

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE



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Sponsor Statement

House Bill 217: Autonomous Vehicles

34-LS0950\I.A

As commercial autonomous vehicles are increasingly contemplated for, and used in shipping and product delivery, new laws around their use will provide critical guardrails for keeping drivers, pedestrians, and other road users safe.

House Bill 217 seeks to regulate the use of commercial autonomous vehicles, and to provide specific requirements for commercial autonomous vehicle use as relates to interstate commerce, goods, and passengers.

Critically, this bill requires that a human safety operator be in the vehicle to intervene if necessary. The issue of safety is a huge concern, especially in Alaska where weather, particularly in winter, is unpredictable. There is very little evidence of how well autonomous vehicles handle snowy and icy conditions.

House Bill 217 establishes legal definitions for technology being used in modern vehicles ensuring that enhancements like collision avoidance systems, adaptive cruise control, lane assistance, and similar programs are not affected.

Additionally, House Bill 217 amends AS 28.33.100, allowing applicants who fail a portion of a Commercial Drivers License test to only retake the failed portion rather than redo the whole test. This aligns Alaska with Federal guidelines and allows us to expedite the CDL process, alleviating the CDL driver shortage in Alaska.

Overall, House Bill 217 protects all road users and sets legal definitions which guarantees safe implementation of commercial autonomous vehicles on our roadways while alleviating Alaska's CDL driver shortage.