



Senator Jerry Hill, 13th Senate District

SB 145 – facilitating deployment of driverless vehicles – factsheet

IN BRIEF

To help facilitate the safe and timely deployment of driverless vehicles, SB 145 eliminates the 180 day driverless vehicle application waiting period and also eliminates a legislative notification requirement.

THE PROBLEM

Current law governing the operation of autonomous vehicles contains an unnecessary provision that will delay their deployment. In 2012, the Legislature and Governor enacted SB 1298 (Padilla), authorizing the testing and operation of autonomous vehicles on California roads. Under that law, the DMV created regulations for testing autonomous vehicles with the presence of a driver in the car and is in the process of finalizing regulations for testing and operation of an autonomous vehicle without the presence of a driver.

Current law requires the DMV to notify the Legislature every time it receives an application for operation of an autonomous vehicle without the presence of a driver. Further, the statute states that an application for operation of an autonomous vehicle without the presence of a driver cannot be approved until 180 days has lapsed since the application was filed. This means that each and every time a manufacturer applies for a permit to operate autonomous vehicles without the presence of a driver, the DMV must notify the Legislature and it also means that an application cannot be approved by the DMV any sooner than 180 days.

The provisions were generally meant to keep the Legislature informed about the deployment of driverless vehicles. However, the Legislature has other means of staying informed, be it through oversight hearings or the budget process, and the notification provisions in current law will likely have the effect of delaying full driverless operation at a time when other states are aggressively pursuing the deployment of autonomous vehicles.

BACKGROUND

California is a leader in self-driving technology, a technology that was largely born here, in the labs of California's universities and technology companies. Our state is one of only a handful of states that has

taken steps to specifically authorize self-driving technology in state law to foster its development.

The technology has terrific potential to bring greater efficiency to our systems of transportation, to save lives, reduce injuries, and increase mobility, especially for those whose opportunities to travel even within their own neighborhoods are limited. It is well documented that the large majority of traffic accidents result from human error. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) assigns blame to the driver in 94% of crashes. By removing the driver from the equation, autonomous vehicles have the potential to reduce crashes and save lives.

Under the 2012 law, the DMV published regulations in 2014 to test an autonomous vehicle with a driver. Under the regulations any manufacturer wishing to test its cars – with a driver at the controls – simply needs to apply for a permit from the DMV, provide certain information, and pay a \$150 application fee. The application is usually approved within 72 hours. Once approved, manufacturers can test their cars in our state. The DMV is expected to this year put out final regulations for the testing and operation of autonomous vehicles without the presence of a driver.

The goal of the law and regulations is to balance the testing and deployment of a new transportation technology with reasonable rules that ensures integrity and confidence in its ability to safely transport passengers and cargo.

THE SOLUTION

SB 145 will eliminate the unnecessary requirement that the DMV notify the Legislature every time there is an application for operation of an autonomous vehicle without the presence of a driver. It will also eliminate the requirement that such applications wait 180 days before being approved.

SUPPORT

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Patrick Welch – 651-4013 – patrick.welch@sen.ca.gov