requires a named Autonomous Operation Certificate holder who is legally responsible for safe operation;
- Bans mandatory arbitration and forum selection clauses with passengers and crash victims;
- Establishes a state approval process so law enforcement, regulators, and the public always know who is accountable;
- Gives regulators the authority to revoke an operator's entire authorization—treating the automated driving system as the driver it is; and

Virginia drew a clear line: corporations that want to profit from Virginia's roads are accountable to Virginia's people. Maryland's bills, as written, draw no such line. The technology is the same. The roads are similar. The accountability standards should match.

Maryland should oppose SB 909 and HB 1295 as written and work with stakeholders to develop legislation that matches Virginia's accountability framework. The Maryland Association for Justice stands ready to assist in that effort and welcomes the opportunity to discuss these issues further.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Hinkle
Senior Counsel for Policy and State Affairs
American Association for Justice
On Behalf of the Maryland Association for Justice

Testimony SB 909_Final.pdf
Uploaded by: Jasmine Vasquez
Position: FWA

TESTIMONY REGARDING S.B. 909
Maryland Judicial Proceedings Committee
Wednesday, March 4 at 1:00 PM

Dear Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

I am India Herdman, Senior Policy Advisor at Tesla, and I am here today in support of Maryland S.B. 909, which establishes a forward-thinking framework for the safe deployment of fully autonomous vehicles (AVs) in the state. Tesla applauds Maryland's effort in modernizing transportation policy and fostering innovation while prioritizing safety and accessibility.

Tesla designs and manufactures electric vehicles, battery systems, and advanced autonomous driving technology. We are a proud American manufacturer with over 100,000 U.S. employees, and we build everything in-house to make advanced, affordable products at scale. Tesla is working to ensure that AV technology is developed and built in the U.S. and deployed globally.

Safety is Fundamental

Tesla believes that autonomous driving technology is the future, and we work every day to lead the transition to safer, sustainable, and affordable transportation. The U.S. is experiencing what the Department of Transportation has described as a "national crisis" in motor vehicle safety -- 40,000 people die on U.S. roads every year.[1] At Tesla, our vision is a future where AVs eliminate human error altogether.

Our Full Self-Driving (FSD) Supervised system, a Level 2 advanced driver-assistance system, already demonstrates a seven-fold improvement in crash prevention compared to the U.S. average.[2] Independent data backs this: vehicle insurer Lemonade recently slashed rates for Tesla drivers by 50% for miles driven with our FSD (Supervised) system engaged due to proven risk reduction.[3]

With FSD (Supervised) data as the foundation of our training technology for our Level 4 fully autonomous operations, we can achieve a greater level of roadway safety. AVs promise a technology that can eliminate collisions, injuries and fatalities associated with high-risk human behavior such as impaired, distracted, and drowsy driving. Our teams work tirelessly to address this epidemic by developing our automated driving systems and designing the safest vehicles from the ground up.

Economic Growth and Job Creation

S.B. 909 positions Maryland to lead in the AV-driven economy. Research shows AV adoption could create three million new U.S. jobs by 2035, including roles in manufacturing, maintenance, and software development, reduce delivery and consumer costs, and boost annual earnings for the average worker. In fact, studies indicate that the workforce needed to produce and maintain AVs could reach almost half a million, which would provide incredible job opportunity to Americans with varied backgrounds and experiences. Tesla, with over 100,000 U.S. employees, builds AV technology in-house to scale production and create high-quality jobs.[4]

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[1] *NHTSA Estimates 39,345 Traffic Fatalities in 2024,* NHTSA (Apr. 8, 2025), https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-estimates-39345-traffic-fatalities-2024.

[2] *Vehicle Safety Report*, Tesla, https://www.tesla.com/fsd/safety.

[3] *See* Abhirup Roy, *Lemonade to cut insurance rates for Tesla drivers in endorsement of EV maker's software technology,* Reuters (Jan. 21, 2026), https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/lemonade-halve-tesla-insurance-rates-miles-driven-with-software-assistant-2026-01-21/.

[4] *See Securing America's Future Energy*, America's Workforce and the Self-Driving Future 9 (2018), https://avworkforce.secureenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/SAFE AV Policy Brief.pdf; *see also Opportunity AV: How Many and What Types of Jobs Will Be Created by Autonomous Vehicles?*, Chamber of Progress (Mar. 2023), https://progresschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Opportunity-AV-How-Many-and-What-Type-of-

Accessibility and Equity

At Tesla, we believe AVs will create an autonomous future that is accessible to everyone. For example, vehicles used in our autonomous driving service, Robotaxi, are designed to support various accessibility needs, including room for service animals, screen readers, app-based verbal location assistance, and information available in 29 languages. We are relentlessly innovating and iterating to expand mobility, independence, and access to opportunity for all. By removing barriers to mobility, AVs will empower underserved communities, including the disabled, rural residents and aging populations.

Data Privacy and Accountability

Tesla supports transparency in data collection and complies with strict privacy standards to safeguard personal information. We support consumer choice by allowing customers to elect when -- and how -- their data is used. In light of the bill's inclusion of vehicle data in Maryland's Online Data Privacy Act (MODPA), Tesla respectfully suggests two refinements: (1) personal information collected exclusively for safety events such as crash diagnostics should be carved out from MODPA applicability; and (2) personal information that remains on vehicle only (not centrally stored or uploaded) should also be exempt as this data cannot be used for any broader commercial profiling or tracking.

Proportionality of Enforcement Mechanisms

Commented [JV1]: New section added

Tesla respectfully requests removal of §21-1510, which would revoke licensure to sell vehicles directly to consumers for violations of the AV subtitle. This provision disproportionately targets Tesla's business model as we are the leader in the direct-to-consumer model. S.B. 909 should ensure fair and impartial enforcement for all AV companies and should focus on correcting safety and compliance failures, rather than imposing heavy-handed, punitive measures that do nothing to enhance roadway safety.

Closing

At Tesla we believe AVs will substantially increase safety and accessibility along with spurring new economic activity. We stand ready to partner with the Committee to ensure safer roads, expanded mobility, and economic growth for the people of Maryland. With 34 states already allowing AV testing or deployment, Maryland has the opportunity to lead in this transformative technology.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.B. 909.

Submitted by:
India Herdman
Senior Policy Advisor, Public Policy & Business Development

Jobs-Will-Be-Created-by-Autonomous-Vehicles.pdf.

SB0909 Bikemore and CMTA Joint FWA Testimony.pdf
Uploaded by: Jed Weeks
Position: FWA

March 2, 2026

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SUPPORT IF AMENDED: SB0909 - Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Bikemore, Baltimore City's livable streets advocacy organization and the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance, a transportation advocacy organization with an agenda to improve and expand transportation options for the residents and businesses of Central Maryland, are writing to **support SB0909 if amended.**

Fully autonomous vehicles are coming. We recognize that. We also recognize the opportunity they can potentially bring–if well regulated–to enhancing safety for all road users, particularly vulnerable road users. In Baltimore City, we have two examples of new transportation technologies and regulation around them.

