Despite some recent setbacks to the industry, including the Uber and Tesla crashes that resulted in fatalities in Arizona and California in March, many states and communities say they are still moving forward with efforts to encourage the safe testing of driverless vehicles in their jurisdictions and to prepare for a future that includes more of them. Those efforts include state legislation, local zoning and planning changes, new testing requirements and the introduction of driverless shuttles on college campuses and elsewhere. Here’s a roundup of some of the latest developments around the country.

State Updates on Autonomous Vehicle Activities

- **Arizona:** City planners in Chandler, Arizona have proposed changes to zoning codes that would allow the city to better accommodate ride-hailing and autonomous vehicles, the Phoenix Business Journal reported. If the changes are approved later this month, new parking and loading regulations in the code could allow the city to reduce parking and increase drop-off and pick-up areas.

- **California:** Waymo, the self-driving company offshoot of Google parent company Alphabet, became one of the first companies to apply to test cars without backup drivers on California roads after the state decided to move forward to allow driverless testing last month despite the Uber and Tesla crashes in March, The San Francisco Chronicle reported. The California DMV has significant oversight measures in place to help mitigate risks to pedestrians and other motorists, CNET noted. Among the requirements to obtain and retain a driverless testing permit in the state: two-way communications within the vehicles, geofencing to ensure the vehicle doesn't leave its predetermined test area and technology to resist cyberattacks. Besides Waymo, few companies have jumped in to apply with the DMV for fully driverless testing, according to U.S. News & World Report.

- **Connecticut:** Gov. Dannel Malloy has announced the state is now officially moving forward with an autonomous vehicle testing pilot program created by legislation he signed last year. Under the program, cities and towns that are interested in allowing the testing of fully autonomous vehicles on their roadways submit applications to the state. From the applicants, up to four municipalities will be chosen to participate and enter into agreements with autonomous vehicle testers.

- **Indiana:** House Bill 1341, a bill that would have established a statewide task force comprised of state and local officials who would grant permits for companies to test autonomous vehicles in the state, didn’t survive the tumultuous final days of the Indiana legislative session in March. The bill’s sponsor, Rep. Ed Soliday, gave a post-mortem to Ryan Johnston of State Scoop. He puts blame for the bill’s failure on lobbyists for the automotive industry. “You can ask legislators all over the country,” he said. “[Automotive lobbyists] come in and they want one of two things. … They either want unlimited, unfettered, total access to every street and road in your state with no accountability whatsoever and no federal safety standards, and if they can’t get that, then they want to kill any legislation.”

- **Maryland:** State transportation officials say the recent autonomous vehicle crashes in Arizona and
California have not put the brakes on efforts to test the technology in the Old Line State, WTOP Radio reported [13]. The state issued its first testing permit to STEER Tech of Howard County in February, which initially allows for testing on two parking lots in Maryland.

- **Michigan:** Two 15-seat electric, driverless bus shuttles will soon go into passenger service along a prescribed two-mile route on the University of Michigan’s North Campus in Ann Arbor, Route Fifty reported [14]. The shuttles, manufactured by the French firm NAVYA, will run year-round and be operated by Mcity, the autonomous vehicle research facility based at the university. Participants in the CSG Autonomous and Connected Vehicle Policy Academy [15] last year had the chance to visit Mcity and ride in a similar shuttle. Last month, Michigan opened another facility built expressly for testing of autonomous vehicles, the American Center for Mobility, on the historic 335-acre Willow Run site just west of Detroit, The Detroit Free Press reported [16]. The center will be home to automakers, suppliers and other groups developing autonomous vehicle technology and smart infrastructure (see more here [17]).

- **Missouri:** A recently released draft of the Missouri Department of Transportation’s Long Range Transportation Plan update [18] includes a lengthy section addressing various issues that have arisen in recent years with the proliferation of electric vehicles and vehicles with automation capabilities, according to The Hannibal Courier Post [19]. “Technological changes are likely to happen faster than the ability of government to react to them, making it imperative that planning for those changes start now,” the plan reads. MoDOT is reportedly looking at what other states have done with regards to autonomous vehicle policy and could consider launching a pilot study, forming a steering committee or establishing an annual forum to explore automation topics.

- **Nebraska:** The unicameral legislature has passed and Gov. Pete Ricketts has signed a bill (LB 989 [20]) that authorizes driverless vehicles to operate on public roads in the state and includes rules and regulations for operating them. The legislation was originally more narrowly focused and would have allowed the city of Lincoln to conduct a pilot program with four autonomous vehicles running in the city’s downtown, The Omaha World-Herald reported [21]. The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers expressed support for the measure, according to the Lincoln Journal-Star. [22]

- **New York:** The Drive reported [23] recently that autonomous vehicles currently are nowhere to be found on the streets of the Empire State despite legislation passed nearly a year ago [24] to allow testing on public roads. Some are speculating that one of the reasons may be a requirement in the law that vehicle demonstrations must be accompanied by a state police escort paid for by the testing company. New York’s law, which was set to expire last month, has been renewed through April 2019. Staff Sgt. Terence McDonnell of the New York State Police discussed the law at the CSG Autonomous and Connected Vehicle Policy Academy [25] last year. “New York’s autonomous vehicle testing legislation is indeed unique,” he told attendees. “In an effort to open the doors to autonomous vehicle testing without compromising public safety, the law authorizes the commissioner of motor vehicles to issue permits for autonomous vehicle testing and demonstration but only if such testing is approved by the superintendent of state police and occurs under the direct supervision of the New York State Police.”

