



SENATOR DAVE CORTESE

SB 915: The Autonomous Vehicle Service Deployment and Data Transparency Act

SUMMARY

Right now, robotaxis and other autonomous vehicle services are operating in California communities without input from local government, concerned residents, emergency responders, or workers.

BACKGROUND

In California, only the Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) authorize and govern autonomous vehicle services, not local governments.

Over the last year, driverless vehicles have delayed transport and medical care, blocked emergency vehicles, and interfered during active firefighting and crime scenes. First responders have been forced to relocate their emergency vehicles because of wayward autonomous vehicles.

These events have sparked a backlash in San Francisco in recent months following a series of traffic snarls and accidents. In one incident, a pedestrian was run over and dragged by a Cruise vehicle after she was struck by another car. Although this resulted in the suspension of Cruise's deployment permit, the DMV only took disciplinary action after it became clear that Cruise misled California regulators about the severity of the event.

The San Francisco Fire Department has indicated that more than 70 driverless vehicles have interfered with emergency responders in 2023 alone.

Additionally, many communities have expressed concerns over the number of driverless vehicles allowed to operate on their local streets; hours allowed for service/operation; locations of vulnerable populations (e.g. schoolyards); and damage to local streets and roads with heavier than average displacement.

Unlike the process for regulating taxicabs, local government are not authorized to establish rules and regulations around the deployment of autonomous vehicle services.

THIS BILL

SB 915 would prioritize local control in the decision to deploy autonomous vehicle services. Contingent upon an autonomous vehicle service company receiving approval by the DMV and the CPUC, this bill would prevent deployment in a geographic location until a local government passes an ordinance authorizing operations.

Each city, county, or city and county that adopts an ordinance or resolution shall include, at a minimum, a policy for entry into the business of providing autonomous vehicle services. This policy must include and consider:

- Maximum rates for passenger fares (robotaxi)
- Establishment of vehicle caps
- Establishment of data transparency
- Establishment of interoperability for emergency responders
- A process of ensuring ADA accessibility
- Annual inspections for health and safety

By doing so, SB 915 will go a long way towards repairing the flawed approach that governs the deployment of robotaxis and similar services in California.

SUPPORT

California Teamsters Public Affairs Council (co-sponsor)
California Conference Board of the Amalgamated Transit Union (co-sponsor)
California League of Cities (co-sponsor)
California Labor Federation

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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