Our shared micromobility program is subject to local enabling legislation, oversight, and permitting. As a result, the Baltimore City Department of Transportation receives total transparency into the impact of shared micromobility on our transportation network. Secure, anonymized data is shared to a third party data host, allowing both the public and transportation professionals to mitigate the negative impacts of the program and highlight the benefits. Worker protections, equity in pricing and deployment policies, and required community engagement are baked into permits. **This program produces 4 million trips per year and is nationally recognized as a model to replicate.**

Our TNCs are regulated only by the state. The Baltimore City Department of Transportation has no insight into their impact on our transportation network. We gain no valuable data through these trips to learn travel patterns and trends and adapt our streets to accommodate them. Workers are abused. Drivers can avoid serving certain neighborhoods. **We are left with only measurable negative externalities.**

As drafted, this legislation would enable another version of the second model. In doing so, legislators would be saying that 25-pound bikes and scooters need more local, context-driven regulation than 5,000-pound driverless cars.

Baltimore City must have the ability to locally regulate and permit commercial autonomous vehicle operations. This could be accommodated with the following change to the legislation:

21–1506. A STATE AGENCY OR LOCAL POLITICAL SUBDIVISION MAY ~~**NOT**~~ PROHIBIT THE OPERATION OF FULLY AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES ON HIGHWAYS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE STATE AGENCY OR LOCAL POLITICAL SUBDIVISION OR OTHERWISE ENACT OR KEEP IN EFFECT RULES OR ORDINANCES THAT WOULD IMPOSE TAXES, FEES, OR OTHER REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIC TO THE OPERATION OF FULLY AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES.

If there are concerns that this is too broad, the committee should introduce an amendment that clarifies that *commercial* autonomous vehicle operations are subject to local permitting, taxes, and fees.

Please consider the positive impacts local permitting and regulation have had on new transportation technologies in Baltimore City, and to give this potentially promising new addition to mobility in our city the same local oversight so it has the best chance for success.

We encourage you to support SB0909 favorably only with the above-suggested amendment.

Sincerely,

Jed Weeks
Bikemore

Brian O'Malley
Central Maryland Transportation Alliance

Maryland SB 909 - AVs - FWA.pdf
Uploaded by: Joshua Fisher
Position: FWA

March 2, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB 909: Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles
Position: Favorable with Amendments

Chair Smith:

The Alliance for Automotive Innovation[1] (Auto Innovators) appreciates the opportunity to express our support, if amended, for SB 909. With the proper amendments, SB 909 will establish a legal framework that supports the full deployment of AVs and will better equip Maryland's residents, businesses, transportation system, environment, and law enforcement to take advantage of the benefits presented by this technology.

AVs Can Improve Safety

The cars and trucks that consumers are buying today are the safest vehicles ever built. Even so, more than 39,345 people died in traffic crashes in the United States in 2024, including 476 in Maryland last year[2][3]. The evidence shows that driver behavior – drivers who are impaired, unbelted, speeding, or driving recklessly – are significant factors in the increase in roadway fatalities. That is what vehicle safety is a priority and automated vehicle technology holds the promise to increase safety and reduce these numbers.

AV Deployment Is a Key Component of American Competitiveness

Autonomous driving has the attention of Washington, D.C., and the state's – and rightly so. Government has a role to play here, with governments at the state and federal level playing their traditional regulatory roles. Regulatory harmonization and coordination are key to creating a clear pathway for AV deployment and the significant safety, mobility and efficiency benefits that AVs promise. On top of the obvious safety benefits, AVs can provide accessible transportation options for seniors and individuals with disabilities and a chance to reduce traffic congestion and create new jobs and supply chains. All stakeholders should strive toward building trust within the AV ecosystem.

The sooner advanced automated driving systems can be brought to market and into the roadgoing fleet, the sooner the lifesaving promise of this technology may be realized. To fulfill this potential,

[1] From the manufacturers producing most vehicles sold in the U.S. to autonomous vehicle innovators to equipment suppliers, battery producers and semiconductor makers – Alliance for Automotive Innovation represents the full auto industry, a sector supporting 10 million American jobs and five percent of the economy. Active in Washington, D.C. and all 50 states, the association is committed to a cleaner, safer and smarter personal transportation future. www.autosinnovate.org.

[2] https://zerodeathsmd.gov/resources/crashdata/crashdashboard/

[3] https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-estimates-39345-traffic-fatalities-2024

our members – both automakers and technology suppliers – must have regulatory consistency and regulatory certainty. As you are aware, the design and planning of a new vehicle takes between 5-7 years, as the modern vehicle is comprised of over 30,000 parts, sourced from thousands of different suppliers, and each must be designed, integrated, produced, and assembled.

The longer it takes to get that regulatory structure, like SB 909, in place, the more skittish AV developers are going to get, especially when there is competition for capital for other pressing priorities related to electrification and battery manufacturing everywhere. Even if we don't get our act together in the U.S., the technology isn't going away. We'll cede our AV leadership to China and other nations already setting the right conditions to make AVs a reality.

Requested Amendments

While we support the general direction of the bill, it will benefit from suggested amendments. Innovative technologies that can make a difference have already been developed or are well on the way to being made commercially available. As introduced, the bill does not currently account for Level 3 ADS equipped vehicles, which are currently in the marketplace. Relevant definitions should be added to permit the operation of L3 vehicles by private owners in the state. Without this clarity, manufacturers are unlikely to bring Level 3 technology to the state's marketplace.

We also suggest amending the hearing requirements to ensure that suspensions and restrictions do not remain in place indefinitely or for long periods of time due to administrative delays. This mirrors language in other AV bills and laws that contain similar enforcement regimes.

As originally drafted, subsection (c) would mandate that all AVs be equipped with a user interface, which would not be necessary or relevant to all AVs. We would also have concerns with imposing what could be a design requirement, given the federal government's role in establishing uniform vehicle design requirements. State specific vehicle design requirements are an obstacle to innovation, and we suggest a more tailored approach.

Conclusion

AVs hold tremendous promise for a cleaner, safer, smarter future for mobility, but only if we work together on smart policies, like SB 909, that are modernized to address the tremendous opportunities that AV technologies hold when it comes to improving roadway safety and expanded mobility for millions of Americans. As our companies start to make plans and critical decisions about where and how and when to build and deploy these technologies, they need to know that policies are in place here in the U.S. that will support those plans and those decisions.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For more information, please contact our local representative, Bill Kress, at (410) 375-8548.

Sincerely,

Josh Fisher
Senior Director
Alliance for Automotive Innovation.

