
HOUSE BILL 1649

State of Washington 63rd Legislature 2013 Regular Session

By Representatives Hudgins, Buys, Upthegrove, Bergquist, Ryu, and Pollet

Read first time 02/04/13. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to promoting innovation in the transportation
2 sector while ensuring safety by encouraging development of autonomous
3 vehicles; adding a new section to chapter 46.04 RCW; adding a new
4 chapter to Title 46 RCW; and providing an expiration date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the state does
7 not prohibit or specifically regulate the testing or operation of
8 autonomous technology in motor vehicles on public roads. It is the
9 intent of the legislature to encourage the safe development, testing,
10 and operation of motor vehicles with autonomous technology on the
11 public roads of the state.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 46.04 RCW
13 to read as follows:

14 "Autonomous technology" means technology installed on a motor
15 vehicle that renders it capable to drive without the active control of
16 or monitoring by a human operator. "Autonomous technology" excludes
17 active safety systems or driver assistance systems including, without
18 limitation, a system to provide electronic blind spot assistance, crash

1 avoidance, emergency braking, parking assistance, adaptive cruise
2 control, lane keep assistance, lane departure warning, or traffic jam
3 and queuing assistance, unless any system alone or in combination with
4 other systems enables the vehicle on which the technology is installed
5 to drive without the active control of or monitoring by a human
6 operator.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) For testing purposes, a person must
8 possess a valid driver's license to operate a vehicle controlled by
9 autonomous technology in autonomous mode, unless such testing occurs
10 entirely on a closed course.

11 (2) For purposes of this chapter, a person is deemed the operator
12 of a vehicle controlled by autonomous technology in autonomous mode
13 when the person causes the autonomous technology to engage, regardless
14 of whether the person is physically present in the vehicle while the
15 vehicle is operating in autonomous mode.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) A vehicle controlled by autonomous
17 technology may be operated on roads in this state by employees,
18 contractors, or other persons designated by manufacturers of autonomous
19 technology for the purpose of testing the technology.

20 (2) For testing purposes, a human operator must be present in a
21 vehicle controlled by autonomous technology such that he or she has the
22 ability to monitor the vehicle's performance and intervene, if
23 necessary, unless the vehicle is being tested or demonstrated on a
24 closed course.

25 (3) Prior to the start of testing, the entity performing the
26 testing must submit to the department proof of insurance or surety bond
27 acceptable to the department in the amount of five million dollars.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) A vehicle controlled by autonomous
29 technology must continue to meet federal standards and regulations for
30 a motor vehicle. The vehicle must:

31 (a) Have a means to engage and disengage the autonomous technology
32 that is easily accessible to the operator;

33 (b) Have a means, inside the vehicle, to visually indicate when the
34 motor vehicle is operating in autonomous mode;

1 (c) Have a means to alert the operator of the vehicle if a
2 technology failure affecting the ability of the vehicle to safely
3 operate autonomously is detected while the vehicle is operating
4 autonomously in order to indicate to the operator to take control of
5 the vehicle; and

6 (d) Be capable of being operated in compliance with applicable
7 traffic and motor vehicle laws of this state.

8 (2) Federal regulations promulgated by the national highway safety
9 administration supersede this section if found to be in conflict with
10 this section.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** (1) The department shall review statutes and
12 rules regarding autonomous vehicles and report to the transportation
13 committees of the legislature and the governor on June 30, 2026, with
14 recommendations on how to update and improve the statutes and rules.

15 (2) The department, in consultation with the department of
16 transportation and the Washington state patrol, shall provide written
17 notice to the legislature when large scale production and retail sale
18 of vehicles controlled by autonomous technology appears imminent. This
19 notice must include recommendations for the operation of such vehicles
20 by the general public.

21 (3) This section expires June 30, 2027.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** A person may not operate a vehicle
23 controlled by autonomous technology except as provided in this chapter.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** Sections 1 and 3 through 7 of this act
25 constitute a new chapter in Title 46 RCW.

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