



## Pinellas County Tests AVs In Downtown St. Pete

Insights

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The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) has moved forward with a three-month pilot program to test autonomous vehicles (AVs) in downtown St. Petersburg, Florida. The PSTA selected the same vendor as the Hillsborough County Transit Authority, [Beep Inc.](#), to run its pilot AV program. As previously noted on our AV blog, Beep is also currently [testing AVs in Downtown Tampa](#).

The contract requires Beep to have a person in the AV to operate it manually if needed. In addition to testing in Tampa and St. Pete, Beep currently has a fleet of vehicles in Orlando. Moreover, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority recently partnered with the company to use autonomous vehicles to transport COVID-19 tests collected at a drive-through location at the Mayo Clinic there.

While a few other communities around the country have AVs that run in designated lanes, the pilot program in downtown St. Pete provides a convenient method to traverse one of the city's most scenic streets. The AV program connects entertainment destinations such as the Dali Museum, the new Pier district, and North Straub Park. Riders are also able to stop at the Cross-Bay Ferry, the free downtown Looper or the Central Avenue Trolley. The AV shuttles can hold up to eight people and travel up to 16 miles per hour.

[The PSTA is looking to gain feedback](#) on how the community feels about the possibility of using AVs as a transit option in the future. So far, 1,500 people have ridden the shuttle during [the first month of testing and the reviews have been positive](#).

As previously discussed on [our AV blog](#), transit authorities will want to closely monitor the testing of AVs for public transportation purposes. Besides the obvious safety aspect of any such program, it is imperative to consider the labor implications. When a transit authority considers automation, a duty to bargain with labor over the decision to automate and a duty to bargain over the effects of the decision may [arise](#). In fact, [the Transportation Trades Department](#) is already pushing to require transit agencies to provide employees with advanced notice of any planned deployment of automated vehicle technologies and the impact these technologies will have on their current workforce.

An employer contemplating automation changes in the future should look to negotiate provisions reserving such decisions to management when first negotiating or renegotiating its collective bargaining [agreements](#). Additionally, employers should monitor the progress of [AV services](#) in order to ensure that their policies and procedures related to data privacy, confidential information, remote

work, and workplace safety are adequately up to date to address potential issues that may arise due employees being able to work while traveling.

### ***Related People***

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**Brett P. Owens**

Partner

813.769.7512

[Email](#)