There have been a variety of activities in the world of autonomous vehicles this spring and summer. Here's a roundup of the most recent federal, state and local policy actions, industry developments and research reports on the topic.

**Federal Activities**

- **Federal legislation running out of time:** Politico last month noted the one-year anniversary of the first hearing on the House's version of self-driving car legislation, H.R. 3388—the SELF DRIVE Act. Action in the Senate has stalled and House members are now expressing concern that time is running out for action during this Congress. “I’m very concerned that if we don’t get this done, we’ll have this patchwork [of state regulations] and we’re going to have companies from other countries developing the technology and it won’t be here,” said House Energy and Commerce Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection Subcommittee Chairman Bob Latta, who also penned an op-ed with Ranking Member Jan Schakowsky that made the rounds last month. Bloomberg Government meanwhile reported last month on concerns expressed by officials in New York and Los Angeles about the Senate’s bill (S. 1885—the AV START Act), which includes language that would preempt state and local authorities from regulating the design, construction and performance of autonomous vehicles and delegate that authority to the federal government. Their fear is that the language wouldn’t allow them to maintain sufficient control to manage traffic congestion and enforce local safety regulations.

- **Senate EPW looks at innovation & infrastructure:** The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a hearing June 13 entitled “Innovation and America’s Infrastructure: Examining the Effects of Emerging Autonomous Technologies on America’s Roads and Bridges.” Among those testifying were Wyoming Department of Transportation Director William Panos, Intelligent Transportation Society of America President and CEO (and former Colorado DOT Executive Director) Shailen Bhatt and New York City Transportation Commissioner Polly Trottenberg (see summaries here, here and here).
  - **Panos:** “As the owners of a significant amount of the highway transportation infrastructure, state DOTs are at the forefront of preparing for deployment of connected and autonomous vehicles, including ensuring that the current infrastructure is in a state of good repair such that any vehicle can operate on it in a safe and effective manner.” (See more here and here).
  - **Bhatt:** “Connected and automated vehicle technologies and smart infrastructure have the potential to give us back our most precious resource: time. By applying intelligent transportation technologies to our existing infrastructure, we can maximize the efficiency of our system.” (See more here).
  - **Trottenberg:** “It’s simply not realistic or feasible to expect cities to overhaul their existing roadway infrastructure to accommodate a still somewhat unproven technology.” (See more here).

- **FHWA weighs in:** “We don’t want to mandate the technology because we don’t want to hinder innovation,” Federal Highway Administration acting administrator Brandye Hendrickson told attendees at a symposium in Philadelphia last month, The Inquirer reported. Noting that many have hope for autonomous vehicles reducing the number of annual fatalities on the roads,
Hendrickson also said “We do have to balance that hope with the reality that further testing and refining the technology and making sure the public is ready is also critical.”

State Activities

- **Arizona:** Mountain View, California-based company Nuro said it plans to test self-driving delivery vehicles in Arizona, *Phoenix New Times reported in May* [16].
- **California:** The California Public Utilities Commission in May voted to approve pilot programs for self-driving cars to carry passengers but said “no” to a proposal to allow companies like Waymo and Lyft to charge passengers, according to *The San Francisco Examiner*, [17] *San Francisco Weekly also reported* [18] on the implications of the programs.
- **Idaho:** The [Idaho Autonomous and Connected Vehicle Testing and Deployment Committee](#) [19], formed by the executive order of Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter, held its first meeting at the end of May to begin the process of creating a state framework for autonomous vehicle use and testing, *Government Technology reported* [20].
- **Michigan:** Lawmakers are looking to revise 2016 legislation that legalized truck platoons in the state. [HB 5749](#) [21], which passed the House in May and awaits action in the Senate, would provide an exemption from Michigan’s requirement that trucks maintain sufficient space behind another truck, *The Detroit News reported* [22]. Seven other states (AL, IN, KY, MS, OR, UT, WI) have approved such exemptions in 2018.
- **North Carolina:** Volvo Trucks North America staged a truck platooning demonstration late last month on a North Carolina toll road using three VNL tractors pulling twin 28-foot pup trailers supplied by FedEx Freight, *Land Line Magazine reported* [23]. *Bloomberg also reported* [24] on the demo.
- **Ohio:** Gov. John Kasich signed an [executive order](#) [25] in May that will allow companies to test autonomous vehicles on all public roads in the state, *Cleveland.com reported* [26]. It was also announced that drones will be used as part of a three-year study to monitor traffic and road conditions along a section of U.S. 33 the state is using as a test route for autonomous and connected vehicles, *Equipment World’s Better Roads reported* [27].

