

London Assembly call for evidence: **“Autonomous Passenger Vehicles in London”**

techUK response – July 2026

Introduction

techUK represents the UK's technology sector, with a membership of over 1,100 companies ranging from major multinational technology firms to innovative SMEs and start-ups. We work with our members and government to ensure the UK remains the best place to grow a technology business while ensuring that the benefits of technology adoption are felt across the economy and society.

techUK's Self-Driving Vehicles Working Group brings together developers, mobility platforms, technology providers and a wide range of other stakeholders working to deliver safe and beneficial self-driving vehicle deployment across the UK.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the London Assembly Transport Committee's call for evidence. London can become a world-leader in the safe adoption of this technology, maximising its benefits in terms of road safety, inclusive transport, and economic development. We hope our response, informed directly by the operational experience of our members, provides a useful and practical contribution to the Committee.

1. How close are autonomous passenger vehicles to becoming a reality in London?

Self-driving vehicles will be a reality this year pending the regulatory approval of Transport for London for pilot applications being considered. With the Automated Vehicles Act 2024 now on the statute book and the Government's automated passenger services (APS) permitting scheme starting to enable small-scale pilots without a safety driver from spring 2026, several of our members are actively preparing to deploy in London this year. Internationally, the technology is already operating at scale. The UK framework, once complete, is set to be the most comprehensive in the world.

While vehicle technology is advancing rapidly, the regulatory landscape is still being finalised, with further consultations and guidance required before the implementation of the full regulatory framework. We are grateful for the work that the Government has done nationally to bring forward the APS regime, now open to applicants and outlined in guidance. Now focus turns to London and TfL and the measures they will have to take to approve passenger services (subject to rigorous reporting requirements, the Code of Practice, regulations under the Automated Vehicles Act, and other requirements).

London's value here is considerable: clarity from the Mayor and TfL on what they expect, proactive and supportive communications with the public, and early engagement with prospective operators, will materially affect how services can be launched in the capital, safely and with public trust.

2. How will autonomous passenger vehicles navigate London's complicated road network?

Our members are addressing this for years directly in their design, technology, and deployment of services. The DfT's Code of Practice for automated vehicle trialling has been in place since 2017, and operators have been safety testing on London's streets throughout that period¹ without serious incident. This track record demonstrates that this technology can be operated safely in complex urban environments.

Early deployments may include additional safeguards. Some operators may initially run with a trained safety operator on board, providing an additional layer of redundancy in complex scenarios. Where a fully driverless deployment is sought, the framework requires operators to obtain a Vehicle Special Order from the Vehicle Certification Agency, assessed to the UNECE Automated Driving Systems regulation. This is not a light-touch process, but structured and evidence-based.

More generally, autonomous vehicle systems are developed for urban operation and real-world testing in urban environments is an integral part of the development process. Specifically, under the regulatory framework, operators will have to demonstrate that their technology can safely interact with the road features that are present in London. Before any passenger service can begin, the vehicle and its autonomous driving system must satisfy the careful and competent driving standard as assessed by the Vehicle Certification Agency against the UNECE Automated Driving Systems regulation. That is the appropriate and rigorous point at which London's operating environment is tested, evidenced and approved.

3. What impact would the introduction of autonomous passenger vehicles have in London?

Safety

In recent years, 88% of all recorded collisions on roads in Great Britain involved human error as a contributory factor². The central promise of AV technology, therefore, is a reduction in the human error that contributes to most collisions, providing significant potential to support

¹ Eg: <https://wayve.ai/thinking/road-to-embodied-ai/>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/self-driving-vehicles-new-safety-ambition/outcome/self-driving-vehicles-new-safety-ambition-summary-of-responses-and-government-response>

Vision Zero road-danger reduction targets. International AV data on this is encouraging, with figures³ showing 82% fewer injury-causing crashes than an average human driver. In the UK, safety gains will be ensured by the “careful and competent” safety standard set out in the AV Act and assessed through the safety case reviewed by the Vehicle Certification Agency as part of type approval. This is supported by a transparent, no-blame incident investigation culture that builds public trust over time, clear failure protocols, and close coordination with emergency services.

