
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anthony Portantino, Chair
2019 - 2020 Regular Session

SB 59 (Allen) - Autonomous vehicle technology: Statewide policy

Version: April 1, 2019

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: May 13, 2019

Policy Vote: TRANS. 10 - 1, E.Q. 7 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Mark McKenzie

Bill Summary: SB 59 would require the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to convene an autonomous vehicle (AV) interagency working group to guide policy development for autonomous passenger vehicles based on specified principles, and report recommendations to the Legislature by January 1, 2021.

Fiscal Impact:

- Estimated one-time OPR costs in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 in 2020 for staff and administrative support to convene meetings of the working group, conduct research, and draft policy recommendations that further specified principles. (General Fund)

Background: Existing law authorizes the operation of autonomous vehicles on public roads for testing and non-testing purposes under certain circumstances subject to regulations adopted by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), as specified.

Existing law establishes OPR within the Governor's Office to assist the Governor and the Administration in planning, research, policy development, and legislative analysis. Among other responsibilities, OPR formulates long-range state goals and policies to address land use, climate change, population growth and distribution, urban expansion, and infrastructure development.

The UC Davis Institute of Transportation Studies (ITS) recently issued a series of policy briefs on what it characterizes as the three "revolutions" in transportation: automation, shared mobility, and electrification. According to ITS's research, through the convergence of these three revolutions, "there is a potential to mitigate the negative externalities of 20th century auto-oriented sprawl, negate any additional sprawl associated with automation, and provide rapid responses to enable sharing and electrification." Beyond the individual benefits offered by these technologies, such as enhanced safety and mobility, a unified, state-level policy on these "revolutions" could have benefits that include avoiding undesirable increases in vehicle-miles-traveled and greenhouse gas emissions and encouraging sustainable land use decisions and adoption of ZEV technology.

Under the Brown Administration, a California Multi-Agency Workgroup on AV Deployment was administratively established in 2017 with a mission to ensure that connected an AV transformation accelerates in California with clear environmental benefits and attention to equity issues, including consideration of effects of AVs on greenhouse gas (GHG) and criteria pollutant emissions, land use patterns, vehicle miles traveled (VMT), health, economic development, and equitable access.

On November 18, 2018 the Workgroup released a set of key principles for deploying AVs in alignment with the public interest and established state environmental and community goals that may be used to guide state policy going forward. Specifically, the document noted that deployment of AVs should maximize shared-use vehicles as an alternative to vehicle ownership, prioritizing pooling and ride-sharing, maximizing the use of low/zero emission vehicles, promoting “right-sized” (not oversized) vehicles for trip purpose, ensuring AV deployment is part of an efficient multi-modal system, facilitating efficient land use, prioritizing a complete streets model, and ensuring AV deployment improves transportation equity.

Proposed Law: SB 59 would require OPR, in coordination with the California Air Resources Board (CARB), to convene an AV interagency working group comprising specified state and local entity participants, to guide policy development for autonomous passenger vehicle technology, with the following principles guiding the working group:

- Maximize ridesharing and shared use of AVs by encouraging pooling and prioritizing pooled vehicles’ mobility.
- Encourage a rapid shift toward the use of zero-emission AVs.
- Encourage deployment of AVs in ways that reduce overall emissions from all vehicles.
- Encourage strategies to ensure vehicles are sufficiently sized, but not oversized, for a particular trip purpose.
- Encourage passenger AV integration as a complementary part of a multi-modal transportation system, as specified.
- Encourage deployment of passenger AVs to support compact and infill development.
- Encourage the deployment of passenger AVs in ways that increase availability of affordable mobility options, particularly for low-income and disadvantaged communities, and those with disabilities.
- Deployment of passenger AVs in ways that consider transportation needs of rural residents and communities in ways that improve access to destination and goods without encouraging sprawl.

The bill requires the working group to submit a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2021 with recommendations to further these principles. In developing the recommendations, the working group must provide an opportunity for public input, identify additional research and data needs, and examine specific policy options and identify actions that require further statutory authority.

Related Legislation: SB 936 (Allen), which was held on this Committee’s Suspense File last year, would have required OPR to convene an Autonomous Vehicles Smart Planning Task Force (AV task force), and submit recommendations to the Legislature by January 1, 2021 to ensure that the deployment of autonomous vehicles promotes specified policies and objectives.

SB 802 (Skinner), which was held on the Assembly Appropriations Committee’s Suspense File in 2017, would have required OPR to convene a specified advisory group to review and advise the Legislature on policies pertaining to new types of motor vehicles operating in California, including autonomous vehicles and shared-use vehicles, as specified.

Staff Comments: This bill is intended to provide guidance to the Legislature to ensure California plans responsibly for the potential wide-scale introduction of automated vehicles to ensure that deployment does not compound our serious climate, clean air, and traffic challenges. Staff notes that the guiding principles of the interagency working group are nearly identical to those recommended by the Multi-Agency Workgroup on AV deployment, as noted above. As such, this bill would codify those policy principles and statutorily require the working group to continue its work and make recommendations to further those principles in a formal report to the Legislature.

OPR currently has only 1 full-time PY of staff dedicated to transportation related issues, so any additional workload associated with this bill are not likely to be absorbable. Staff estimates that OPR would need at least ½ PY of staff time to convene meetings, prepare meeting materials, conduct research, and produce final recommendations, plus additional administrative support. Any costs for CARB and other specified state entities to participate in the working group are expected to be minor.

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