MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE
Thursday, October 22, 2026

TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Vice Mayor Azeem, Co-Chair
Councillor Flaherty, Co-Chair
Councillor Nolan
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler
Councillor Zusy

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Transportation and Public Utilities Committee was held on Thursday, October 22, 2026. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:30p.m. by the Co-Chair, Councillor Flaherty. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of the Co-Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.
Vice Mayor Azeem – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Flaherty – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
Councillor Zusy – Absent*
Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.
*Councillor Zusy was present in the Sullivan Chamber at 12:38p.m.

Councillor Flaherty offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to discuss the emergence of autonomous vehicles and robo-taxis, such as WAYMO, and potential future impacts on transportation, public safety, accessibility, labor unions, and the community. Present at the meeting were Brook McKenna, Commissioner of Department of Transportation, Jeff Parenti, Assistant Commissioner for Street Management, Stephanie Groll, Assistant Commissioner for Transportation Planning, Stephanie McAuliffe, Assistant Commissioner for Parking Management, and Rachel Tanenhaus, Coordinator-ADA/Executive Director. Mayor Siddiqui and Councillor McGovern were also present. Panelists that were present included Bridget Quinn, Legislative Director for Teamsters Joint Council 10 New England, Autumn Weintraub, Executive Director for App Drivers Union for 32BJSEIU, Abdiaziz Samanter from the App Drivers Union, Scott Page, Boston Carmen's Unions, Atu 589, and Darleen Lombos, President of the Greater Boston Labor Council.

Councillor Flaherty recognized Brook McKenna who gave a presentation related to autonomous vehicles and robo-taxis. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Councillor Flaherty recognized Bridget Quinn who spoke in opposition to autonomous vehicles, emphasizing how technology could threaten union jobs and negatively affect working families, neighborhoods, and public safety. Bridget Quinn pointed out that Teamsters are not opposed to technological advancements, but want companies, such as Waymo, to explain what new jobs may be created for those workers who are displaced. Bridget Quinn questioned if Waymo's vehicles are safer than human drivers, and shared information related to crashes, federal investigations, recalls, and incidents involving construction zones, emergency vehicles, power outages, and school bus stop signs. Bridget Quinn also shared concerns related to Waymo's ability to operate in Massachusetts due to weather concerns, such as snow and extreme cold and heat. Bridget Quinn referenced a poll that indicated 78% of Massachusetts residents oppose autonomous vehicles, with public safety being a primary concern.

Councillor Flaherty recognized Autumn Weintraub, Scott Page, Abdiaziz Samanter, and Darleen Lombos who offered individual statements related to autonomous vehicles and robotaxis and the effects and impacts on labor unions. (**Attachment A**)

Councillor Flaherty recognized Rachel Tanenhaus who discussed both the potential benefits and concerns associated with autonomous vehicles, particularly for individuals with disabilities. Rachel Tanenhaus shared how services, such as Waymo, could provide independence for people who are blind or have intellectual disabilities, and also reduce discrimination that is experienced by people with disabilities. Rachel Tanenhaus pointed out that Waymo does not currently operate wheelchair accessible vehicles, which could limit transportation options for some users. She raised concerns about passenger safety, such as incorrect drop-off location and the availability of having human assistance. Rachel Tanenhaus emphasized the importance of autonomous vehicles being accessible to individuals with different disabilities and encouraged the City to consider accessibility along with public safety and broader equity concerns when reviewing the use of autonomous vehicles in Cambridge.

Councillor Flaherty opened Public Comment.

Mike Ortiz, 500 Broadway Street, Malden, MA, Teamster Local 25, spoke in opposition to autonomous vehicles and WAYMO.

Prisell Polanco, 26 West Street, Boston, MA, spoke in opposition to autonomous vehicles and WAYMO.

Councillor Flaherty recognized Councillor Nolan who shared her appreciation for professional drivers and emphasized the important role they play in providing transportation and assistance to the community. Councillor Nolan acknowledged that autonomous vehicles could have potential benefits in the future, but it was something she did not support at this time. Councillor Nolan questioned whether autonomous vehicles would increase traffic congestion and contribute to emissions and negatively affect public transportation or create surveillance and privacy risks.

Councillor Nolan raised concerns related to the potential displacement of workers and the loss of union jobs, adding that those losses would not only impact workers but their families, neighborhoods, and local businesses. Councillor Nolan emphasized that the City would need more research and analysis done related to the concerns and impacts.

Councillor Flaherty recognized Councillor Zusy who shared her support for autonomous vehicles as part of the future of transportation, highlighting that with them, there is potential to reduce personal vehicles which could help contribute to a more sustainable city. Councillor Zusy shared that technology is advancing quickly and that autonomous vehicles could provide benefits for older adults and individuals who may not be able to drive. Councillor Zusy acknowledged the concerns being raised related to the potential displacement of rideshare drivers and the importance of protecting employment, adding that autonomous vehicles should not come at the expense of people losing their jobs. Councillor Zusy encouraged collaboration with labor unions to help identify ways to adapt to the technology while still supporting workers and the community. Councillor Zusy shared that for the City to move forward with autonomous vehicles there needs to be thoughtful planning to address impacts.

