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Autonomous Akin



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Our newsletter reflects the focus of Akin’s cross-practice autonomous systems and advanced mobility team on developments in the regulatory, policy, trade, intellectual property, and cybersecurity and privacy spaces. Autonomous Akin brings you the latest news and developments so that you can keep a pulse on what is happening in government and industry that is impactful for your business. For our new readers, you can subscribe to future issues of this newsletter [here](#). Thank you!

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Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)

Why Walmart Sees Drone Delivery Taking Flight - *Supply Chain Dive*

“After testing drone deliveries for the last few years, Walmart is increasingly rolling out the option as a way to fulfill e-commerce orders. As of early January, the retailer had 31 hubs for drone delivery across six states, Prathibha Rajashekhar, the retailer’s senior vice president of automation and innovation, stores and supply chain, recently told retail blog Omni Talk, noting that in the Dallas area alone, the retailer had 11 hubs with drone technology firm DroneUp and two with another tech provider in the space, Wing.”

[Read the Article](#)

China's Xpeng's Drone Car AeroHT Voyager X2 Completes Low-Altitude Flight

in Guangzhou City - Reuters

“Chinese EV maker Xpeng's affiliate, XPENG AEROHT, said on Friday its flying drone car AeroHT Voyager X2 completed a low-altitude flight in the central business district of the southern city of Guangzhou, the company said in a statement.”

[Read the Article](#)

Sky's The Limit: Federal Approval Ushers New Era for Drone-Delivery Services in U.S. - BNN Breaking

“Recent federal endorsements have marked a pivotal turn for drone-delivery services, empowering them to expand operations across the United States. This development paves the way for a variety of sectors, including retail, dining, and healthcare, to offer innovative delivery solutions. Amidst a landscape where instant gratification is increasingly sought after, drone deliveries emerge as a vital link in ensuring efficiency and convenience in consumer services.”

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AALTO Seeks to Democratize High-Speed Internet Access Through Solar-Powered Drones - TechCrunch

“AALTO relies on fixed-winged drones, which are – at the very least – more predictable in their movements than weather balloons. Airbus acquired the technology for the fixed-wing drones from U.K. Ministry of Defence and Space spinoff QinetiQ in 2013.”

[Read the Article](#)

Manna's Drone Delivery Service is Up and Away - And Aiming For the Stars - Irish Independent

“Bobby Healy's mantra with Manna, the drone delivery firm he founded in Dublin six years ago, has always been to “go big or go home”. That - as well as around €40m of venture funding - has gotten the 55-year-old Dubliner to a point in 2024 where he's launching the company's first legitimately commercial, non-trial, service in Blanchardstown.”

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Two Texas Cities Pave the Way for Drone Delivery: Cities and Providers Discuss What that Means - Drone Life

“Two cities in North Texas have recently taken steps to pave the way for Walmart to continue to expand its drone delivery operations across the greater Dallas/Fort Worth area . . . Both moves come in response to Walmart's ambitious plans to expand its drone deliveries to 75% of the DFW area by the end of this year. In January, the retail giant said it would expand its UAV delivery services to its stores across more than 30 towns and municipalities in the metroplex, in partnership with on-demand drone delivery providers Wing and Zipline.”

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Port Authority of NY/NJ, Skyports Explore Drone Delivery - *Air Cargo Next*

“The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has entered an agreement with Skyports Drone Services to explore the logistics and market for drone delivery across the Hudson River. For the first six months of the yearlong partnership, the U.K.-based cargo drone operator will reach out to potential drone delivery customers to gauge interest in middle-mile delivery between New York and New Jersey.”

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Southern Port City to Demonstrate Food Drone Delivery Services for Near-Shore Vessels and Fishing Areas - *Aju Korea Daily*

“The southern port city of Busan is set to showcase drone delivery services, aiming to transport food and essential items to vessels near the shoreline and individuals at popular fishing locations. This initiative seeks to promote the use of aerial delivery systems and enhance leisure experiences by providing greater convenience.”

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Virginia Beach-Based DroneUp Debuts Dropoff and Pickup System for Drone Deliveries - *Daily Press*

“Virginia Beach drone services company DroneUp is expanding beyond the skies to build out its delivery ecosystem. The company unveiled a kiosk package pickup and drop-off system at its headquarters Tuesday to expand the reach of drone delivery. The Destination Box, called DBX, is a gray storage locker about the size of a parking space and a few feet taller than a person. On top of each box is a large netted area where drones drop off packages. An automated elevator rises out of the box, grabs the package and stores it inside. During a demonstration, a DroneUp employee was able to retrieve the package through a small opening in the front of the box.”

