

Varun M. Jain

Of Counsel

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OVERVIEW

Varun Jain is of counsel in the firm's Public Policy and Law practice group, where he helps companies and public entities navigate AV regulation, transportation policy, and emerging technology governance across federal and state agencies, including the US Department of Transportation (USDOT), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). His practice covers both traditional and advanced transportation, including autonomous vehicles, with a focus on regulatory compliance, government oversight, and deployment strategies.

Varun has held senior legal and regulatory roles in both government and industry, including at the White House's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), the USDOT, a global ride sharing platform, and a purpose-built autonomous vehicle startup. That government and industry background shapes how he helps clients today: anticipating regulatory risk, navigating government oversight, and deploying AV and transportation technologies responsibly and at scale.

Varun focuses extensively on AV regulation, compliance, and policy advocacy. He advises companies and investors on NHTSA and FMCSA regulatory obligations, federal and state AV permitting and deployment strategies, safety and defect reporting, and incident response and investigations. He regularly counsels clients on the evolving regulatory roles of NHTSA, USDOT, the California Department of Motor Vehicles (CA DMV), and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and advises on how federal vehicle safety actions interact with state deployment and commercial operations regimes. Varun also engages with the Executive Branch, Congress, and local governments on legislation such as the SELF DRIVE Act and AMERICA DRIVES Act. His work spans light duty and heavy duty AVs, freight and robotaxi/ride-hail use cases, off-road applications, and emerging governance issues such as remote operations, reporting, and enforcement.

Varun speaks regularly on autonomous vehicles, transportation regulation, and emerging technology policy, and is known for translating complex regulatory structures into practical, action oriented advice for clients.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Before joining the firm, Varun served as a deputy general counsel at the USDOT, where he advised on regulation and consumer protection, amongst other matters, and helped oversee a departmental legal team of nearly 500 attorneys.

Prior to that, he served as senior counselor to the administrator at OIRA, where he led the review of significant regulatory initiatives across transportation, health, labor, education, agriculture, veterans, and defense. In that role, he developed expertise with the federal regulatory process, interagency review, and cost-benefit analysis, and helped lead OIRA's early experimentation with the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in regulatory review.

Varun began his legal career as an assistant general counsel at the White House's Office of Management and Budget, where he worked on administrative law and regulatory matters.

Between his periods of public service, Varun was in-house counsel at a multinational ride-sharing company and an autonomous vehicle startup, where he advised on AV and mobility permitting, product launches, government investigations, and crisis management. He also worked with federal, state, and local regulators and policymakers on emerging mobility frameworks and provided testimony before a public utilities commission.

PROFESSIONAL / CIVIC ACTIVITIES

- Member, Standing Technical Committee on Developments and Advancements in Transportation Technology Law (AQL 14), Transportation Research Board
- Member, Section Council, Section of Administrative Law and Regulatory Practice, American Bar Association

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- *Bootcamp: Understanding Vehicle Autonomy*, ACT Expo, May 2026
- *Managing the Modern Curb: Governing the Last Mile*, CoMotion Miami, April 2026
- *Safe Autonomous Transportation Deployment – From Pilots to Corridors*, 2026 National Safety Summit of US DOT University Transportation Centers, Safety21, March 2026
- *Keeping Pace With New Rules: Understanding Efforts to Regulate Modern Vehicles*, ACI's 14th Annual Automotive Litigation, Regulation, and Innovation Summit, American Conference Institute, March 2026
- *Joint Energy & Environment & AI, Technology & Innovation*, Policy Committee Meeting, New Jersey Business & Industry Association, February 2026
- *Policy in Motion: Guiding Next-gen Mobility*, 2026 Advanced Mobility Symposium, AUVSI North Carolina, February 2026
- *From Driverless to Drones: Hot Topics in Emerging Transportation Technology Law,* Transportation Research Board, 105th Annual Meeting, January 2026