Councillor Flaherty shared concerns related to the unintended consequences of the advancing technology and the potential impact it may have on social interactions and possibly contribute more to social isolation. Councillor Flaherty raised concerns related to the possible increase in traffic congestions and whether autonomous vehicles could respond appropriately to unexpected road conditions, construction, and situations that require human judgment. Councillor Flaherty emphasized the impact technology would have within the transportation industry and on working families and stressed the importance of keeping good paying union jobs. Councillor Flaherty shared that Cambridge should monitor State Legislation, review the current requirements for autonomous vehicle testing and pilot programs, before making an informed decision of any potential introduction of the technology to the City.

Councillor Flaherty recognized Councillor Nolan who agreed that autonomous vehicles may become more common in the future, but the City must fully understand the potential consequences before moving forward. Councillor Nolan agreed with comments related to the impact on working people.

Councillor Flaherty recognized Councillor Zusy who pointed out that 21 states currently allow self-driving vehicles and that autonomous vehicles will be part of the future. Councillor Zusy added that many of those 21 states have warmer climates and less snow than Massachusetts but noted it will be important to help minimize the negative impacts and recognize the positive benefits. Councillor Zusy added that it will be important to development appropriate regulations, guidelines, and criteria to ensure the technology works for the public.

Councillor Flaherty offered closing remarks and shared that the City should be cautious not to move too quickly and that the concerns related to artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles should be better understood.

Councillor Flaherty recognized Councillor Zusy who made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor Azeem – Absent
Councillor Flaherty – Yes
Councillor Nolan – Absent
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes
Councillor Zusy – Yes
Yes – 3, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The transportation and Public Utilities Committee adjourned at approximately 2:02p.m.

Attachment A – Statements from panelists (not verbatim).
Attachment B – Communications from the public.

Clerk's Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. The video for this meeting can be viewed at: https://cambridgema.v3.swagit.com/videos/404887

Attachment A

AUTUMN WEINTRAUB

City of Cambridge: Transportation & Public Utilities Committee

October 22, 2026

Good afternoon, and thank you, members of the Committee.

My name is Autumn Weintraub, and I serve as the Executive Director of the App Drivers Union. Our coalition represents thousands of workers across the state. The ADU represents 70,000 hardworking essential drivers.

We have to **hit the brakes** on allowing driverless vehicles on our streets.

Despite Waymo's aggressive non-stop lobbying, the State of Massachusetts has not advanced Waymos AV legislation. But Waymo, like other Big Tech corporations, is trying to move fast. Waymo is now pursuing a strategy of lobbying municipalities like Cambridge and others in the state for support.

Waymo's "ask mom, then ask dad" gambit treats our state and local governments like parents to be worn down—so it can get to "yes" and impose life-altering technology on communities. But we must understand the impact and put appropriate guardrails in place first.

This is not about innovation. This is about the **lives and livelihoods of thousands of ridesbare drivers** and the families and communities that rely on them.

Allowing robot taxis would mean a direct hit to jobs and local economies. Drivers who are already stretched thin will be pushed further into debt. They'll work longer hours for fewer trips. They will be forced to compete with robots.

Massachusetts rideshare drivers are currently negotiating the nation's first union contract for rideshare drivers. Drivers ***won*** the right to improve their jobs through a union after a majority of MA voters supported Question 3 in 2024. Much of that support came from Cambridge, on the Harvard and MIT campuses, where students and staff stood with drivers fighting to transform the gig industry. **Now, driverless cars threaten that progress.**

This isn't just about drivers. It's about the ripple effect driverless cars will have on our communities.

Replacing drivers with robot taxis would be devastating for **small businesses, neighborhood economies and our state's tax base.** Driverless cars mean fewer paychecks spent at local car

repair shops, gas stations and convenience stores. When drivers lose income and are driven to unemployment lines, entire communities feel the loss.

There are paramount concerns about Waymo and surveillance, bias, and potential immigration enforcement that should be of particular concern to the city of Cambridge, which prides itself on diversity. Waymos are "essentially surveillance cameras on wheels" and have come under fire from privacy advocates for their cooperation with Law Enforcement.

While the City of Cambridge strictly limits local police cooperation with ICE Waymo could prove to be a loophole. ICE could potentially obtain Waymo footage to track and deport alleged undocumented immigrants, as ICE has accessed footage from other camera companies, and Waymo's policies could allow ICE to access its data.