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Ohio DOT Pioneers Drone Traffic Management System - *Government Technology*

“In an effort to improve safety and provide comprehensive oversight for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) has launched what is believed to be the first state-level, low-altitude unmanned traffic management (UTM) navigation system. Federal Aviation Administration-led (FAA) initiatives have explored UTM test deployments and partnerships with private industry. But Ohio stands out as the first state to establish a permanent UTM system for statewide use, Sean Calhoun, managing director of CAL Analytics, which pioneered its technology, said in an interview.”

[Read the Article](#)

US Agriculture Industry Gears Up For Futuristic Aerial 'Drone-Swarm' Farming After FAA Decision - *Fox Business*

“A new exemption for drone piloting from the Federal Aviation Administration has cleared the airways for “drone-swarm” agriculture, a method of seeding and spraying crops at a fraction of the traditional cost. Hyllo, a Texas-based drone manufacturer, successfully applied for an exemption from the FAA to allow fleets of drones weighing 55 pounds or more to fly together.”

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Advanced Air Mobility



A Flying Car Startup Backed by A Key SpaceX Investor Has Almost 3,000 Pre-Orders - *Quartz*

“Alef Aeronautics CEO Jim Dukhovny is very excited about his company’s Model A flying car, and so are 2,850 other people with \$300,000 to spare . . . Alef began its flying car work in 2015 and flew a prototype in 2019. Venture capitalist Tim Draper, an early Tesla and SpaceX investor, is one of the company’s backers.”

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Take a Look at Airbus’ Newly Unveiled Electric Air Taxi - *Flying Magazine*

“Airbus on Thursday unveiled the full prototype of its four-seat CityAirbus NextGen to the public. The electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) design makes its debut ahead of its anticipated maiden voyage later this year. CityAirbus NextGen is a zero-emission, lift-plus-cruise design for a variety of missions in major cities and urban environments, including passenger transport, medical services, and ecotourism. Airbus will partner with operators and airlines to fly the model worldwide.”

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Volocopter Becomes World’s First eVTOL Approved Training Organisation - *Pilot Web*

“Urban air mobility pioneer Volocopter has become an Approved Training Organisation (ATO), the first eVTOL (electric vertical takeoff and landing craft) developer to receive this certification anywhere in the world. The ATO certification was awarded from the German Federal Aviation office (Luftfahrtbundesamt) through its subsidiary, Volocopter Air Services, following zero findings in the final audit. Volocopter will now work on finalising the training programme for its VoloCity aircraft in conjunction with the Luftfahrtbundesamt, after which the manufacturer can begin to train up future pilots in Germany.”

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Korean Gov't to Commercialize UAM Aircraft Beginning from 2025 - *Business Korea*

“The OPPAV is the first UAM aircraft of Korea’s own development. It is an electric-powered vertical take-off and landing aircraft that is quieter and safer than a helicopter . . . The Korean government spent 45 billion won on the development of the Korean UAM aircraft because the UAM market is growing rapidly due to carbon neutrality policies and increasing traffic congestion in major cities around the world.”

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Urban Air Mobility Ready for Takeoff But Huge Infrastructure Challenges Remain - *DigiTimes Asia*

“However, realizing the full potential of UAM requires robust infrastructure support. Chen said regulatory bodies like the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) have been developing standards to guide UAM infrastructure development which includes considerations for airspace management, air traffic control systems, and safety protocols.”

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Flying Taxis Could Launch in Two Years In UK Skies - *The Independent*

“The first ever flying taxi could take to the UK skies as early as 2026, a government plan has suggested, in a bid to welcome technology “once confined to the realm of sci-fi”. The proposals are part of the Department of Transport’s (DoT) Future of Flight Action Plan. Under the proposals, driverless flying taxis could also become a reality within the next six years. The “roadmap” would mean the adoption of technology that could boost the country’s economy by £45 billion by 2030.”

[Read the Article](#)

Autonomy & Electric Vehicles



Kentucky Lawmakers Override Veto, OK Fully Autonomous Vehicles - *Transport Topics*

“Kentucky has legally paved the way for autonomous vehicles on its roadways with the legislators gathering enough support April 12 to overcome significant opposition in both chambers to override Gov. Andy Beshear’s veto of House Bill 7.”

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Look, No Hands! My Trip of Seoul’s Self-Driving Bus - *BBC*

“There is a moment on the A21 bus, at around midnight, when the man in the driver's seat presses a small red button on his dashboard. He smiles, then lets go of the steering wheel and lifts his feet from the pedals. The vehicle continues to glide through the streets of South Korea's capital, Seoul, turning corners and stopping at traffic lights. No-one on board seems to notice.”

