

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS SHARON DURKAN, ED FLYNN, GABRIELA COLETTA ZAPATA, BREADON, FERNANDES ANDERSON, FITZGERALD, MEJIA, MURPHY, PEPEN, SANTANA, WEBER, WORRELL AND LOUIJEUNE



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO EVALUATE AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE OPERATIONS IN BOSTON

WHEREAS, Boston has long been at the forefront of technological innovation; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston, through its Vision Zero initiative, aims for zero traffic fatalities by 2030 along with a broader goal of “zero injuries, zero disparities, zero emissions, and zero stress in our transportation future”; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston is mired in traffic congestion, ranking fourth worst of all major cities in the country using traffic data from INRIX; *and*

WHEREAS, Autonomous vehicles (AVs) are a cutting-edge synthesis of technologies that through their usage, have the potential for society to reach our Vision Zero ideal by minimizing human operating error while making mobility more efficient; *and*

WHEREAS, AV’s could offer potential benefits in terms of expanding mobility options for people with disabilities, reducing certain types of human error-related crashes, and lowering transportation costs over time—if deployed thoughtfully and equitably; *and*

WHEREAS, AV’s such as those operated by companies like Waymo, are increasingly being deployed in major cities across the United States, including San Francisco, Phoenix, and Los Angeles where they’ve completed over 50 million miles with no driver present with 83% fewer airbag deployment crashes, 81% fewer injury-causing crashes, 64% fewer police-reported crashes; *and*

WHEREAS, Concerns have been raised in other cities about AV’s ability to respond safely to construction zones, emergency vehicles, unplanned detours, and unpredictable pedestrian behavior, potential to increase automobile congestion, displacement of unionized drivers, and the undermining of public transit systems; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston has a dense urban fabric with many pre-automobile road networks, inclement weather, and a mix of multimodal users – including pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders – which combine to pose unique challenges to the safe deployment of AV’s; *and*

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and City of Boston have previously issued frameworks for AV testing; *and*

WHEREAS, This guidance has not been updated in a few years while companies like Waymo have begun preliminary testing of AVs across the Boston and surrounding areas in recent weeks;
and

WHEREAS, It is the responsibility of the Boston City Council to proactively assess the risks and opportunities associated with emerging technologies before they significantly alter the lived experience of our constituents; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED, That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a public hearing to examine the potential operations of autonomous vehicles in the city of Boston and the future regulatory framework needed to maximize opportunities while minimizing drawbacks.

Filed on: June 2, 2025