
HOUSE BILL 1439

State of Washington 63rd Legislature 2013 Regular Session

By Representatives Buys and Magendanz

Read first time 01/28/13. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to autonomous vehicles; adding a new chapter to
2 Title 46 RCW; and providing an effective date.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds and declares the
5 following:

6 (1) Development of new technology that through the use of
7 computers, sensors, and other systems permits a motor vehicle to
8 operate without the active control and continuous monitoring of a human
9 operator is actively under way. Motor vehicles with this technology,
10 referred to as autonomous vehicles, offer significant potential safety,
11 mobility, and commercial benefits for individuals and businesses in the
12 state and elsewhere;

13 (2) Autonomous vehicles have been operated safely on public roads
14 in other states in recent years by companies developing and testing
15 this technology;

16 (3) The state of Washington, which presently does not prohibit or
17 specifically regulate the operation of autonomous vehicles, desires to
18 encourage the current and future development, testing, and operation of
19 autonomous vehicles on the public roads of the state. The state also

1 seeks to avoid interrupting these activities while at the same time
2 creating appropriate rules intended to ensure that the testing and
3 operation of autonomous vehicles in the state are conducted in a safe
4 manner; and

5 (4) Toward that end, it is appropriate to authorize the
6 establishment of specific safety requirements for the testing and
7 operation of autonomous vehicles, and to require that future testing
8 and operation of autonomous vehicles in the state comply with those
9 requirements.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) An autonomous vehicle may be operated on
11 the public roads of this state if the manufacturer of the autonomous
12 vehicle certifies, in a manner to be determined by the state patrol,
13 that the vehicle meets all of the safety standards and performance
14 requirements adopted by the state patrol to ensure the safe operation
15 of the vehicle.

16 (2) A manufacturer of an autonomous vehicle may operate the vehicle
17 for testing purposes on the public roads of this state if the
18 manufacturer and the vehicle to be tested meet the testing safety
19 requirements adopted by the state patrol.

20 (3) For purposes of this section and section 3 of this act:

21 (a) "Autonomous vehicle" means a motor vehicle that uses computers,
22 sensors, and other technology and devices to enable the vehicle to
23 safely operate without the active control and continuous monitoring of
24 a human operator. "Autonomous vehicle" does not include a vehicle
25 equipped with one or more crash avoidance systems, including, but not
26 limited to, electronic blind spot assistance, automated emergency
27 braking systems, park assist, adaptive cruise control, lane keep
28 assist, lane departure warning, traffic jam and queuing assist, or
29 other similar systems that enhance safety or provide driver assistance,
30 but are not capable, collectively or singularly, of driving the vehicle
31 without the active control and continuous monitoring of a human
32 operator.

33 (b) "Manufacturer of an autonomous vehicle" means the person that
34 manufactures the autonomous vehicle as an originally completed vehicle
35 or, in the case of a vehicle not originally equipped with autonomous
36 technology, the person that modifies the vehicle to convert it to an
37 autonomous vehicle.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The state patrol shall adopt rules to
2 implement this chapter. The rules must include, but not be limited to,
3 the following:

4 (1) A licensed driver must operate an autonomous vehicle at all
5 times during its operation;

6 (2) An autonomous vehicle must comply with the federal motor
7 vehicle safety standards;

8 (3) A licensed driver is legally responsible for the autonomous
9 vehicle for traffic infractions and criminal offenses in the same
10 manner as a driver of a nonautonomous vehicle;

11 (4) A commercial vehicle may not be an autonomous vehicle; and

12 (5) An autonomous vehicle must be a single vehicle only and be
13 restricted from towing operations.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This chapter does not prohibit the operation
15 and testing of autonomous vehicles on the public roads of this state on
16 or before the adoption of rules by the state patrol pursuant to section
17 3 of this act.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** This act takes effect January 1, 2014.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 1 through 5 of this act constitute
20 a new chapter in Title 46 RCW.

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