SB0909-JPR-FWA.pdf
Uploaded by: Nina Themelis
Position: FWA

BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB 0909

March 4, 2026

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 909 – Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 909 **with amendments**.

SB 909 establishes a comprehensive statewide framework governing the operation of fully autonomous vehicles (AVs) on Maryland highways. The bill permits operation without a human driver when the vehicle meets defined safety and performance standards, including the ability to achieve minimal risk in the event of system failure and compliance with Maryland Vehicle Law. It also requires submission of a First Responder Interaction Plan before deployment and authorizes the Motor Vehicle Administration to review and restrict unsafe vehicles as needed.

The legislation clarifies that, when active, the automated driving system is considered the vehicle operator for the purposes of Maryland Vehicle Law. It establishes registration requirements and creates clear insurance standards. At the same time, the bill sets limits on personal and biometric data collection, limiting the potential of this technology for mass surveillance. However, SB 909 restricts the ability of jurisdictions to regulate AVs in any meaningful way. Allowing unrestricted testing of AVs within the public Right-of-way creates unnecessary public risk in addition to other negative externalities stemming from operational and logistical needs surrounding deployment.

As such, the BCA respectfully requests the revision of language preempting jurisdictions from creating reasonable safeguards around the testing and deployment of AVs on roads in Baltimore City and our peer jurisdictions. The State must work in coordination with local jurisdictions to ensure that we are working collaboratively toward allowing autonomous vehicles on our roadways. Given that Baltimore City is a densely populated urban environment, we believe that we will be more highly impacted than most other jurisdictions and need to retain the ability to regulate the presence of autonomous vehicles within our boundaries. The Administration should be required to share all notices concerning autonomous vehicles that are not in safe mechanical condition with the relevant local jurisdictions in which the vehicles are operating to ensure our

local public safety entities are able to ensure that only vehicles in safe operating condition are on our roadways. Each company that seeks to operate autonomous vehicles within Baltimore City should be subject to local regulatory oversight and controls before deployment in order to determine the parameters of their operations and ensure that the localized impacts of such operations are taken into consideration. The safety and welfare of our residents is of critical importance and we must be able to provide safeguards to the hundreds of thousands of Baltimore City residents and millions of annual visitors as this technology is tested on our roadways.

For the above stated reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 909, **with the above amendments**.

SB0909 - LOS wA - MVA - Vehicle Laws - Fully Auon

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FWA

March 4, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support w/ Amendments – Senate Bill 909 – Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 909, with amendments, as an important adaptation of Maryland transportation law to accommodate modern technology while supporting a growing industry that caters to underserved communities' mobility needs.

SB 909 establishes a statutory framework for the operation of fully autonomous vehicles (AVs) on Maryland roadways. Additionally, the bill establishes that certain data collected by fully autonomous vehicles is subject to the Online Data Privacy Act.

The MDOT wants to note that it has worked with the sponsor and stakeholders on this legislation. We appreciate the willingness of the sponsor to work with us on this critical legislation.

The MDOT recognizes that AVs provide a tremendous opportunity to improve safety on the roadways, transportation accessibility, and resilient supply chains. As of 2025, 26 states have passed laws that enable the testing and deployment of autonomous vehicles on public roads. While the number of vehicle-related fatalities and injuries across the State has seen a recent decrease, the MDOT believes more can be done to address the loss of life and personal injury. MDOT's Serious About Safety initiative is designed to provide the safest transportation network in the nation. As a Vision Zero state, the MDOT is committed to doing everything in our power to support the State's goal of eliminating all vehicle-related deaths and serious injuries on our roadways by 2030. The MDOT sees the successful deployment of fully autonomous vehicles as a component of an effective safety strategy.

The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) has taken a lead role in guiding the development of Connected and Autonomous Vehicle (CAV) policy in Maryland. The MVA has chaired the CAV working group since 2015 to unite all interested parties and collaborate on the issue, including industry, first responders, business development, safety advocates, and government; this has been recognized as a successful model across the country. While the MVA has issued a number of permits under existing statutory authority to entities to test CAVs in Maryland, there are currently no active testing permits in Maryland.

The framework for SB 909 would expressly authorize the use of AVs within their designated operational design domain. The vehicle would be considered the driver of the vehicle, and there would be no need for human driving intervention. The vehicle's liability limits would apply, and the vehicle owner would be liable for its operation. In short, with this legislation, AVs would essentially be treated as any other vehicle on the road, except that the vehicle could not subject to citation for laws naturally applying to only 'human' behavior, such as impaired and distracted driving.

The MVA's role would be to issue a distinctive registration and to collect and disseminate information on the registered AV to first responders. It would require a new process for registering these vehicles, but the MVA system is already capable of recording the level of autonomy for a vehicle. The MVA is already familiar with dissemination of first responder plans through the current testing permit process.

For the safety of people on Maryland's roads, SB 909 would authorize the Administration to suspend the registration of an AV if the vehicle presents safety concerns. The MDOT appreciates this inclusion following discussion with the stakeholders on this issue last year.

The MDOT is in conversation with the sponsor regarding – and will continue to collaborate on – amendments to SB 909. Specifically, these amendments include strengthening the MVA's ability to receive critical safety-related data from companies, manage the distinct differences and unique considerations around light and heavy duty/commercial motor vehicles, and enhance the MVA's intervention authorities when needed for safety.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information during its deliberation and grant Senate Bill 909 a favorable report with the proposed amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine E. Nizer
Administrator
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration
410-787-7830

Matthew Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1102

selfdriving.pdf
Uploaded by: Travis Lerol
Position: FWA

To whom it may concern,
While I generally approve of the desire to permit driverless vehicles, the general approach of this legislation would be prohibitive for an individual, and would limit such vehicles to relatively large entities running fleets.

It is of the utmost importance that we avoid using law to enshrine corporate power as superior to the individual, and that everyone has true equality in access to education. In particular, the first responder interaction plan is a burden on individuals, and should be removed, and the requirement for a fleet support specialist is even worse, being blatantly discriminatory towards the individual relative to the corporation.

If the pro-corporate monopoly provisions are removed, the bill would be a valuable addition.

Thank you,
Travis Lerol

SB 909 Fully Autonomous Vehicles.Hubbard Testimony

Uploaded by: Will Hubbard

Position: FWA

TESTIMONY IN PARTIAL SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 909

Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicle

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Professor Will Hubbard, University of Baltimore School of Law
DATE: March 2, 2026

I am a professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law. My academic research focuses on legal aspects of innovation, including the regulation of autonomous vehicles under state law.[1] I offer this written testimony in my capacity as an academic researcher. **I support Senate Bill 909 with amendments.**

This bill authorizes the use of "fully autonomous" vehicles on Maryland roads, provided that certain conditions are met. SB 909 4:22-24. As an innovation scholar, I applaud Maryland's efforts to support the deployment in our state of new technologies, like autonomous vehicles ("AVs").[2] These vehicles have the potential to offer great benefits. Computerized drivers eventually may be safer than average humans, and self-driving technologies may extend the benefits of driving to people who otherwise cannot drive, including those with disabilities. Nevertheless, like any motor vehicle, AVs pose dangers to many people, including passengers, other drivers, and pedestrians. Consequently, AVs should still be subject to some legal oversight. The regulation of AVs thus involves a delicate balance: providing sufficient regulation to ensure safety while also encouraging the development and deployment of new technologies. I am concerned that SB 909 needs amendment to strike the right balance.

