HOUSE BILL 1131
By Carter

SENATE BILL 1072

By Lundberg

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 5; Title 6; Title 7; Title 39; Title 40; Title 54; Title 55; Title 56; Title 65 and Title 67, relative to autonomous vehicles.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 55, is amended by adding the following new chapter:

55-54-101.

(a) As used in this chapter:

(1) "Autonomous technology" means technology installed on a motor vehicle that performs all aspects of the driving task for a vehicle without requiring a human driver to be present;

(2) "Autonomous vehicle" means any motor vehicle equipped with autonomous technology, including a commercial motor vehicle;

(3) "Department" means the department of safety;

(4) “Driving task” includes:

(A) Operational tasks, which may include steering, braking, accelerating, and monitoring the vehicle and the roadway; and

(B) Tactical tasks, which may include responding to events, determining when to change lanes, turning, using signals, and other related actions;

(5) "Human driver" means a natural person in the vehicle with immediate access to controls for steering, brakes, and acceleration; and

(6) "Minimal risk mode" means a fallback operating mode in which an autonomous vehicle operating without a human driver achieves a reasonably safe state, such as bringing the vehicle to a complete stop upon experiencing a critical safety-related failure.

55-54-102.

Whenever a human driver is in a motor vehicle during its use, the human driver is responsible for the vehicle's operations, unless the autonomous technology is engaged.

55-54-103.

(a) A person may operate an autonomous vehicle without a human driver present if the following conditions are met:

(1) The person has submitted proof satisfactory to the department that the autonomous vehicle satisfies the requirements of chapter 12, part 1 of this title;

(2) The vehicle can enter a minimal risk mode if the autonomous technology experiences a critical safety-related failure; and

(3) The autonomous vehicle is capable of operating in compliance with the applicable traffic and motor vehicle laws of this state, unless an exemption has been granted by the department. Autonomous vehicles are exempt from §§ 55-9-204 and 55-9-216.

(b) No agency or other state entity may impose requirements specific to the operation of autonomous vehicles or autonomous technology in addition to or otherwise inconsistent with the requirements in this chapter.

55-54-104.

(a) An autonomous vehicle must comply with applicable federal regulations for autonomous vehicles, unless an exemption is granted.

(b) An autonomous vehicle must comply with any equipment requirements of this state that are applicable to autonomous vehicles, unless an exemption has been granted by the department.

(c) Federal regulations promulgated by the national highway traffic safety administration supersede equipment requirements of this state when found to be in conflict.

55-54-105.

(a) An autonomous vehicle shall be properly registered in accordance with chapter 4, part 1 of this title. If an autonomous vehicle is registered in this state, the vehicle shall be identified on the registration as an autonomous vehicle.

(b) An autonomous vehicle shall be properly titled in accordance with chapter 3, part 1 of this title. If an autonomous vehicle is titled in this state, the vehicle shall be identified on the title as an autonomous vehicle.

55-54-106. When an autonomous vehicle is operated without a human driver, the autonomous technology is considered the driver or operator, for the purpose of chapter 8 of this title. An autonomous vehicle, for purposes of determining conformance to any applicable traffic or motor vehicle laws, is deemed to satisfy electronically all physical acts required by a driver or operator of the vehicle.

55-54-107.

(a) The original manufacturer of a vehicle converted by a third party into an autonomous vehicle is not liable in, and shall have a defense to and be dismissed from, any legal action brought against the original manufacturer by any person injured due to an alleged vehicle defect caused by the conversion of the vehicle, or by equipment installed by the converter, unless the alleged defect was present in the vehicle as originally manufactured.

(b) A developer of autonomous technology is not liable in, and shall have a defense to and be dismissed from, any legal action brought against the developer by any person injured due to an alleged defect caused by a modification to the autonomous technology made without the developer's consent, unless the alleged defect was present in the autonomous technology prior to such modification.

(c) Nothing in this section supersedes or otherwise affects the contractual obligations, if any, between a motor vehicle manufacturer or developer of autonomous technology and a converter or modifier.

55-54-108. A person who operates an autonomous vehicle without a human driver present shall report to the department any type of accident that is reportable under §§ 55-10-106 and 55-10-107. The department shall create an appropriate form for reporting covered accidents pursuant to this section.

55-54-109.

(a) Unless otherwise provided in this chapter and notwithstanding any other provision of law, autonomous vehicles and autonomous technology are governed exclusively by this chapter.

(b) The department is the sole and exclusive agency authorized to implement §§ 55-54-104, 55-54-105, 55-54-106, and 55-54-108.

(c) No local government or state entity shall impose a tax on, or impose requirements on, an autonomous vehicle or autonomous technology.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017, the public welfare requiring it.