- *Intelligent Traffic Management: AI-Driven Coordination in Urban Networks*, International Road Federation, Global R2T Conference and Exhibition, December 2025
- *Harnessing V2X Communication: Enhancing Safety and Efficiency Through Vehicle-Infrastructure Links*, International Road Federation, Global R2T Conference and Exhibition, December 2025
- *Industry InFocus - Transportation and Logistics*, Voice of the Client Series, K&L Gates, December 2025
- *Department of Commerce's Office of Information and Communications Technology and Services: National Security Implications for the Solar Energy Sector*, Solar Energy Industries Association, December 2025
- *Carrots or Sticks: The Changing Direction in Federal and State AV Policy*, Society of Automotive Engineers, Automated Transportation Symposium, November 2025
- *Recall Trends, Including Software and Autonomy-Related Recalls, and the Regulatory Outlook*, MAPConnected, Commercial Vehicle Summit, October 2025
- *What is Happening? Recent Developments in Transportation Technology Law*, Transportation Research Board, Annual Workshop on Transportation Law, July 2025
- *No Vehicles in the Park: Handling Hard-To-Categorize Transportation Modes*, Transportation Research Board, Annual Workshop on Transportation Law, July 2025
- *Department of Transportation Authority Post-Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo*, American Bar Association, Forum on Air & Space Law, Washington Update Conference, March 2025
- *Artificial Intelligence and the Federal Government*, American Bar Association, Section of Administrative Law and Regulatory Practice, November 2024
- *Making Tax Policy in the Era of Artificial Intelligence—Can It Survive the Robots?*, American Bar Association, Section of Taxation, May Tax Meeting, May 2024

EDUCATION

- J.D., New York University School of Law, 2014 *cum laude, Frank J. Guarini Leaders in Government Service Scholar, Robert McKay Scholar*
- A.B., Dartmouth College, 2007 *cum laude, Rufus Choate Scholar (top 5% yearly GPA)*

ADMISSIONS

- Bar of District of Columbia
- Bar of Maryland

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP *POWERED BY HUB*

- 2 October 2026, The White House Adopts "Super Intelligence" Terminology and Launches SI-Powered America.gov
- 24 August 2026, Office of Space Commerce Opens Pilot for Novel Space Mission Authorizations
- 4 June 2026, Balancing Innovation and Risk—President Trump's Executive Order Aims to Review Security Implications of High-Risk AI Models
- 26 May 2026, How AI Governance Is Being Built in Real Time, and What Comes Next
- 27 March 2026, Office of Space Commerce Releases Updated Mission Authorization Proposal for Novel Space Activities
- 24 March 2026, White House Releases National AI Policy Framework
- 16 January 2026, FCC Announces Wide-Ranging New Controls on Drones and Drone Components
- 9 January 2026, Race for Space Superiority: Trump Administration Continues Sweeping Space Policy Changes
- 15 December 2025, President Trump Signs Executive Order Limiting State Power to Regulate Artificial Intelligence
- 10 December 2025, Office of Space Commerce Seeks Industry Input on Revolutionizing the US Mission Authorization Process
- 17 September 2025, "Enhancing American Greatness in Space": President Trump Signs Executive Order to Expand the Domestic Commercial Space Industry
- 5 August 2025, More Federal Agencies Streamline NEPA Procedures to Expedite Review and Permitting
- 24 July 2025, Trump Administration Unveils Its Plan for Winning the AI Race

NEWS & EVENTS

- 29 July 2026, Automated Transportation Symposium 2026, Hosted by Automated Vehicle Safety Consortium
- 9 June 2026, ITS America Conference & Expo, Hosted by ITS America
- 19 March 2026, 2026 National Safety Summit of US DOT University Transportation Centers, Hosted by Safety21
- 19 February 2026, Recall, Customer Campaigns & Legal Xchange Group: Over-the-Air Updates and Regulatory Management, Hosted by MAPconnected
- 18 June 2025, K&L Gates Enhances Public Policy and Law Practice With Transportation, Emerging Technologies Lawyer in Washington, D.C.

OTHER MEDIA MENTIONS

- Featured, “The Next 15 Months Will Define Autonomous Vehicle Policy in America,” *Road Autonomy*, 10 October 2025
- "K&L Gates' Latest Public Policy Atty Brings DOT Experience," *Law360*, 18 June 2025
- "The challenges of AI in tax policymaking," *American Bar Association*, 20 May 2024

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Public Policy and Law
- Emerging Growth and Venture Capital
- Private Equity Transactions

INDUSTRIES

- Automotive
- Manufacturing
- Physical AI and Autonomous Systems
- Technology
- Transportation and Logistics