Every state has enacted laws designed to ensure that motor vehicles are operated safely. These laws, like speed limits and obeying traffic signals, are familiar to anyone who drives. Importantly, many of these laws target the conduct of "drivers" and "operators." For instance, Section 21-302 of the Maryland Transportation Code states, By targeting the conduct of "drivers" and "operators" these laws identify a person who will be responsible for violations. Holding that person responsible encourages lawful behavior.

Unfortunately, the identity of the "driver" or "operator" of an AV is unclear. In AVs, the person in the driver's seat may not be performing the kinds of tasks we traditionally think of as driving. That person may behave more like a passenger. In some AVs, there may not even be a person in the driver's seat at all. As a result, our traditional notions of "driver" may not make sense with AVs. After all, the basic goal of these technologies is to relieve humans of the burdens of

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[1] Two of my articles directly address automated vehicles. William Hubbard & Colin Starger, *The Collision Course Between Outdated State Laws and Automated Vehicles*, 46 CARDOZO L. REV. 2319 (2025), The Collision Course Between Outdated State Laws and Automated Vehicles | Cardozo Law Review; William Hubbard, *Drivers of Effective Laws for Automated Vehicles*, 70 VILLANOVA L. REV. 115 (2025), Drivers of Effective Laws for Automated Vehicles | Published in Villanova Law Review.

[2] I consider the terms "autonomous" and "automated" interchangeable in this context and use the term "AV" to address both.

driving. Current statutory definitions do not help to identify the "driver" or "operator" of an AV. The Maryland Transportation Code defines "driver" as "any individual who drives a vehicle."[3] Maryland law defines "operator" simply as being equivalent to "driver."[4] With no clear "driver" or "operator" for an AV, the application of laws addressed to "drivers" and "operators" is likewise unclear. For instance, if an AV does not have a "driver" is it subject to the law that states that "[d]rivers of vehicles that are going in opposite directions shall pass each other to the right"? This is no small problem. My scholarship has identified more than 680 Maryland laws that rely on the term "driver" or "operator."[5]

SB 909 acknowledges this problem with identifying the "operator" of an AV and provides a definition. Specifically, the bill defines "operator" as the "automated driving system," which in turn is defined to be "the hardware and software that are collectively capable of performing the entire dynamic driving task on a sustained basis." SB 909 3:15-18, 5:29-33. However, this approach to defining the "operator" of an AV is flawed in that it substantially undermines the enforcement of vehicle laws regarding AVs. Critically, the "automated driving system" is not a legal person. A pedestrian who is hit by an AV cannot bring a lawsuit against a collection of "hardware and software." Likewise, a law enforcement officer cannot issue a ticket to the electronic brain of an AV. A law that identifies the "automated driving system" as the "operator" makes about as much sense as declaring that the steering wheel of a traditional vehicle is a "driver" of that vehicle.[6]

Enforcement mechanisms need to target a legally responsible actor, not a part of a car. By defining the "operator" to be the "automated driving system," the proposed bill substantially undermines the consequences of violating Maryland Rules of the Road and thereby limits the enforcement of these laws regarding AVs. This is particularly troubling given that the bill does not require that an AV demonstrate any level of capability before being deployed on Maryland roads, requiring only that AVs be "capable of operating in accordance with the Maryland Vehicle Law." *Id*. at 5:29-30. In contrast, to be licensed to operate motor vehicles on Maryland roads, human drivers must actually demonstrate their ability to operate motor vehicles in accordance with Maryland law by passing various tests.

Other provisions of the bill do not offset this reduction in enforcement mechanisms for Maryland vehicle laws. For instance, while the bill requires that an AV be "capable of operating in accordance with Maryland law" it does not provide any verification mechanism or certification for that "capability." *Id*. Moreover, the safety enforcement mechanisms described in the bill either (1) are substantially less robust than those for conventional vehicles or (2) will require a substantial expansion of oversight by the Maryland Department of Transportation. Notably, the bill nowhere addresses the ticketing of AVs for violating traffic laws or lawsuits by accident victims. For instance, the required First Responder Interaction Plan does not address ticketing or victim recovery. *Id*. at 5:12-24.

Instead, the bill states, "If the Administration has information … indicating that an autonomous

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3 Md. Code Ann., Transp. § 11-115 (West 2024).

4 *Id*.§ 11-142 (West 2024).

5 Hubbard & Starger, *supra* note 1, at 2319.

6 I discuss additional concerns with defining the "driver" or "operator" to be the "automated driving system" in one of my articles. Hubbard, *supra* note 1, at 154-56.

vehicle … may endanger persons on the highway, the Administration may issue a request for relevant information to the person who submitted the first responder interaction plan." *Id*. at 7:23-28. Based on that information, the Administration may ultimately revoke the AV's permission to operate in Maryland, but only after (1) giving an AV provider "a reasonable time" to respond, (2) "considering and evaluating all responses," and (3) potentially holding a hearing. Naturally, because AVs are new technologies Maryland officials currently have a limited capacity to scrutinize and oversee sophisticated AV companies. Substantial investment would be required to expand those administrative resources to provide oversight on part with the traditional application of Rules of the Road by law enforcement.[7]

For all of these reasons, I recommend that a provision be added to the bill stating that (1) the person who submitted the first responder interaction plan *certifies* that the autonomous vehicle is capable of operating in accordance with the Maryland Vehicle Law, and (2) the person who submits this certification may be issued a traffic citation or other applicable penalty if the vehicle fails to comply with traffic or motor vehicle laws. This type of approach has already been adopted in three states: Arizona, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania.[8] Under this approach, the enforcement of Maryland vehicle laws regarding AVs would more closely align to that for conventional vehicles.

In sum, given the problems with identifying the "driver" or "operator" of an AV, it is vital that Maryland update its laws to support the deployment of AVs. As a Maryland citizen and a legal scholar, I am excited to see lawmakers working on these issues. However, Maryland's AV laws should also ensure that AVs obey Maryland's Rules of the Road by identifying an entity that is responsible for violations. **For the foregoing reasons, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 909 with the amendments described above**.

