City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Planning and Transportation Committee	**Dated:** 22 June 2026
Subject: Automated passenger services in the City of London	**Public report:** For Decision
This proposal: • **Delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes**	Dynamic Economic Growth Leading Sustainable Environment
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	NA
What is the source of Funding?	NA
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	NA
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Summary

The Automated Vehicles Act (2024) will enable autonomous vehicles (AVs) to operate in the UK without a driver by mid-2027, with pilots of automated passenger services starting in late 2026.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) will approve AVs for use and will be the permitting authority for automated passenger services. However, automated passenger services will only be able to operate in London with TfL's consent. The City of London Corporation cannot prevent AVs from operating but can manage them through existing highway powers, with AVs treated as general traffic and subject to existing access, parking and waiting restrictions.

Operators such as Waymo, Uber and Lyft are expected to seek to run services in London, with an initial focus on west and central London, including the City. It is proposed that the City Corporation proactively engages with operators with the intention of including the City of London within their initial operating areas. This would help identify impacts, gather operational data, and inform future policy and responses to consultations.

The introduction of AVs has the potential for reduced road danger due to the removal of human error. Vehicles operating systems continuously monitor surroundings with 360-degree coverage by cameras, radar, and LiDAR (light detection and ranging). Further information about how these vehicles operate can be found in Appendix 1.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Agree that officers should proactively engage with potential operators of automated passenger services with the intention of including the City of London within their operating areas.

- Note that, for the purposes of highway network management, autonomous vehicles will be treated in the same way as general traffic, as outlined in paragraph 15.

Main Report

Background

1. Following the passing of the Automated Vehicles Act into law in 2024, it is expected that autonomous vehicles (AVs) will be allowed to operate on UK roads with no user in charge no later than mid-2027.

2. Prior to this, a pilot of automated passenger services (in effect autonomous private hire services) is due to begin in late 2026. The vehicles that would be used to provide these services are already operating in London, albeit currently with a driver and not providing a service to the public.

3. The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) will be responsible for type approval of AVs, initial safety assurance and monitoring safety in use, as well as national level coordination of AV deployment. The DVSA will also be the permitting authority for automated passenger services.

4. TfL will be the consenting authority for automated passenger services to operate on London. This means that trials with passengers will only be able to commence once TfL has provided consent to the DVSA for a permit to be issued for the operation of automated passenger services. A range of factors are likely to be considered by the DVSA and TfL prior to them giving consent to operate, including safety features, operation domain and fleet size, the latter of which we expect to be managed in London to prevent an increase in congestion.

5. No further approval is required from the City Corporation, and we will not be able to prevent AVs from operating on the City's streets. In effect this is the same situation as currently exists for private vehicles, private hire vehicles and taxis.

6. We expect Waymo, Uber (in partnership with Wayve & Baidu) and Lyft (in partnership with Baidu) to apply to operate automated passenger services in London.

Current Position

7. Officers have had introductory discussions with Waymo, a Google owned AV operator currently active in the United States. Waymo have confirmed that they are preparing to operate in London, with data collection and road mapping largely completed, but permission to operate commercially is still pending.

8. Waymo are currently planning a small trial in 2026, with west and central London cited as the preferred areas of operation, across two or three boroughs with approximately 100 vehicles. Waymo showed an interest in including the City of London in their early operations and indicated that they would prefer to operate with our agreement.

9. It is anticipated that Uber and Lyft will also be keen to include the Square Mile within their operational area, but we have not yet been approached by them.

Proposal

10. It is proposed that officers should proactively engage with potential operators of automated passenger services with the intention of including the City within their initial operating areas.

11. The adoption of AVs has the potential for reduced road danger due to the removal of human error. Vehicle operating systems continuously monitor surroundings with 360-degree coverage by cameras, radar, and lidar (light detection and ranging). Further information about how these vehicles operate can be found in Appendix 1.

12. Early participation in trial operations will allow us to understand potential issues and opportunities relating to automated passenger services, and AVs more generally, while fleet numbers are low and in advance of wider roll out. This experience will inform any responses to future TfL, DVSA and DfT consultations on AVs, including whether specific controls and licencing conditions might be beneficial.

13. Engagement with operators would include agreeing data sharing related to the operation and use of automated passenger services, such as vehicle numbers, passenger trips that start or end within Square Mile, empty running, and complaints or incidents reported to the operator, TfL or the police.

14. The monitoring of automated passenger services will also help inform the City Corporation's management of AVs within the powers available to us as a Highway Authority. For example, by managing access to streets or the kerbside.

15. When considering traffic movement and access for AVs the City Corporation will treat these vehicles as general traffic. This means that all current and future traffic restrictions, parking controls and waiting and loading restrictions will apply to AVs in the same way as private vehicles and private hire vehicles. Any exemptions for taxis (black cabs) will not be applied to automated passenger services.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

16. Engaging with the piloting of autonomous passenger services will support delivery of the Dynamic Economic Growth and Leading Sustainable Environment outcomes of the Corporate Plan.

17. It will also support delivery of Transport Strategy, particularly Proposal 39 – support, enable and facilitate innovation in transport and the public realm. The wider adoption of AVs may also contribute to the delivery of a range of outcomes and proposals, including those relating to the efficient and effective use streets space and reducing road danger.

18. AVs are expected to remove human error, drive within speed limits, consistently obey traffic regulations and the Highway Code and to be less likely to be involved in collisions, supporting the delivery of Vision Zero. Across the US cities where they currently operate Waymo have reported an overall serious injury causing collision reduction of up to 92% compared to an average human driver over the same distance, and reduction in collisions of 85% with people cycling, 92% with people walking and 81% for people riding motorcycles.

Financial implications

19. There are no requirements for the City Corporation to commit any funding to this proposal, nor is there any opportunity to generate revenue, due to the permitting and consenting processes sitting with the DVSA and TfL.

Resource implications

20. Engagement with operators and monitoring would be undertaken by existing resource within the Strategic Transport team.

Legal implications

21. There are no direct legal implications for the City. Approvals to operate automated passenger services will be provided by the DVSA and TfL.

Risk implications

22. The risks associated with an approved AV operating on the City's streets are expected to be similar to the risks associated with any motor vehicle. As noted above, there may be a reduced risk of collisions.

Equalities implications

23. The need to undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been reviewed and it has been determined that an EqIA for this proposed trial is not necessary. It is considered that any potential equalities implications arising from

operation of AVs will be addressed during testing and approval of technology and through legislation and operating standards.

Climate implications

24. None

Security implications

25. It is expected that security issues will be considered by the DVSA and TfL prior to permitting automated passenger service operations. This is likely to include requirements for operators to ensure the safety and security of passengers, for example by requiring cameras, microphones and the ability to speak to remote operators in real time regarding any issues during a trip, and sensors in the vehicle to prevent people remaining in the vehicle following the conclusion of a trip.

Conclusion

26. Automated passenger services will be permitted on the City's streets if they secure DVSA and TfL approval. No further approval is required from the City Corporation.

27. Several operators are expected to begin piloting automated passenger services in London by before the end of the year, initially at a limited scale and with a focus on west and central London, including the Square Mile.

28. It is recommended that the City Corporation proactively engage with potential operators of automated passenger services with the intention of including the City within their initial operating areas.

29. Early participation in trial operations will allow us to understand potential issues and opportunities relating to automated passenger services, and AVs more generally, while fleet numbers are low and in advance of wider roll out.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Autonomous vehicle operating systems and standards

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