
MEMORANDUM

To: City of Palo Alto
From: Townsend Public Affairs
Date: March 22, 2024
Subject: **Bill Analysis: SB 915 (Cortese)**

The official text of SB 915 can be found [here](#).

Summary

SB 915 grants local governments control over the rules and regulations self-driving autonomous vehicles must follow before being deployed within communities. Specifically, SB 915:

- Prohibits an autonomous vehicle service from operating within a jurisdiction unless authorized by a local government ordinance.
- Authorizes each city, county, or city and county in which an autonomous vehicle has received authorization to operate, to protect the public health, safety, and welfare by adopting an ordinance or resolution in regard to autonomous vehicle services within that jurisdiction.
- Requires local governments that adopt an ordinance or resolution to include certain provisions within that ordinance or resolution. These would include a policy for entry into the business of providing autonomous vehicle services including a permitting program, the establishment of reasonable vehicle caps and hours of service restrictions, and the establishment of an interoperability or override system accessible by first responders in case of an emergency.
- Authorizes local governments to levy service charges, fees, or assessments in the amount sufficient to pay for the costs of carrying out an ordinance or resolution adopted in regard to autonomous vehicle services.
- Makes it unlawful to operate an autonomous vehicle service without a valid permit to operate issued by the local jurisdiction in which the service is substantially located, with violations subject to administrative fines.
- Authorizes a local government to enter into an agreement with another local government to form a joint powers authority or into an agreement with a transit agency for the purpose

of regulating or administering autonomous vehicle services within jurisdictional boundaries.

Status

SB 915 has been referred to the Senate Local Government Committee with a hearing date scheduled for April 3.

Author's Statement

None available at this time

Support and Opposition

SB 915 is sponsored by the League of California Cities and has received support from other Bay Area jurisdictions with autonomous vehicle operating agreements in place. The official committee analysis will reveal a more comprehensive list of supporters and opponents.

Recommended Position

Support

This bill provides for additional local control over the operations and licensing of autonomous vehicle services. Given Palo Alto's location in the Bay Area and proximity to tech sectors, this bill could provide additional guardrails for future agreements with autonomous vehicle companies, providing for the safety and well-being of residents.