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[7] The bill also prohibits local governments from stepping in to fill this enforcement gap. The bill prohibits any "state agency or local political subdivision" from prohibiting the operation of fully autonomous vehicles or adding any requirements regarding "the operation of fully autonomous vehicles." SB909 7:12-17.

[8] Ariz. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 28-9702(C)(2) (2025); La. Stat. Ann. § 32:400.3-400.4 (2025); 75 Pa. Cons. Stat. § 8510.1 (2025). I discuss further the merits of this approach in one of my articles. *See* Hubbard, *supra* note 1, at 163-66.

HB 1295 - Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Uploaded by: Brian Wivell

Position: UNF

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1300

126 W. 25th Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218
Telephone: 410-889-3566 Facsimile: 410-243-5541
www.atu1300.org

Proudly representing the transit workers of the MTA!

HB 1295 / SB 909 - Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles
Unfavorable
House Appropriations Committee & Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 4th & 5th, 2026

ATU Local 1300 represents over 3,000 transit workers at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). This includes bus operators, bus mechanics, rail operators, rail maintenance workers, and more. Our members keep Maryland moving every day.

No matter what any company tells you, autonomous vehicles are not fully autonomous. At least not yet. They still require human intervention and assistance on occasion (See Appendix 1 & 2). So bills that legalize so-called autonomous vehicles in 2026 are really bills that allow unrestricted experimentation of new, potentially dangerous technology on our roads that is still clearly working on resolving major issues. All Maryland drivers and pedestrians are thrown into this experiment with them. We are the guinea pigs.

Even cities that are further along in their launches are dealing with the consequences. San Francisco had to shut down its entire Waymo fleet during a power outage because the "autonomous vehicles" couldn't handle navigating in traffic without the traffic lights. Simple parades leave Waymos baffled. Residents living next to Waymo parking lots are stuck listening to uncontrollable beeping noises.

So why is this bill here today? What's the rush? It's because for the second time in little over a decade Silicon Valley is asking for legislators to throw out the existing laws that they have in place to set commonsense regulations of an industry (e.g. requiring a human driver, or requiring companies to pay payroll taxes, etc.). Tech companies are allergic to regulation and safeguards. They ideologically view it as an impediment to their ability to "innovate." Move fast and break things is their motto. What they actually bristle at is that safety regulations cost money. Moving slow and taking our time to get things right costs them money.

Waymo, just like Uber in 2013, would rather make some mistakes and even flex the boundaries of the law to gamble at the chance of being the big winner in this new market. Waymo has made its business model one where it loudly and publicly announces that it is "entering a new market" then turns around to use that pressure and interest to request that legislators change laws to allow them to operate. Legislators should not fall for this trick a second time.

Just learn from the example of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs). Uber got a generation of people hooked on "rideshare" platforms. We were sold a promise that people would drive for TNCs in their spare time. We were promised cheap rides. What we got was half a decade of subsidized transportation at a loss for the companies until the moment they had destroyed their Taxicab competitors and undermined public transit. Now TNC ride prices have skyrocketed. Those very same companies unveil products (e.g. Uber Shuttle) that mimic public transit.

The only thing that TNCs substantively achieved was taking hundreds of thousands of workers out of formal W-2 employment and putting them into a shadow “gig economy.” Now Waymo or Zoox will promise safer and even cheaper rides. Why should we believe them this time?

It is also worth noting that the State of Maryland’s Connected & Autonomous Vehicle Working Group clearly considers workers to be an afterthought. We do not believe that there were any worker representatives involved. Maryland’s transportation sector employs thousands of people. Is the plan to just unleash potentially mass unemployment causing technology in the sector and just let it run wild with no strategy? How is the state supposed to replace this tax revenue? How is the state supposed to find new employment for these workers? My greatest fear is that there is no plan. Just senseless “innovation” and “disruption” for the sake of disruption.

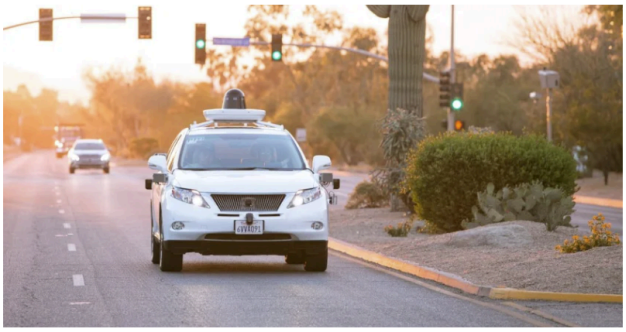
Appendix 1. Article from San Francisco Chronicle (2/9/26) and Reuters (2/17/26)

TRANSPORTATION

Waymo Says Its Robotaxis Get Help From Workers Overseas

In testimony before the U.S. Senate, a top Waymo executive revealed that the autonomous vehicle company uses remote workers in the Philippines to assist its self-driving cars.

February 09, 2026 • Aidin Vaziri, San Francisco Chronicle



Reuters World Business Markets Sustainability Legal Commentary Technology Investigations More

Waymo defends use of remote assistance workers in US robotaxi operations

By David Shepardson

February 17, 2026 4:58 PM EST · Updated February 17, 2026

A Waymo driverless taxi is shown driving in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, U.S., January 13, 2026. REUTERS/Mike Blake/File Photo

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Appendix 2. Article from Business Insider (5/16/25)

BUSINESS INSIDER Subscribe

DOW JONES -0.44% NASDAQ -0.32% S&P 500 -0.34% AAPL -0.52% NVDA +2.22% MSFT +1.52% AMZN -0.78% META +0.79% TSLA -0.17%

TRANSPORTATION

Tesla's robotaxi debut will be invite-only and have a lot of teleoperators, an analyst says. Here's what that could mean.

By Lloyd Lee + Follow

Tesla's robotaxi debut will include a small fleet of Model Ys, CEO Elon Musk said. Stanislav Kogiku/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

May 16, 2025, 11:50 PM ET Share Save

The analyst also wrote that the robotaxis will operate on public roads, that the service will be invite-only, and that there will be many teleoperators on hand.

"Public roads. Invite only. Plenty of tele-ops to ensure safety levels ("we can't screw up")," Jonas wrote. "Still waiting for a date."

In the context of robotaxis, teleoperators often mean that a remote employee can take some level of control of the vehicle, typically when the autonomous driver gets stuck.

Appendix 3. WKRN Coverage of Stranded Waymo Blocking Ambulance During Austin Mass Shooting

Waymo blocks ambulance during shooting response in Austin, Texas

News / Mar 2 / 2026, 6:11 AM EST

Waymo blocks ambulance during shooting response in Austin, Texas

Waymo robotaxi blocks EMS responding to Austin mass shooting

Nicole Cobler

Add Axios on Google

Waymo has been expanding its presence in Austin and across the U.S. In Austin, riders can call a Waymo through the Uber app. Photo: Brandon Bell/Getty Images

A Waymo robotaxi picking up a passenger near Sunday morning's mass shooting in Austin blocked an ambulance from reaching the scene, according to a bystander video. Waymo and EMS officials confirmed the video shows the company's vehicle blocking the ambulance.

