



SFMTA

Autonomous Vehicle Accessibility in San Francisco

Mayor's Disability Council

October 20, 2023

Who We Are

San Francisco County Transportation Authority



San Francisco
County Transportation
Authority

- Plans, funds, and delivers transportation projects to improve travel choices for residents, commuters, and visitors throughout San Francisco

San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency



- Responsible for management of all ground transportation in San Francisco. Oversees transit, streets, emerging mobility, paratransit, and taxis

Introduction

- Cruise and Waymo are currently providing autonomous passenger service and collecting fares in San Francisco
- Disability community has long been interested in autonomous vehicles (AVs) as a potential option to expand transportation accessibility
- California state law gives permitting authority to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and Department of Motor vehicles (DMV)



San Francisco's Work on AV Accessibility

- Comment letters to California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) urging specific benchmarks and requirements for accessibility, including wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs)
- Participated in CPUC's AV Accessibility Working Group while it was active
- Meeting with disability organizations to understand variety of perspectives within the disability community

San Francisco's AV Accessibility Priorities

- AV passenger services drop off and pick up at safe and accessible locations
- Comparable non-autonomous WAV service while autonomous WAVs are in development
- Clear development, testing, and deployment timelines for autonomous WAVs
- Pedestrian safety for people with disabilities around AVs

Role of the CPUC

- CPUC is responsible for establishing the terms and conditions governing permits to test or provide commercial services to passengers
- CPUC is the agency responsible for adopting specific accessibility requirements
- CPUC adopted a goal around accessibility, but has not adopted specific benchmarks for WAV service or other accessibility considerations (Decision 20-11-046, p. 38)

Importance of Regulation

- We are appreciative that Cruise and Waymo have each developed relationships with various disability organizations
- While we hear the stated commitment of Cruise and Waymo to accessibility, we know industry often doesn't implement consistent or reliable accessibility until they are subject to clear and specific requirements
 - Recent example: Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), also known as ride hail
- Accessibility requirements should be complemented by data reporting and analysis that ensure compliance and identify areas for improvement

Next Steps

- SF will continue to advocate for policies that improve AV accessibility and safety, including comparable service requirements for WAV users and appropriate data reporting
- We have met with a variety of disability organizations and are interested in meeting with more
- We are always open to input on these issues from the disability community

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