



Autonomous Vehicles

Position: The Epilepsy Foundation supports the development of autonomous vehicles that expand mobility for members of the epilepsy community who cannot safely operate a traditional motor vehicle due to lack of seizure control. **We urge federal, state, and local policymakers to encourage innovation related to autonomous vehicles and ensure that regulation of these vehicles considers the needs of the disability community and does not unnecessarily restrict their use.**

About Epilepsy: The Epilepsy Foundation is the leading national voluntary health organization that speaks on behalf of more than 3 million Americans with epilepsy and seizures. We foster the wellbeing of children and adults affected by seizures through research programs, educational activities, advocacy, and direct services. Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy at some point in their lifetime.

Background: Some members of the epilepsy community, especially those that are not able to gain seizure control despite available treatments, cannot legally hold a driver's license or safely operate a motor vehicle. Many states also have reporting requirement after a seizure that can lead to temporary license restrictions. For these individuals, autonomous vehicles offer the promise of expanded mobility and independence; greater access to employment, education, and medical care, and decreased social isolation. Autonomous vehicles could be especially beneficial in rural areas or in regions that are poorly served by public transportation.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration classifies autonomous vehicles at five distinct stages of automation. At Stage 4 and Stage 5, an automated vehicle driving system handles all aspects of driving without input from a human driver. Autonomous vehicles at Stage 4 and Stage 5 operate with no possibility of human driver error, and thus, have the potential to be safer than traditional motor vehicles. Many individuals who cannot safely operate a traditional motor vehicle would be able to safely operate a Stage 4 or Stage 5 autonomous vehicle. The Epilepsy Foundation is concerned by proposed and existing policies and legislation requiring operators of Stage 4 and 5 autonomous vehicles to hold drivers' licenses. A driver's license is unnecessary for operation of fully autonomous vehicles and licensing requirements would likely needlessly restrict some people with epilepsy from fully realizing the benefits of this new technology.

The Epilepsy Foundation further believes that the successful deployment of autonomous vehicles will be the result of innovation by a wide range of stakeholders. We urge policymakers to encourage participation in autonomous vehicle development by all interested parties, including traditional automobile manufacturers and technology companies, as well as the disability community.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Laura Weidner, Esq., Vice President Government Relations and Advocacy at lweidner@efa.org or 301-918-3766.