

Committee on Transportation

CS/CS/HB 1289 — Autonomous Vehicles

by Commerce Committee; Tourism, Infrastructure and Energy Subcommittee; and Rep. McFarland and others (CS/CS/SB 1620 by Rules Committee; Transportation Committee; and Senator Brandes)

The bill defines the term “low-speed autonomous delivery vehicle” as a fully autonomous vehicle that meets the current federal definition and authorizes such vehicles to operate only on streets or roads where the posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour or less. Such vehicles are not prohibited from crossing a road or street at an intersection where the road or street has a posted speed limit of more than 35 miles per hour. However, a low-speed autonomous delivery vehicle may operate on a street or road with a posted speed limit of more than 35 miles per hour, but no more than 45 miles per hour, if:

- The vehicle travels no more than one continuous mile, except that the entity with jurisdiction over the street or road may authorize travel in excess of that distance;
- The vehicle operates exclusively in the right lane, other than for the purpose of completing a turn; and
- On a two-lane street or road where overtaking and passing another vehicle is unsafe, and five or more vehicles are formed in a line behind the low-speed autonomous delivery vehicle, the delivery vehicle exits the roadway wherever sufficient space exists, to permit the following vehicles to proceed.

The bill sets out equipment requirements for such vehicles and provides that the new provisions are superseded by any conflicting federal regulations. The bill also establishes insurance coverage requirements for such vehicles and exempts them from specified provisions of law relating to authorized use of golf carts, low-speed vehicles, and utility vehicles.

The provisions of any motor vehicle equipment laws or regulations of this state, relating to or supporting motor vehicle operation by a human driver but not relevant for an automated driving system, are rendered inapplicable to fully autonomous vehicles designed to be operated *exclusively* by the automated driving system for *all* trips.

The bill also revises the definition of the terms:

- “Autocycle,” by clarifying that the required brakes on such autocycles must meet the requirements of a specified Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard relating to antilock brakes, and by revising the requirement for a steering “wheel” to a steering “mechanism.”
- “Personal delivery device,” by removing the current 80-pound weight limitation (excluding cargo) and replacing it with a weight that does not exceed the maximum established by rule by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

The bill authorizes the FDOT to adopt rules to implement provisions of law relating to personal delivery devices.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2021.
Vote: Senate 39-1; House 116-0