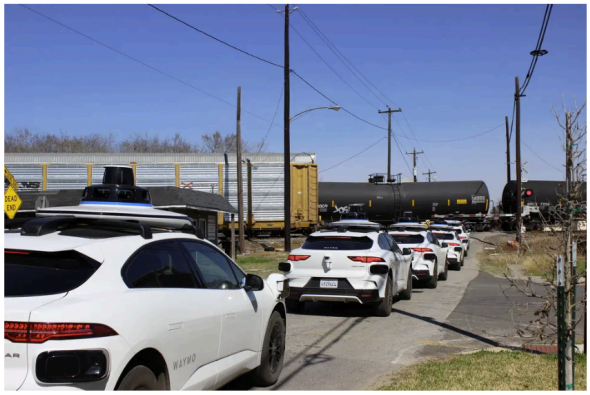
Appendix 4. Houston Chronicle Coverage of Waymo Issues with Rail Crossing

HOUSTON CHRONICLE Subscribe

LOCAL // TRANSPORTATION

Self-driving Waymo cars stack up at Fifth Ward rail crossing, blocking driveways and blaring horns

By **Octavia Johnson**, *Staff Writer*
Feb 25, 2026



Appendix 5. Articles by Futurism (12/17/25) and ABC 7 News (12/6/25)

ADVANCED TRANSPORT | SELF-DRIVING VEHICLES

CRAZY TAXI

Waymo Paralyzed by Parade, Blocks Traffic for 45 Minutes

"All the pedestrian activity just made it shut down, though folks weren't directly in the way."

By Joe Wilkins / Published Dec 17, 2025 1:12 PM EST

snazzymustache via Instagram

abc7 EYEWITNESS NEWS 24/7 Live | San Francisco East Bay South Bay Peninsula North Bay

SOCIETY

3 Waymo self-driving cars in 'standoff' cause traffic jam in San Francisco

Monday, December 8, 2025

The video shows three self-driving Waymo cars blocking a residential street after two of them appeared to have hit each other. The third seemed to have stopped when it sensed the others.

SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- Video captured three Waymo self-driving cars frozen in an apparent "standoff" on a residential street in San Francisco.

Written Testimony - SB909.pdf
Uploaded by: David Pendleton
Position: UNF

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Chairperson/Director

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March 2, 2026

SB909 -Vehicle Laws Fully Autonomous Vehicles - Unfavorable

To the Honorable William C. Smith Jr., Chair, Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

My name is David Pendleton, I am the Director of the Maryland Safety and Legislative Board for the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal Air Rail and Transportation Workers, SMART. Our members in the State of Maryland are employees of CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, Amtrak, Canton Railroad and MARC (Amtrak & Alstom). We are Conductors, Locomotive Engineers, Yardmasters, Switchmen and Utility Workers. We are the **TRAIN UNION**

I am urging the committee to vote Unfavorable for **SB909.**

SB909 would open Maryland's public roads to testing for fully autonomous driving technology that when fully implemented would undoubtedly lead to unsafe roads, tens of thousands of job losses in the State and hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenue to the General Fund.

There are an estimated fifty thousand delivery and twenty thousand trucking jobs in Maryland. This sector is the most used path to enter into the Middle Class. Often only requiring only a high school diploma and a CDL license to get started. This one subsection of the transportation sector generates $4.6 billion in wages and pays $276 million in income taxes annually to the Maryland General Fund.

This technology threatens to eliminate not only these jobs, but also the tens of thousands of rideshare, bus, and passenger van driving jobs in this sector. Considering that $4.6 billion in wages paid to the middle class equals $4.6 billion in economic activity to the State, this technology not only threatens these jobs, but when multiplied across the sector, threatens the economic destruction of the State of Maryland.

There are so many questions around this technology. Here are some simple questions that need to be answered before considering this bill:

What's the plan to replace the lost revenue? How would the State pay for unemployment benefits? How would services lost in hard hit communities all throughout the State due to revenue reductions be restored? What's the State's plan to replace close to 100k jobs? What's the State's plan for retraining workers? Would there be a place left for the middle class in Maryland?

Before fully embracing this potentially destructive technology, I hope these questions will be answered. With these things in mind, I urge an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,
David Sr
David Pendleton Sr., Chairperson/Director
Maryland Safety & Legislative Board
SMART Transportation Division

SB 909:HB 1295_AFSCME3_UNF.pdf
Uploaded by: Denise Gilmore
Position: UNF

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Email: info@afscmemd.org

Patrick Moran – President

SB 909/HB 1295 – Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 4, 2026

Environment and Transportation Committee
March 5, 2026

Position: UNFAVORABLE

AFSCME Council 3 represents 55,000 public servants across Maryland's state and local agencies, public schools, and higher education institutions. Our membership includes thousands of highly skilled CDL drivers who safely transport our students to public schools each day and across our university campuses, and they operate heavy equipment across our state, county, and toll roads. We want to both protect these vital jobs and the safety of the Marylanders our members serve.

Lack of Labor Inclusion
As drafted, SB 909/HB 1295 ignores the voices of organized labor. Unlike other states where labor organizations have partnered with legislatures to shepherd in new technology safely, this bill was crafted in a vacuum. During the January 29, 2026, briefing, MVA Administrator Christine Nizer admitted that despite autonomous vehicle (AV) testing occurring in Maryland since mid-2017, labor has never been brought to the table. We cannot support a framework that excludes the very workers most impacted by its implementation.

Proven Safety Risks
Maryland must not rush into an AV expansion while the technology remains unreliable in critical safety scenarios. Recent data suggests these vehicles struggle with basic traffic safety:

- **School Bus Safety:** In January 2026, the NTSB opened an investigation into Waymo vehicles in Austin, Texas, for failing to stop for school buses loading and unloading children.

- **Emergency Response Interference:** In late 2025 and 2023, driverless vehicles from Waymo and GM Cruise repeatedly breached active fire scenes in Los Angeles and San Francisco, obstructed first responders, and, in one instance, required firefighters to smash a window to stop the vehicle.

- **Unreported Collisions:** Tesla's robotaxi service in Austin reported three collisions, including one injury, within its first month of deployment.

AFSCME, along with other Labor partners nationally, are for instance involved in with legislative efforts in Missouri and Washington State at the moment to regulate the use of AVs. Here in Maryland, AFSCME Council 3 also supports a strong minimum state safety standard for AVs, provided it includes policy measures to prevent worker displacement and robust workforce development. However, any legislation with this level of impact on the workforce must move forward with the deep involvement of organized labor not just the input of a single industry.

