

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1246 (Cortese) – As Amended June 24, 2026

Policy Committee:	Transportation	Vote:	13 - 2
	Communications and Conveyance		7 - 1

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

SUMMARY:

This bill makes various requirements of autonomous vehicles (AVs) and AV manufacturers regarding responses to accidents, incidents and emergencies and directs the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) to implement a course or courses of voluntary public safety-related training for law enforcement regarding commercial AVs.

More specifically, and among many other things, this bill:

Regarding Responses to Accidents, Incidents and Emergencies:

- 1) Directs the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to adopt guidelines establishing reasonable response times for local incident technicians to be present at the scene of an incident after request by an emergency response official or 911 dispatch center.
- 2) (a) Requires any commercial AV operated without a human driver that is equipped with controls that allow someone physically present to drive the vehicle be equipped with a manual override system that allows local incident technicians, emergency response officials, tow operators, and trained personnel to readily and safely disable the vehicle, place the vehicle in neutral gear to relocate it during an emergency and turn off the vehicle and (b) requires a manufacturer of a commercial AV that is not equipped with manual controls for completing the dynamic driving task to ensure that remote assistants or remote drivers can place the AV in neutral to allow an emergency response official to move the AV or to turn off the vehicle and have it remain stationary or, if the AV is unable to be located as described here, requires the manufacturer to immediately dispatch either a local incident technician or a tow operator to safely disable, relocate and turn off the vehicle and (c) prohibits DMV from permitting the deployment of any AV that does not comply with the preceding requirements.
- 3) Requires an AV remote driver or local incident technician be located within the United States and hold a valid driver's license (DL) issued in the United States and for the appropriate class of vehicle.
- 4) Requires an AV manufacturer to ensure (a) that remote drivers or remote assistants are able to immediately respond to calls and incidents and (b) that local incident technicians are immediately dispatched upon (i) notification of an accident involving damage to persons or property and (ii) receiving a request from an emergency response official or 911 dispatch center.

- 5) In the event of a fleetwide emergency or a system failure, requires an AV manufacturer to immediately notify affected local jurisdictions, including emergency dispatch, of the location and status of the fleet and deploy local incident technicians, where appropriate, whenever affected vehicles cannot be remotely recovered and create a traffic hazard or impede emergency response.
- 6) Requires an AV manufacturer, upon request of an emergency response official who has determined a remote driver or remote assistant is unable to reasonably address the official's request regarding a commercial AV, as specified, to immediately dispatch a local incident technician, who has the authority and ability to manually relocate the commercial AV.
- 7) Requires an AV manufacturer to maintain records on response times and related actions.
- 8) Provides that a violation of the bill's provisions is not a crime and make violations of these provisions subject to specified civil penalties from \$5,000 to \$10,000 for obstructing vehicles.

Regarding POST's Implementation of Public Safety-related Training Courses:

Requires POST to:

- 1) In consultation with appropriate groups and individuals that have an interest and expertise in the field of the operation of AVs, as specified, to implement a public-safety-related course or courses for voluntary training of law enforcement officers on commercial AVs and develop related uniform minimum guidelines for voluntary use by California law enforcement agencies and to assist in this training when possible.
- 2) Develop uniform guidelines and requirements for the manual override training and written guidance required to be provided by AV manufacturers.
- 3) Establish a process to review and certify any manual override training and written guidance developed by AV manufacturers.

The bill also authorizes POST to charge AV manufacturers a fee sufficient to cover its reasonable regulatory costs.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) The DMV will incur one-time costs, likely of about \$115,000, to develop and adopt regulations related to new requirements imposed on AV operators (Motor Vehicle Account (MVA)). The DMV projects the MVA will have a structural deficit as of fiscal year 2027-28.
- 2) POST will need to develop a training course or courses, develop guidelines and establish a process to review and certify AV manufacturers' manual override training and written guidance. POST estimates one-time costs of \$250,000 (GF). POST may be able to recover these costs through a fee on AV manufacturers.
- 3) Potential court cost pressures of an unknown, but potentially significant amount (Trial Court Trust Fund (TCTF), GF). Although courts are not funded on a workload basis, increased workload creates pressure on the GF to backfill the TCTF. The Budget Act of 2025-26 included \$117.3 million GF to backfill the TCTF for trial court operations.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** The author intends this bill to ensure AV companies operating vehicles on California's roads have trained and available personnel to manage AVs as needed by emergency response officials. According to the author, "SB 1246 puts common-sense standards in place to ensure AV companies act quickly, trained personnel are accountable, and our emergency response officials have the resources they need to keep the public safe."
- 2) **Background. *AVs on California Streets.*** Existing law allows operation of an AV on California public roadways for testing purposes. To operate an AV on the roadways, a manufacturer must receive permission from DMV. DMV's website lists 40 companies permitted by DMV to test light-duty AVs with a driver, seven companies to test light-duty vehicles without a driver and three companies to deploy AVs without a driver.

The CPUC allows an AV, including a driverless AV, to offer passenger service for hire, subject to a Transportation Charter Party (TCP) permit issued by the CPUC. A TCP operating under a CPUC permit must comply with the DMV's AV permit requirements. Driverless AVs provide passenger service in several California cities.

Driverless AVs have caused numerous highly reported disruptions, particularly in San Francisco. In response to such incidents, the Legislature approved AB 1777 (Ting), Chapter 682, Statutes of 2024, which generally required implementation of methods to allow emergency response officials to communicate with AV operators.

POST. Over six decades ago, legislation established POST to set minimum selection and training standards for California law enforcement. More recently, legislation empowered POST to certify peace officers, as well as to suspend and decertify peace officers for serious misconduct. POST offers a variety of training course and describes its "Regular Basic Course" as the minimum entry-level training requirement for all city police officers, county sheriff deputies and most other peace officer categories.

- 3) **Support and Opposition.** This bill is supported by, among others, the League of California Cities and several organizations representing law enforcement and other emergency response personnel and sponsored by SEIU California, which describes the bill as ensuring AV companies "have the staffing and tools necessary to timely respond and minimize disruptions."

The bill is opposed by AV manufacturers and operators and other business interests, which together generally object to the bill as follows:

California recently implemented substantial new requirements through AB 1777 (Ting) and updated Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) regulations. These new provisions address many of the same subjects covered by SB 1246, including first responder interactions, manual override systems, remote support personnel, incident response, and recordkeeping. The Legislature should allow these new rules, which were adopted with thorough broad stakeholder engagement, to take effect before considering additional changes that would disrupt

implementation and impede the safe operation of AVs on California's roadways.

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