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Bidirectional Charging Could Unlock New Potential For Waste Fleet Electrification - *Smart Cities Dive*

“An electric vehicle charging pilot by one of the world's largest waste companies could chart a new course for the industry as operators look to electrify their fleets. Electrification is increasingly seen as the future for waste vehicles, based on corporate pledges and requests from municipal customers, but costs and charging infrastructure are still evolving. France-based Veolia recently completed what it described as the world's first trial of bidirectional charging for waste collection vehicles, which could have implications for fleets in other areas.”

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Biden Orders Security Probe into Chinese "Connected" Vehicles, Labeling Them a Potential Security Threat - *TechSpot*

“President Biden has ordered an investigation into whether Chinese connected vehicles, particularly EVs, pose a security risk to American citizens. It comes amid concerns that cheap EVs from China could flood the US market, which would have a major impact on domestic car makers. The White House notes that the US Commerce Department probe is needed because vehicles collect large amounts of sensitive data on their drivers and passengers, while regularly using their cameras and sensors to record detailed information on US citizens and infrastructure - information that could be sent back to China.”

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China EV Makers Woo Buyers with In-Car Beds, Kitchens And Drones - *The Seattle Times*

“In China, electric vehicles with built-in fridges and even in-car karaoke systems are considered passé. Instead, carmakers are turning to increasingly novel add-ons from beds to cooktops to boost sluggish sales. Top EV makers are facing a slowdown in demand at home as consumers curb spending, just as geopolitical tensions with major Western economies cloud the outlook for exports.”

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Drone Crashes Into Wrecked Fukushima Nuclear Reactor in First study of Molten Core - *The Independent*

“A drone small enough to fit in someone’s hand flew inside one of the damaged reactors at the wrecked Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant on Wednesday. The study hopes to examine some of the molten fuel debris in areas where earlier robots failed to reach.”

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North Texas Innovation Zone Aims to Drive AV, Delivery Tech - *Government Technology*

“Leaders are developing a mobility innovation district in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro region to take full advantage of its strategic location in fostering next-generation technologies related to autonomy, deliveries and aviation. The Mobility Innovation Zone in AllianceTexas, is situated near a busy air cargo hub, rail lines, and Interstate 35, enabling it to grow industries around autonomous trucking and air taxis, as well as stimulate new approaches in package delivery.”

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NYC's Curbside EV Chargers Are Popular – And Often Blocked - *Auto Blog*

“In the three years since New York City began installing curbside chargers for electric cars, demand for the spaces has boomed – both from EV owners looking for a place to plug in and from gas-engine drivers willing to risk a ticket in exchange for street parking. “We expected moderate demand,” with usage rates around 15%, said Roy Rada, project manager for e-mobility innovation at Consolidated Edison Inc. It’s been “exponentially higher,” he said. The 100 chargers are online 99.9% of the time with an average utilization rate of 72% in 2024, according to the New York City Department of Transportation.”

[Read the Article](#)

EPA Softens Vehicle Emissions Standards, Giving Carmakers More Time To Ramp Up EV Sales - *Utility Dive*

“The Biden administration on Wednesday approved new vehicle emissions standards for light- and medium-duty vehicles, according to an Environmental Protection Agency press release. By 2032, automakers must reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from light-duty vehicles by almost 50% and medium-duty vehicles by 44% compared with 2026. The EPA’s final rule allows automakers to meet the targets using a range of powertrain technologies, including hybrids, plug-in hybrids and battery-electric vehicles.”

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[Commerce Focuses National Security Scrutiny on 'Connected Vehicle' Supply Chain](#) (March 1, 2024)

[FAA Reauthorization Watch: Provisions of Note for UAS and AAM Companies in the Senate Bill](#) (February 13, 2024)

[Hot Issues in 2024 for TMT Companies](#) (February 6, 2024)

[Three New UK Laws Impacting Autonomous Vehicles, Digital Markets and Personal Data](#) (November 30, 2023)

[CPPA Takes Aim at Connected Cars in First-Ever Review](#) (August 23, 2023)

[Congress Takes a Step Forward on Outbound Investment](#) (July 27, 2023)

[Akin's Mid-Year TMT Report Provides Important Updates on Regulatory and Policy Developments for TMT Leaders](#) (May 25, 2023)

[Autonomous Systems & Advanced Mobility: 2023 Trends & Predictions](#) (May 5, 2023)

[Kayo Sustainable Infrastructure Webinar Recording - Passcode: Fm%X07T](#) (April 19, 2023)

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