

February 06, 2024

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH AND JANICE HAHN

Support for SB 915 (Cortese): Prioritizing Local Control in the Deployment of Autonomous Vehicle Services

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) acts as the regulatory body overseeing for-hire transportation services such as taxicabs and rideshare, and the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) administers the Autonomous Vehicles Program and issues permits to manufacturers that test and deploy autonomous vehicles on California public roads. In 2022, the CPUC voted to permit Google-owned Waymo and General Motors-owned Cruise to expand their driverless car operations allowing them to charge passengers for driverless rides without a human safety driver present. And in January 2024, Waymo indicated its intent to expand their deployment operation to portions of the Los Angeles area.

Despite state approval, local jurisdictions vociferously oppose the deployment of driverless passenger service. In San Francisco last October, a hit-and-run driver struck a pedestrian, tossing her into the path of a Cruise self-driving taxi that then drove over her and pinned her under the car. The DMV ordered Cruise to immediately stop all operations in California. Last December, the City and County of San Francisco filed a lawsuit against the State of California for "unlawful" authorization of self-driving cars demanding the CPUC reconsider its decision to allow autonomous vehicles to operate 24/7 as paid taxi service.

SB 915 prioritizes local control in the deployment of autonomous vehicle services. Contingent

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upon approval from the CPUC and DMV, this legislation would prevent deployment of autonomous vehicle services in a geographic location until the local jurisdiction passes an ordinance authorizing operations. The bill is patterned after existing law that provides for local regulation of taxicab companies which requires taxicab companies to have a valid permit to operate in a local jurisdiction. SB 915 will help maintain safety for pedestrians, passengers, and other vehicles, and establish a community-centered approach.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors [express support for SB 915 (Cortese), which would prioritize local control for the deployment of autonomous vehicle services.

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Contact: LPH:ma