Cities & Autonomous Vehicles

- **Boston:** The company nuTonomy, which has been testing self-driving Renault Zoes at two sites in the city over the last year-and-a-half, will now be allowed to test vehicles city-wide, *Engadget reported* [28]. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation and 14 towns and cities in the Greater Boston area signed a memorandum of understanding to open up roads in the area to autonomous vehicle testing. Companies will be required to submit quarterly reports on its tests and let the Boston Transportation Department know when they move into new neighborhoods for testing. Industry officials view Massachusetts in terms of regulation as somewhere between Arizona’s open road policy and California’s carefully crafted regulatory regime, *Wired magazine reported* [29].
- **Chandler, AZ:** The Chandler City Council has begun to look at how to prepare for the impact of driverless vehicles on parking, according to *The East Valley Tribune* [30].
- **Cincinnati:** The city could play host to autonomous vehicle testing soon as a result of the executive order signed by Gov. Kasich (see above), *The Cincinnati Enquirer reported* [31].
- **Las Vegas:** Lyft announced in May they would add 30 autonomous vehicles to their ride-hailing fleet. Riders can use the Lyft app to hail the vehicles just like any other cars and have the opportunity to opt in or out of having a self-driving car pick them up, according to *Engadget*. [32]
- **Los Angeles:** The Los Angeles Department of Transportation has issued an updated planning document titled “[Urban Mobility in a Digital Age Strategic Implementation Plan](#)” [33] that seeks to integrate autonomous vehicles and “the ongoing explosion of technology,” *the AASHTO Journal*.
Phoenix: *The MIT Technology Review* reported recently [35] on how American cities built around car ownership such as Phoenix could be transformed by autonomous vehicles.

Pittsburgh: Mayor Bill Peduto recently took issue with Uber’s plans to resume testing self-driving cars in Pittsburgh in the wake of the fatal pedestrian accident in Arizona this spring, *KDKA-TV reported* [36]. The mayor said he wanted to be certain the federal report on the Arizona crash was addressed and any shortcomings with the vehicle’s software resolved before allowing driverless cars back on Pittsburgh streets.

**Further Reading:**

- Also, autonomous shuttles are now in operation or soon to be in operation in Arlington [39], Austin [40] and Frisco [41], Texas; Ann Arbor [42] and Detroit [43], Michigan; Gainesville [44], Florida; Lincoln [45], Nebraska; and Columbus [46], Ohio, according to various reports.

**Industry Developments**

- “Self-Driving Cars Are Headed Toward an AI Roadblock: Skeptics say full autonomy could be farther away than the industry admits,” [47] The Verge, July 3, 2018.
- “Silicon Valley believes driverless trucks and drones will soon transform how we get things—but truckers and warehouse workers disagree,” [57] Business Insider, June 20, 2018.
• “Fiat Chrysler Says It Wants to Have Almost Fully Autonomous Cars by 2023.” [69] Jalopnik, June 1, 2018.
• “As Uber and Tesla struggle with driverless cars, Waymo moves forward.” [70] Ars Technica, June 1, 2018.
• “MIT’s self-driving car is a huge step for drivers in rural areas.” [77] Mic, May 14, 2018.
• “Emark CEO says autonomous driving is the only way we’ll get to zero fatalities.” [78] Tech Crunch, May 14, 2018.

Recent Reports

• “Death on foot: 5 ways new car tech could save pedestrians.” [90] USA Today, June 28, 2018.
• “Self-driving cars will change how we get around, which could mean using more energy.” [97] The Verge, June 21, 2018.
• “What if autonomous vehicles actually make us more dependent on cars?” [99] The Conversation, June 18, 2018.
• “What We’ve Learned from Tesla Autopilot and Self-Driving System Crashes.” [102] Consumer
Reports, June 9, 2018.

- “Self-driving technology is going to change a lot more than cars: How self-driving technology could transform everything from retail to transit,” [118] Ars Technica, May 29, 2018.
- “Researchers say drivers can build trust in autonomous cars, despite recent accidents,” [122] CBS 2 Iowa, May 24, 2018.
- “Self-driving cars could be the answer to crushing commutes, say some experts,” [124] Q13 FOX, May 17, 2018.
- “Studies suggest autonomous vehicles will have reduced parking requirements,” [132] State Smart Transportation Initiative, May 7, 2018.
- “How smart cities are using data to pave the way for autonomous vehicles,” [133] Smart Cities Dive, May 2, 2018.
Highly Automated Vehicles Committee Resources Page, Uniform Law Commission

By:
Friday, July 6, 2018 at 09:22 AM

Tags:
Capitol Comments


© 2016 The Council of State Governments. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL:

Links
[3] https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/housebill/3388?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%5D%7D&r=1
[10] https://news.transportation.org/Pages/061518hearing.aspx
[54] https://news.transportation.org/Pages/062218study.aspx
[67] https://www.verdict.co.uk/autonomous-cars-three-factors-race-first/
[69] https://jalopnik.com/flat-chrysler-says-it-will-have-nearly-full-autonomous-1826484517
[78] https://techcrunch.com/2018/05/14/embark-ceo-says-autonomous-driving-is-the-only-way-well-get-to-zero-fatalities/
[79] https://news.transportation.org/Pages/051118mit
[85] https://venturebeat.com/2018/05/03/toyota-builds-self-driving-car-facility-to-test-edge-cases/
[88] https://news.transportation.org/Pages/062918driverless.aspx
[91] https://news.transportation.org/Pages/062218automated.aspx
[92] https://avworkforce.secureenergy.org/