For these reasons, AFSCME Council 3 urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB 909/HB 1295.

SB909_OPP.pdf
Uploaded by: Elizabeth Bobo
Position: UNF

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SB 909 - Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 4, 2026

OPPOSE

Elizabeth Bobo

Legislative Director

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong opposition to SB 909.

SB 909 authorizes fully autonomous vehicles to operate on Maryland highways without a human driver, despite the absence of enforceable safety standards or meaningful oversight of the automated driving systems that would be entrusted with public safety. By allowing these vehicles on the road without proven safeguards, SB 909 exposes Marylanders to risks that are well-documented and entirely avoidable.

Real-world deployments show that autonomous vehicles are not ready for unsupervised operation. In Austin, Texas, autonomous vehicles were reported to have more than 20 incidents in which they illegally passed school buses with red flashing lights, putting children directly in harm's way.[1] These incidents triggered a company recall of the software. Because these vehicles rely on algorithms or remote human intervention from thousands of miles away, they often struggle in unpredictable, real-world situations. A study by Shengxuan Ding and Mohamed Abdel-Aty from the University of Central Florida found that self-driving cars "had a crash risk five times as great as human drivers at dawn or dusk, and nearly double the accident rate of human drivers when making turns."[2] These risks are especially concerning in densely populated cities with complex roadways. Much of the research on autonomous vehicles is preliminary, and many experts in the field have called for significantly more studies before concluding that AVs enhance safety. Between 2019 and late 2025, there were 5,202 reported autonomous vehicle crashes in the United States,

[1] "Waymo Issues Recall After Incidents With School Buses." John J. Malm & Associates Personal Injury Lawyers. December 2025.
[2] "Driverless cars are mostly safer than humans - but worse at turns." New Scientist. Jeremy Hsu. June 2024.

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resulting in 451 injuries or fatalities.[3] These numbers reflect a technology that is still experimental.

SB 909 treats the automated driving system as the "driver," even though these systems routinely fail to detect human bodies, unusual objects, and other cues that human drivers can interpret. The vision-based software that powers autonomous vehicles often struggles to correctly interpret complex or unusual environments. These systems malfunction in unpredictable ways, requiring human intervention to fix them. However, when no human is behind the wheel, will that intervention come quick enough? This bill also does not require an independent safety certification. Instead, it relies on manufacturer-submitted "first-responder interaction plans," which, while important, do not substitute for engineering review or mandatory safety testing. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the federal agency with expertise to regulate vehicle safety, has not established national safety standards for self-driving cars. In the absence of federal standards, Maryland needs to be cautious. SB 909 does the exact opposite: it preempts local governments and exempts autonomous vehicles from certain equipment laws designed to protect people. We strongly support local governments and municipalities the freedom to regulate the access of their roads to autonomous vehicles.

The legislation also threatens Maryland's transportation workforce. Overall, just under 3% of all workers in the United States are employed in driving occupations.[4] National estimates indicate that up to 5 million jobs could be lost due to self-driving vehicles.[5] Driving occupations including truck drivers, bus drivers, and taxi drivers would be the hardest hit. Entry-level driving jobs, which provide stable employment for thousands of Marylanders, are at significant risk of disappearing altogether. SB 909 offers no transition plan, no retraining, and no protections for the workers whose livelihoods will be displaced.

SB 909 is dangerous; it authorizes fully autonomous vehicles to operate without human drivers, without proven safety performance, and without the regulatory infrastructure needed to protect Marylanders. Maryland should not be a testing ground for unproven technology. Until autonomous vehicles can meet and consistently demonstrate safety

[3] "Autonomous Vehicle Accidents: NHTSA Crash Data (2019-2025." Craft Law Firm.
[4] "Stick Shift: Autonomous Vehicles, Driving Jobs, and The Future of Work." Dr. Algernon Austin, Ms. Cherrie Bucknor, Mr. Kevin Cashman, Dr. Maya Rockeymoore. Center for Global Policy Solutions. March 2017.
[5] "Rethinking Transportation 2020-2030." James Arbib, Tony Seba. May 2017.

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performance equal to or greater than human drivers, they should not be allowed to operate without a physical human behind the wheel on our roads.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable vote on SB 909.

SB 909 testimony.docx.pdf
Uploaded by: Miranda Lan
Position: UNF

METROPOLITAN BALTIMORE COUNCIL
AFL-CIO Unions

SB 909 Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles
Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 4th, 2026
Unfavorable

To: Chair & members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Courtney Jenkins, President, Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO Unions

Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Courtney L. Jenkins, and I am proud to serve as President of the Metro Baltimore AFL-CIO, representing thousands of union members and working families across our region. I write today in strong opposition to Senate Bill 909.

While this legislation is framed as forward thinking innovation, in reality it opens the door to the widespread deployment of fully autonomous vehicles without any meaningful protections for the workers whose livelihoods will be directly impacted. The transportation sector provides stable, middle class careers for thousands of Marylanders, including truck drivers, bus operators, delivery drivers, train workers, and other skilled professionals who move our economy every single day. These are jobs that put food on the table, pay mortgages, and support local businesses. SB 909 creates a clear pathway to replacing those workers with machines, with no transition plan and no safety net.

The bill contains technical standards for autonomous vehicles, but it is silent on the human cost. There are no worker retraining requirements, no wage protections, no job placement guarantees, and no workforce impact assessments. That omission speaks volumes. Innovation cannot come at the expense of working families. When technology is deployed without guardrails, it is not progress; it is displacement.

Beyond the economic threat, this legislation also raises serious safety concerns. Professional drivers are trained, licensed, and accountable. They make judgment calls in unpredictable conditions, respond to emergencies, and protect passengers and the public. Removing human oversight without clear safeguards prioritizes corporate interests over public safety and worker safety.

The Metro Baltimore AFL CIO believes in progress, but we also believe that progress must include working people. If the General Assembly wishes to explore autonomous vehicle policy, it must do so

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in a way that protects jobs, requires workforce impact studies, ensures meaningful human oversight, and includes organized labor at the table. Without those protections, Senate Bill 909 threatens good union jobs and weakens the economic foundation of our communities.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 909.

Thank you for your consideration.

Courtney Jenkins
President
Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO

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Teamsters Joint Council 62 - Oppose Senate Bill 90

Uploaded by: Thomas Doyle

Position: UNF

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Baltimore, MD 21223

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland Senate
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

March 4, 2026

Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

More than 15,000 Teamster members live, work, and raise their families here in the state of Maryland, including many thousands who drive vehicles for a living. We represent bus drivers who safely bring children to and from schools in Harford County; UPS members in their familiar brown uniforms who deliver packages to homes and businesses throughout the state; our members can be seen operating paratransit vehicles for WMATA throughout the DMV; we deliver groceries to stores throughout the city of Baltimore; our members can be found hauling heavy equipment to and from construction sites from Garrett County, all the way to the Eastern Shore. Wherever you go in this state, you are likely sharing the public roads with a member of Teamster Joint Council 62.

