

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS HENRY SANTANA, ERIN MURPHY, ED FLYNN,
FITZGERALD, MEJIA, WEBER, WORRELL AND LOUIJEUNE



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FIVE

ORDINANCE REGARDING THE SAFETY AND EFFICACY OF COMMERCIAL AUTONOMOUS VEHICLE OPERATIONS RELATIVE TO WORKERS, EMERGENCY FIRST RESPONDERS, AND RESIDENTS IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

WHEREAS, The City of Boston is committed to a conscientious approach to the introduction of new technologies that prioritizes the well-being and safety of its residents, the strength of its local economy, and the security of its essential workforce; *and*

WHEREAS, The introduction of Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations in the City of Boston without substantial regulation could have significant negative impacts on the local economy by displacing thousands of commercial drivers, and rideshare drivers whose labor and vehicle investments have been instrumental in creating the passenger transportation network industry in Boston over the past decade; *and*

WHEREAS, The introduction of Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations in the City of Boston without substantial regulation could have significant negative impacts on the local economy by disrupting the hundreds of small businesses that serve the rideshare driver community; *and*

WHEREAS, A comprehensive, public, and participatory study is required to determine whether the introduction of Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations in the City of Boston will serve to benefit its residents, local economy, and rideshare drivers, who would be most directly impacted by such operations. ***NOW, THEREFORE***

Be it ordained by the City Council of Boston as follows:

That the City of Boston Code, Ordinances, is amended by adding the following new sections and subsections:

SECTION 1. *Purpose & Scope*

The purpose of this Ordinance is to establish rules and regulations governing the operations of Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations within the City of Boston in furtherance of the public interest, safety, and convenience.

SECTION 2. *Definitions*

When used in this section, unless the context otherwise requires, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

“*Autonomous Vehicle*” means any vehicle equipped with technology that has been integrated into that vehicle 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),” as may be revised.

“*Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations*” means the use of Autonomous Vehicles for commercial purposes, including but not limited to transporting passengers or goods.

SECTION 3. *Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations in the City of Boston*

No entity shall operate Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations in the City of Boston until the study set forth in Section 5 below is completed and operational permit requirements are established by the Mayor of the City of Boston in accordance with the provisions of this ordinance.

SECTION 4. *Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations Labor and Small Business Impact Advisory Board*

The Mayor shall establish a Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations Labor and Small Business Impact Advisory Board to evaluate the introduction of Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations in the City of Boston and provide advice and guidance to the Mayor. The Board shall include the Chief of the Worker Empowerment Cabinet as Chair, and the following officials or their designees as members: the Commissioner of the Boston Police Department, the Chief Technology Officer, the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, the Director of Small Business, and appointees at the discretion of the Mayor, included but not limited to, representatives from the Greater Boston Labor Council, the App Drivers Union, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1445.

SECTION 5. *Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations Study and Permit Process*

- a. The Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations Labor and Small Business Impact Advisory Board shall enlist an independent research institution with expertise in ridehail labor economics to conduct a comprehensive review of Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations and evaluate its potential deployment in the City of Boston. Such review shall include, but not be limited to: an independent economic impact study conducted to determine the short- and long-term effects of Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations on rideshare drivers, commercial drivers; including workforce displacement projections; economic impacts on Transportation Network Drivers; impacts on the effectuation of M.G.L. ch. 150F; avoidance of preemption under M.G.L. ch. 159A1/2; reemployment pathways for displaced rideshare drivers, commercial drivers; economic displacement impacts on businesses that serve commercial drivers, rideshare drivers; and financial impacts on the City of Boston, including those due to reductions in tax revenues to the Commonwealth.

- b. The Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations Labor and Small Business Impact Advisory Board shall also examine the potential for Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations to interfere with the operations of first responders, an evaluation of the ability of Autonomous Vehicles to navigate the City of Boston's unique streets and roads, and an assessment of the congestion impacts of Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations.
- c. The Board shall hold a series of public hearings to obtain testimony from rideshare drivers, commercial drivers and members of the public. Following the release of preliminary findings, there shall be a public comment period of no fewer than thirty (30) days.
- d. By July 1, 2026, the Board shall publish a final review report on a publicly-accessible website, which shall include recommendations to the Mayor on whether Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations should be permitted to operate in the City of Boston, and regarding requirements for a potential permit process for Commercial Autonomous Vehicle Operations.

SECTION 6. *Human Safety Operator*

Any permit process must include the following requirements: (a) an Autonomous Vehicle operating in the City of Boston shall not transport passengers or goods unless a human safety operator is physically present in the vehicle and has the ability to monitor the performance of the vehicle and intervene if necessary, including but not limited to taking over immediate manual control of the vehicle or shutting off the vehicle; and (b) that Autonomous Vehicles and human safety operators must meet all applicable local, state and federal requirements.

SECTION 7. *Enforcement*

The provisions of this section may be enforced by all enforcement mechanisms authorized, including but not limited to the noncriminal disposition process of M.G.L. c. 40, § 21D, and, if applicable, by seeking to restrain a violation by injunction.

SECTION 8. *Severability*

The provisions of this Ordinance are severable and if any provision, or portion thereof, should be held to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality or invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions which shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 9. *Effective Date*

The provisions of this Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon passage.

Filed in Council: August 6, 2025