Robotaxi software is also notoriously worse at detecting darker-skinned people than lighter-skinned ones. This bias increases safety risks for pedestrians of color.

Silicon Valley may want to force driverless vehicles into our communities, but Massachusetts voters do not. **74% of Massachusetts voters oppose driverless vehicles,** according to a March 2026 WorkBench Strategies poll. And the public's concerns about unregulated technology–from AI to data centers-are growing by the minute.

We have the opportunity to get this right. To make sure workers have a seat at the table and that the future of transportation in Massachusetts is shaped thoughtfully and with care.

We can't rush headfirst into experimental technology that presents an answer to a problem that doesn't exist. Over **70,000 rideshare drivers** already serve our communities every day, alongside **thousands more public transit workers** and Teamsters who keep Massachusetts moving.

Cities like San Francisco and Phoenix, which did not have a chance to create guardrails around commercial robotaxis in advance, are now struggling to regulate the reckless industry. The incidents involving Waymos are too numerous to name and some are too outrageous to believe. Cambridge does not need to follow that path. It must not follow that path.

We can chart a different course. We urge this committee to put the brakes on WAYMO. We urge this committee to keep standing up for workers and our communities. So that we do not need to play catch-up and try to address consequences once the cat is out of the bag and it is too late.

Good afternoon,

My name is Scott Page, and I am here today from the Boston Carmen's Union, ATU Local 589. I rise today on behalf of our President, James Evers, Jr. and the nearly 7,000 union brothers, sisters and siblings who operate and maintain the buses, trains, and streetcars at the MBTA.

For 123 years, our local has proudly moved the people of this region with a keen eye for safety, both on our vehicles and in the communities we serve.

Much of the work our members do goes far beyond the task of moving a vehicle.

Transit workers act as ambassadors to the region, assist those who need extra help using public transit, serve as the first point of contact during emergencies, and troubleshoot mechanical issues that arise in the course of normal operations.

A quick search of news headlines will show you that transit operators have recovered lost valuables, reunited missing children and elderly people with their loved ones, extinguished fires in people's homes, and prevented crime, injury, and damage to personal property by taking proactive steps to ensure that people are safe.

While we gather here today to talk about whether big tech can deliver a vehicle that drives itself, we must equally raise our voices to defend the efforts of transit workers and the importance of the humanity they bring to the art of moving people.

AVs in their current state are not prepared to deal with the unpredictable situations that members of Local 589, and transit workers across the industry, handle every day without incident. More importantly, robo-taxis and self-piloted vehicles are incapable of developing a relationship with the communities they serve. Our members are the bedrock of cities and towns we live in, because we are the community.

We should be very skeptical about using Waymo's proprietary, self-reported data about safety. Rather than spending our scarce resources on being a testing lab for the latest tech fad, Cambridge, and all of Massachusetts, should invest in our efficient and well-tested public transit system and the workers who make it run. Thank you.

Abdiaziz Samanter Testimony
City of Cambridge: Transportation & Public Utilities Committee
October 22, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Abdiaziz Samanter. I come here today as a rideshare driver, father of eight, and Cambridge resident to ask you to reject Waymo.

I've been driving in the Boston area for about twenty years - nine years in a taxi and eleven with Uber.

I used to drive a cab, but I lost my business to Uber. I adapted, moved forward, and started driving for Uber. Now, I'm watching Waymo take over the same way Uber did.

It feels like every time I adjust to a new reality, another technology comes along and threatens my livelihood. First, it was Uber. Now, it's self-driving cars.

My question is: How many times must a hardworking driver start over just to survive?

We are not just drivers. We are people with families to feed, bills to pay, and dreams to pursue. Technology may be the future, but what happens to the people who built their lives around driving?

Waymo doesn't just threaten our jobs, it threatens the support network that real human drivers provide. Every day, we offer connection, compassion, and help that no robot can replicate. We help passengers get to and from the hospital and to doctors' appointments. We help elderly and disabled passengers get in and out of the vehicle and to their front doors, and fold and put their wheelchairs away. We make sure women passengers get home safely.

Robotaxis don't pay taxes. They don't raise families here. They don't make judgment calls when someone's in trouble. This isn't about public safety, it's about profits that go straight to Silicon Valley.

We moved mountains to win our union so we can make our jobs better. We're at the bargaining table right now, negotiating the first-ever contract for rideshare drivers. That's real progress. So I'm asking you today—don't erase it. Don't replace us with robots at the exact moment we're transforming this industry for the better.

I survived the transition from taxis to Uber. Now I'm facing the transition from Uber to Waymo. My story is not just about cars or technology. It's about survival, dignity, and the struggle of the working class.

Progress should not mean leaving hardworking people behind. We deserve a fair chance to adapt, earn a living, and support our families.

