

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2193 (Ta) – As Amended April 8, 2026

Policy Committee:	Transportation	Vote:	16 - 0
	Communications and Conveyance		9 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill specifies which entity is liable when an autonomous vehicle (AV) commits a traffic violation.

Specifically, among other things, this bill states that such a citation is to be issued as follows:

- 1) If a level 4 or 5 AV does not have a person in the driver’s seat and commits a traffic violation, the citation shall be issued to the manufacturer of the autonomous technology.
- 2) If a level 4 or 5 AV has a person in the driver’s seat and commits a traffic violation while the autonomous technology is engaged, the citation shall be issued to the manufacturer of the autonomous technology.
- 3) If an AV has a person in the driver’s seat and commits a traffic violation while the autonomous technology is not engaged, the citation shall be issued to the driver.
- 4) If a level 3 AV has a person in the driver’s seat and commits a traffic violation while the autonomous technology is engaged, the citation shall be issued to the driver, though the driver may, as a defense, raise that the autonomous technology was responsible for the violation and, if the court determines that the autonomous technology is the cause of the traffic violation, the citation shall be issued to the manufacturer of the autonomous technology.

The bill provides that the holder of the AV testing permit or AV deployment permit issued by the DMV may contest a citation or penalty described above through use of procedures in the Vehicle Code.

FISCAL EFFECT:

This bill would require the DMV to promulgate regulations. Costs to the DMV to do so vary, depending on the scope and complexity of the regulation, but regularly surpass \$150,000.

Any costs to the DMV to develop these regulations would come from the Motor Vehicle Account (MVA), the primary funding account for the California Highway Patrol and the DMV. The MVA faces insolvency. The Legislative Analyst’s Office recently advised, “Until a plan is put in place to address MVA’s structural deficit, we recommend the Legislature set a high bar for considering approval of any proposals that create additional MVA cost pressures and accelerate the risk of insolvency.”

COMMENTS:

State law defines autonomous technology as technology that has the capability to drive a vehicle without the active physical control or monitoring by a human operator. In addition, state law defines an AV as a vehicle equipped with autonomous technology and that meets the definition of Level 3, Level 4, or Level 5 of SAE International’s “Taxonomy and Definitions for Terms Related to Driving Automation Systems for On-Road Motor Vehicles, standard J3016 (APR2021),” or as SAE subsequently revises that definition. SAE broadly groups these three levels of AVs as Level 3—conditional driving automation; Level 4—High Driving Automation; and Level 5—full driving automation.

State laws allow an AV of any of these levels to operate on California roadways, for testing purposes, if operation of the AV meets certain DMV regulatory conditions, including that a driver be seated in the driver’s seat, monitoring the safe operation of the AV, and capable of taking over immediate manual control of the AV in the event of an autonomous technology failure or other emergency. State law also allows the operation (also referred to as “deployment”) of an AV on California roadways, not necessarily for testing purposes, but only if the DMV approves a manufacturer’s application pursuant to DMV regulations. In addition, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) administers a pilot program through which AVs may be used as charter party carriers, that is private vehicles used to transport passengers according to pre-arranged terms, commonly through a smartphone app.

The policy committee analysis of this bill reports that, according to the DMV, 36 companies have permits for testing AVs with a driver in the vehicle and six companies have permits for testing AVs without a driver; one company has a deployment permit to operate an AV with a human driver in the vehicle and three companies have deployment permits to operate an AV with no human driver in the vehicle. The policy committee analysis also cites the CPUC as reporting five companies that participate in the CPUC’s AV charter party carrier pilot program, with only one—Waymo LLC—authorized to operate an AV with no human driver in the vehicle.

So, there are, or will likely be, AVs meeting the definitions of SAE Level 3, Level 4 and Level 5. The author is concerned that it will be unclear who, or what, is legally responsible when something goes wrong in such a vehicle. According to the author:

AB 2193 ensures that when an autonomous vehicle violates traffic law, someone is accountable. As the use of driverless vehicles expands on our roads, we must ensure our law enforcement framework keeps pace with technology. AB 2193 protects passengers, supports law enforcement, and ensures that companies deploying autonomous vehicles remain responsible for their operations. Innovation should move forward, but it must do so safely and responsibly by holding driverless cars to the same standards as other drivers.

Yet, some contend the state is already addressing the issue of AV liability. Pursuant to AB 1777 (Ting) Chapter 682, Statutes of 2024, the DMV is in the process of developing regulations to establish a process to permit law enforcement officers to issue an AV notice of noncompliance when an AV allegedly violates a section of the vehicle code or an ordinance created by the vehicle code, which is to be sent directly to the DMV. The DMV has released proposed regulations on this topic for public comment, and its release of final regulations seem imminent. The CHP warns that this bill may conflict with DMV’s regulations and, therefore, result in

“confusion within the law enforcement community on whether to issue a citation or issue a notice of noncompliance.”

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