

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3026
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Transportation
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In 2017, the State of Texas adopted landmark legislation allowing for both testing and deployment of autonomous vehicles on public roads. Autonomous vehicles have the potential to improve road safety, create jobs, and expand access for people with disabilities or who live in food deserts. While the law governing autonomous vehicles creates a regulatory framework that appropriately balances the needs of business and technology with public safety, an opportunity exists for simple revisions to provide greater clarity for operators, encouraging the growth of this burgeoning technology. Multiple manufacturers now build purpose-built autonomous vehicles that contain no space for human occupants and have no useful application for manual controls or other equipment needed on traditional vehicles. C.S.H.B. 3026 seeks to address this issue by exempting autonomous vehicles operated exclusively by an automated driving system from certain vehicle equipment laws and regulations.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3026 amends the Transportation Code to exempt an automated motor vehicle that is designed to be operated exclusively by the automated driving system for all trips from state motor vehicle equipment laws or regulations that:

- relate to or support motor vehicle operation by a human driver; and
- are not relevant for an automated driving system.

If a vehicle safety inspection is required for the operation of such an automated motor vehicle, the vehicle must automatically be considered to pass the inspection with respect to any equipment covered by the bill's exemption or any equipment that is not subject to inspection under state law.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 3026 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The original exempted a dedicated autonomous vehicle, defined as an automated motor vehicle incapable of operation by a human operator present in the vehicle, from requirements for a motor vehicle to be equipped with certain lighting equipment, mirrors, windshield wipers, and a muffler. The substitute exempts an automated motor vehicle that is designed to be operated exclusively by the automated driving system for all trips from all state motor vehicle equipment laws or regulations that relate to or support motor vehicle operation by a human driver and that are not relevant for an automated driving system.

The original included a prohibition against a required vehicle safety inspection of the vehicle from including any equipment covered by the bill's exemption or any equipment that is not subject to inspection under state law, whereas the substitute establishes that the vehicle is automatically considered to pass such an inspection with respect to that equipment.