Thank you

Cambridge City Council Hearing on Waymo
October 22, 2026

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Darlene Lombos and I'm the President of the Greater Boston Labor Council, AFL-CIO. We represent 100,000 union members and their families in the region, including the City of Cambridge. On behalf of all of us here today, we would like to thank Co-chairs Councilor Flaherty and Councilor Azeem and the rest of the Transportation and Public Utilities Committee for inviting us to share our concerns about driverless cars.

While the Labor Movement has always fought for a transportation system that is affordable, accessible and serves the public good, for over a year now in Massachusetts and in Boston, we have **also** been advocating to ensure that new technologies that may be used to build our transportation system are shaped with us, not at our expense.

When it comes to driverless cars and commercial robotaxis in Massachusetts, we are urging city and state leaders to take the time to understand this technology that other cities and states across the country did not:

#1: Study the traffic and safety impacts before it's too late and Cambridge ends up with driverless cars going through active crime scenes or through highway construction zones like in Atlanta;

#2: Give local workers, small businesses and community members a seat at the table and the power to guide discussions and decisions so Cambridge is not left scrambling to address issues raised from a variety of stakeholders who are already dealing like driverless cars inability to work properly in extreme weather or deal with flash floods like in San Antonio and other cities in Texas;

And #3: Create real, human-centered guardrails that prioritize workers, residents and public safety over corporate profits so Cambridge doesn't have to backtrack to address these basic concerns like what has been happening in San Francisco.

Think about it this way: In the 1970s, we sprayed asbestos everywhere from schools to offices and homes all because industry assured us it was innovative and safe.

No one asked the hard questions. And decades later, we're *still* paying the price, cleaning it up, and dealing with the harm.

We cannot let AVs become the new "spray and pray" technology. We can't let robotaxis loose on our streets willy nilly without first understanding the immediate and long-term consequences.

So today, as you hear from union leaders and drivers who will be most impacted, we want you to remember that driverless cars are just one facet of a much broader conversation about the future of work, how we want to build our cities, and a real test to our democracy.

We know AI, algorithmic management and other technology companies want to concentrate power and decision making at the top to maximize profits but the Labor Movement is sending a strong message today that **that** outcome is **not** inevitable. We can build a future where technology enhances human work, not replaces us and where working people are decision-makers, not data points.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be part of the conversation today and look forward to our continued partnership.

Attachment B

ADU Driver

City of Cambridge: Transportation & Public Utilities Committee

October 22, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Prisell Polanco. I come here today as a rideshare driver, father, and Cambridge resident to ask you to reject Waymo.

I've been driving for Uber and Lyft in the Boston area for six years. I chose this work for the flexibility, but staying afloat now requires working endless hours just to make ends meet. I have three children that I support. I have to work more hours and have little time with my family and little time to sleep.

I want to change this industry to make it better for drivers so I started organizing. After a long fight we won our union rights and our union. We're at the bargaining table right now, negotiating the first-ever contract for rideshare drivers. We've made real progress and do not want to lose it.

Waymo doesn't just threaten our jobs; it takes away the services that real drivers provide. We already have too many cars and too much traffic. We don't need more confusion. We need investment in the people already doing the job. We need to invest in the driver who waited an extra minute outside for your daughter to come inside after a graduation party. We need to invest in the driver who helped your mother or grandmother to get in and out of the vehicle and fold and put away her wheelchair. We need to invest in the driver who helped the distressed person with IDD to calm down and make sure they get home safely.

That's what real drivers do. We adapt. We protect. We care. A preprogrammed car won't do any of that.

I drive often in Cambridge. I have driven hundreds if not thousands of Harvard and MIT students, professors and more where they need to go.

I am excited about the technology and innovation that happens on campus. I want to see that innovation helps people for the greater good, not displace people and destroy their lives.

We can't take humans out of the equation.

I hope you take the opportunity to stand with us, the drivers. Stand with the unions supporting us. Do not side with robots that will never give the service, care, or safety that we drivers provide.

If you open the door to Waymo, drivers like me will lose our jobs. We will lose the only way we can feed our families.

Thank you.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Lena Bradley <lenarbradley@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2026 12:48 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Correct to Autonomous Vehicle presentaion in city council meeting

Hello,

I'd like to make a correction to the presentation today: the presentation mentioned that Zoox is not operating commercially, that information is outdated. Zoox does have a commercial deployment. e.g. see this news article: https://www.cnbc.com/2026/08/05/amazon-zoox-paid-robotaxi-rides-las-vegas.html

Best,
Lena Bradley

Resident of Somerville, MA

Erwin, Nicole

From: Tabatha Holmes <tabatha.holmes.12@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2026 11:59 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: WAYMO city council meeting on 10/22 comment

Good afternoon,

I live in cambridgeport and am emailing to say that i do not want waymo on the streets in cambridge. I think it should be illegal in general.

Tabatha Holmes
(731) 608-0877