

Department of Ecology, public comment submission for “ZEvergreen State Dialogue Sessions”
From: Chris Bruno, Washington resident and clean transportation advocate
Proposal: support electric autonomous vehicle (AV) ride hailing to help Washington meet its zero-emission vehicle and climate goals

I encourage Washington officials to remove barriers to AV ride hailing services and encourage operators to enter our state. I believe autonomous ride hailing can complement Washington’s existing EV incentive programs and help accelerate the decarbonization of the light duty passenger vehicle fleet. I also believe AVs support social justice for Washington residents with mobility issues.

In 2024, Washington had nearly 2,500 public charging stations and about 224,000 registered EVs, a jump of 34% from the year prior (Washington State Department of Transportation n.d.). 224,000 EVs sounds impressive but only represents 4.3% of all passenger vehicles (data.wa.gov n.d.). To reach 100% by 2050, the state must look beyond 1-for-1 replacement of private vehicles which are only driven an average of one hour per day (U.S. Department of Energy 2024). Since autonomous vehicles can operate continuously, they provide more utility than privately-owned vehicles and can displace them in terms of vehicle miles traveled at a 5-to-1 (or more!) ratio. Thus, AV ride hailing can decarbonize the transportation sector even while privately-owned ICE vehicles remain on the roads.

Transportation independence is a social justice pillar, and autonomous vehicles can fulfill this need for the 30 percent of Washington residents who can’t drive. This week is the fifth annual Week Without Driving, started by Disability Rights Washington with the aim to increase the visibility of nondrivers (Disability Rights Washington 2025). AVs can serve the transportation needs of those who either can’t afford to own a car or are prevented from driving by a disability. Thus, autonomous electric vehicles not only can help Washington reach its climate goals but can also help provide travel independence to those lacking it.

In summary, I explained Washington’s promising EV start but the long road still ahead – strong initial growth but still only 4.3% of the light duty fleet. Then, I gave two reasons why policymakers should promote autonomous ride hailing – AVs can accelerate the decarbonization of the transportation sector and they give independence back to residents who can’t drive.

I know there are many more factors to consider, and other stakeholders will certainly have their own opinions to share. I hope our regulators consider this idea, however, and take advantage of this opportunity to meet our climate goals and to help those in need.

Sincerely,

Chris Bruno

References

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- U.S. Department of Energy. 2024. "FOTW #1356, August 19, 2024: Household Vehicles Were Parked 95% on a Typical Day in 2022." *Vehicle Technologies Office*. August 19. Accessed September 30, 2025. <https://www.energy.gov/eere/vehicles/articles/fotw-1356-august-19-2024-household-vehicles-were-parked-95-typical-day-2022>.
- Washington State Department of Transportation. n.d. "Electric Vehicles." Accessed September 30, 2025. <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/data/gray-notebook/gnbhome/environment/electricvehicles/default.htm>.