It is on behalf of these members that I write to you today in order to express my deep concern regarding Senate Bill 909. As the bill is currently written, our members would be forced to share the roads with fully autonomous driverless vehicles of any size, despite the fact that these vehicles have not proven that they are safe for operation. Until our members have been properly consulted and had their concerns heard, and until the state of Maryland has studied both the safety and economic impact of the deployment of fully autonomous commercial vehicles, we cannot and should not advance this legislation.

We urge you to bring together all relevant stakeholders – professional drivers, including Teamster members, representatives from public safety groups and law enforcement, and the small businesses across our state who would face an economic impact – for a comprehensive examination of these issues before we rush these vehicles onto our roads. These stakeholders, and the driving public, deserve to have their voices heard. There are still far too many

unanswered questions that our elected officials have a duty to answer before we can move such legislation forward.

On behalf of the members of Teamsters Joint Council 62, I strongly urge you to oppose Senate Bill 909.

Respectfully,

Sean Cedenio
President, Teamsters Joint Council 62

Teamsters Local 639, Oppose SB 909.pdf
Uploaded by: Thomas Doyle
Position: UNF

William Davis
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Scott Clark
Secretary-Treasurer

Wayne Settles
Vice President

Vernon Bollino
Recording Secretary

TEAMSTERS LOCAL 639

Affiliated With The International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Representing members in the following industries;
Drivers, Chauffeurs and Helpers, Dairy Delivery and Plant Processing, Law Enforcement, Public Employees, Bakery, Laundry and Allied Sales Drivers, Health Care Workers, Housekeeping and Laundry Aides, Gaming Industry and Casino Employees, Washington, D.C. and Metropolitan Area

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland Senate
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

March 4, 2026

Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

I write to you today on behalf of the more than 9,500 members of Teamsters Local 639 in order to express our deeply held concerns with Senate Bill 909.

The members of Local 639 drive every classification of vehicle on the public roads of Maryland; from our tractor-trailer drivers at UPS and Giant Foods, to paratransit operators with WMATA's MetroAccess program, our members deliver long awaited packages, keep the shelves of our stores fully stocked, and make our community more connected and accessible for everyone. Our members have dedicated years of their lives obtaining proper licensing and extensive training that keeps themselves and the motoring public safe on our roadways.

Let me be clear - the Teamsters do not oppose technology that would make our roads safer. Over the years, our drivers have trained and adapted to work in vehicles equipped with electronic logging devices, speed limiters, automatic emergency brakes, and more. However, this legislation is written in such a way that any and all autonomous vehicles would be given the green light to operate on our roads, even if they have not yet proven that that they can be safely driven. As written, SB 909 would allow any vehicle, of any size, to be operated without a driver. We need to ask ourselves - do we really believe that this technology is at a point where we can trust it to drive vehicles weighing as much as 80,000lbs on the roads next to our families? Do we really believe that there should not be a restriction on the transportation of hazardous materials? Any commercial truck driver can tell you about the enormous risks that come with operating a vehicle of that size and weight.

The legislation refers to the availability of a "fleet support specialist" who is supposed to assist with a vehicle in case of emergency – should we not have a requirement that this individual should be physically based in the state of Maryland, properly licensed to drive in our state, and familiar with our roadways? Recent testimony provided by the autonomous vehicle company Waymo in

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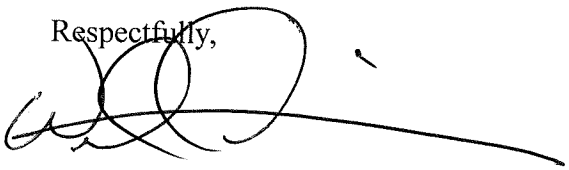
the United States Senate indicates that much of their technical support staff is based out of the country.

Our members are experts in their crafts and know just how much skill it takes in order operate their vehicles in a manner that is safe for themselves, other motorists, and pedestrians who use our public roadways. Until these critical stakeholders are properly engaged in discussions about the future operations of vehicles on our roads, we respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 909.

Respectfully,



William Davis
President, Teamsters Local 639

SB0909-JPR_MACo_LOI.pdf
Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko
Position: INFO

MARYLAND Association of COUNTIES

Senate Bill 909

Vehicle Laws - Fully Autonomous Vehicles

MACo Position: **LETTER OF INFORMATION**

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: March 4, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

MACo respectfully submits this Letter of Information on SB 909, 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.

SB 909 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.

Reason Foundation Comments on MD SB 909 (030226).p
Uploaded by: STEVEN GASSENBERGER
Position: INFO

Reason Foundation Comments on Senate Bill 909: Fully Autonomous Vehicles

Prepared for: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland Senate

Prepared by: Marc Scribner, Senior Transportation Policy Analyst
Reason Foundation

Date: March 2, 2026

Dear Chair Smith and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our organization's perspective on Senate Bill (SB) 909 and the issue of regulating vehicles equipped with automated driving systems (ADS). My name is Marc Scribner, and I serve as senior transportation policy analyst at Reason Foundation. We provide pro bono consulting to public officials and stakeholders to help them design and implement policies related to transportation and infrastructure. I am also a member of the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies' Standing Technical Committee on Developments and Advancements in Transportation Technology Law.

Our assessment of SB 909 is based on my more than 15 years of research on the law and policy related to driving automation. We share the goal of the sponsors to enable access to this safety-enhancing technology in Maryland, and believe SB 909 strikes the appropriate balance.

Specifically, we find:

- The definitions of key terms such as "automated driving system" and "dynamic driving task" conform to the international consensus technical standard, SAE International Recommended Practice J3016, *Taxonomy and Definitions for Terms Related to Driving Automation Systems for On-Road Motor Vehicles*;
- Required submission of first responder interaction plans to the Motor Vehicle Administration will enable adherence to the Automated Vehicle Safety Consortium (AVSC) Best Practice for First Responder Interactions with Fleet-Managed Automated Driving System-Dedicated Vehicles (ADS-DVs) (AVSC-I-01-2024);
- Collision reporting requirements avoid duplicating or contradicting the federal data reporting mandate established by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Standing General Order 2021-01;
- Financial responsibility requirements are consistent with the state of practice in the United States;
- Clarification of human-specific provisions related to the operation of commercial motor vehicles and equipment requirements reflects best practices; and

- Establishing statewide autonomous vehicle policy on the basis of nondiscrimination preserves traditional local government authorities to manage roadways and traffic.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on SB 909, and we welcome the opportunity to advise the legislature on this subject in the future.

Sincerely,

Marc Scribner
Senior Transportation Policy Analyst
Reason Foundation
marc.scribner@reason.org