- **North Carolina:** North Carolina Turnpike Authority officials said recently the Uber crash in Arizona in March has not dissuaded them from efforts to encourage companies to test autonomous vehicles on the Triangle Expressway in western Wake County, The (Raleigh) News & Observer reported [26]. The state touts the expressway as one of the most advanced freeways in the country with a fiber optic network used for electronic tolling, video cameras, and in-pavement detectors to monitor highway conditions. But officials say they aren’t trying to emulate Arizona or any other states where testing is taking place. Companies seeking to test on the expressway are required to submit a testing plan that officials are comfortable with. The only vehicle with self-driving technology to be tested so far on the expressway is the Cadillac CT6, which the Turnpike Authority borrowed from General Motors for a month this winter. Elsewhere in the state, the North Carolina Department of Transportation is reportedly [27] testing self-driving cars on state highways and the department recently gave a grant to North Carolina State University to develop a driverless transit system.
Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation last month announced a plan to establish stepped-up safety oversight of highly automated vehicles in the commonwealth. "Given public concerns about safety on Pennsylvania roadways, we must implement interim oversight policies while we await legislative action on our request for permanent authorization," said PennDOT Secretary Leslie Richards in announcing the plan.

Rhode Island: The Rhode Island Department of Transportation is accepting proposals for a public-private partnership pilot program they hope by next summer will result in the operation of an autonomous shuttle in an area of Providence currently underserved by transit, WPRI reported. "It's not just a pilot to see how the thing works," said RIDOT Director Peter Alviti. "It's a pilot to see how it's going to change our transportation, our economy and our social structure."

Texas: The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County’s (Houston) Board of Directors has given the go-ahead for an autonomous shuttle to start transporting Texas Southern University students this Fall. The free, low-speed shuttle will drive itself but have an operator on board at all times. The pilot project will help the transit authority study how autonomous vehicles could be used to improve first and last mile transit connections as well as how they could be used in other locations, such as business parks and medical centers.

Further Reading on Autonomous Vehicles

- “One way to get self-driving cars on the road faster: let insurers control them,” MIT Technology Review, April 30, 2018.
- “Driverless cars are forcing cities to become smart,” The Conversation, April 24, 2018.
- “Five reasons why we need to be skeptical of autonomous vehicles,” Mobility Lab, April 23, 2018.
- “Self-driving car casualties are tragic. But we shouldn’t stop improving the technology,” USA Today, April 18, 2018.
- “Self-Driving Cars Still Have a Lot to Learn,” City Lab, April 16, 2018.
- “Ford’s self-driving car network will launch ‘at scale’ in 2021,” Engadget, April 15, 2018.
- “Cities Need to Band Together on Self-Driving Cars: We need a modern-day Hanseatic League to give local governments bargaining power,” Slate, April 11, 2018.
- “The way we regulate self-driving cars is broken—here’s how to fix it,” Ars Technica, April 10, 2018.
- “Four more states adopt rule changes to accommodate truck platoons,” Land Line Magazine, April 5, 2018.
- “Driverless cars are already here, but the roads aren’t ready for them,” Salon, April 4, 2018.

Autonomous Vehicles on P3 Forum Agenda
As mentioned above, Michigan is one of the states at the forefront of autonomous vehicle testing at facilities like Mcity and the American Center for Mobility. Both places are essentially public-private partnerships to further research and testing in this area. Last year, officials in Oakland County (Detroit), Michigan also announced plans to move forward with another partnership that asks businesses to create a system of short-range communication for use with autonomous vehicle infrastructure and technology. The county received bids from five companies to participate in the project. That project and Michigan’s other public-private efforts in the autonomous vehicle space are likely to be topics of conversation when Michigan Department of Transportation Director Kirk Steudle participates in a panel at the US P3 Infrastructure Forum 2018 hosted by Inframtion. CSG is pleased to be a supporting organization and media partner this year on the conference, which takes place June 13-14 at The Hilton Midtown in New York City. The preliminary agenda for the 14th annual event is now available and you can request your copy here. The Infrastructure Forum brings together state and federal public officials and regional transportation authorities, along with infrastructure developers, investors and financiers to talk about what’s happening with public-private partnerships around the country and the issues that are shaping the industry’s future. You can find out more about how to register for the conference on the event website. I’ll also have more details about the event here on the CSG Knowledge Center in the weeks ahead. For an idea of what to expect, you can read my coverage of the 2016 forum here.

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