Mobility

Of great significance is the expanding of access to mobility for those currently underserved by the transport system, including older and disabled Londoners who cannot drive – in alignment with the Mayor’s Transport Strategy. AV deployment can offer them greater independence, reliable door-to-door travel, and wider access to jobs, healthcare and education across the city. AVs are designed to be seamlessly integrated into the road environment and hybrid transport network we have it today and can, therefore, complement and enhance the wider transport system by connecting people to mass transit, public transport and providing services in areas currently underserved.

Autonomy offers a real chance to design inclusion in from the outset, and support greater access to mobility, rather than replicate the exclusions of the past. Our members are committed to upholding the protections passengers rightly expect, drawing on the established private hire vehicle regime.

Jobs

The introduction of self-driving vehicles is expected to be gradual and phased, and they are expected to operate as part of a hybrid network alongside human drivers. Additionally, the arrival of AVs will create many new roles – in manufacturing, fleet maintenance, AI development, and many other areas many of which will be well-suited to the PHV workforce – alongside broader economic and social benefits which should also be taken into account.

techUK’s view is that managing this transition fairly, through honest public engagement, local research and with the voices of workers and their representatives included from the start is the right course.

Other points

With the right framework, London is exceptionally well-placed to capture the safety, accessibility and economic opportunities this technology offers. The introduction of autonomous passenger vehicles offers significant potential benefits for London with some of the most significant being increased road safety, supporting London’s air quality and carbon reduction targets, and helping to knit together a more integrated, accessible and sustainable transport network.

³ <https://waymo.com/safety/impact/>

4. What actions should the Mayor and TfL prioritise when engaging with operators intending to pilot autonomous passenger vehicles and what powers should they be seeking to regulate the sector?

Local consenting authorities have a meaningful role to play in AV deployment. They understand their streets, their communities and the practical realities of how services will operate on the ground and so, under the APS regime, licensing authorities will use this knowledge to shape how services are delivered well in their area. Self-driving vehicles will be a reality this year pending the regulatory approval of Transport for London for pilot applications being considered.

The Automated Vehicles Act establishes a clear and complementary division of responsibilities: vehicle safety is assessed nationally, through type approval and authorisation against rigorous international standards. Then consenting authorities – including the Mayor and TfL – then focus on the service-level considerations that matter most locally. We see real value in the Mayor and TfL leaning into this convening and enabling role, working with operators to ensure deployment in London reflects the city's needs while drawing on the safety assurance already built into the national framework. This approach allows London to move with confidence, supporting its position as a leading place to deploy this technology, while keeping local areas firmly at the centre of how services are shaped and delivered.

We would encourage TfL to prioritise:

- clear expectations and guidance for operators as early as possible to ensure productive conversations can be started well in advance of pre-consent engagement
- building internal capability and expertise, so the authority can engage constructively with the technology
- consistency with guidelines set by government for licensing authorities and with other authorities, to avoid fragmented local variation

5. What can the Mayor and TfL learn from trials and deployments of autonomous passenger vehicles in other countries?

International experience offers valuable lessons. Deployments in the United States and elsewhere show that careful, evidence-led expansion, combined with proactive management by authorities works. They also show the importance of public trust: surveys find that people

who have used an AV are significantly more confident in them than those who have not⁴. This points not to delay, but to the need for transparent communication, balanced framing of risks and benefits, and a visible commitment to safety and accountability, particularly in the early, high-scrutiny stages of deployment.

techUK shares the underlying interest in an open, competitive and resilient market. The best safeguards are a level playing field with consistent national standards, proportionate data-sharing arrangements that protect both the public interest and commercially sensitive information, and an approach that keeps a healthy ecosystem of operators in which UK innovators can compete. London is well-placed to lead in Europe, and we and our members would welcome the chance to work with the Committee, the Mayor, and TfL to help realise the benefits of this technology safely and successfully for Londoners.

ENDS

⁴ A poll by J.D. Power, a consumer-research firm, found that confidence was 56 percentage points higher among those who had ridden in a robotaxi than those who had not.
<https://www.economist.com/business/2025/11/24/the-self-driving-taxi-revolution-begins-at-last>