

Summer 2025 Autonomous Vehicle Developments

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Automated vehicles (AVs) have received heightened attention from the automotive industry and regulators this summer when it comes to improving and expanding AV technology in the US. Here are some developments:

NHTSA Holds Hearing On “Looking Under the Hood: The State of NHTSA and Motor Vehicle Safety”

- On June 26, 2025, The Committee on Energy and Commerce held a hearing to discuss the state of AV regulation and vehicle safety in the **United States**. The full hearing can be **viewed here**.
- The Committee heard statements from several witnesses, including **Jeff Farrah**, CEO, Autonomous Vehicle Industry Association; **John Bozzella**, President and CEO, Alliance for Automotive Innovation; **David Harkey**, President, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and Highway Loss Data Institute; and **Catherine Chase**, President, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.
- Remarks focused on how to “modernize NHTSA” and ensure that agency and industry investment into AVs translates into safer roads. For example, Ms. Chase emphasized that “AVs, which are essentially billion-dollar pieces of equipment with years of research, should not drive better than only the worst drivers on our roads.”

House Bill Proposes Improvement of Incident Reporting for AVs – “AV Safety Data Act”

- On July 15, 2025, the House introduced **H.R. 4376** “to improve incident reporting with respect to certain autonomous vehicles, and for other purposes.”
- This Act is being referred to as the “AV Safety Data Act.”
- This Act proposes AV information and data that should be reported to NHTSA, such as weather conditions and injuries to passengers in AV-related crashes. It also proposes that any such information should be made public.
- This Act would build on the reporting requirements in NHTSA’s **Third Amended Standing General Order on Crash Reporting**.

Senate Holds Nomination Hearing For NHTSA Administrator

- On July 16, NHTSA Administrator nominee Jonathan Morrison testified before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. The Committee voted 16 to 12 to nominate Mr. Morrison, who served as NHTSA’s Chief Counsel under the first Trump Administration.

- Regarding AVs, Morrison stated: “Technologies such as . . . automated vehicles (AVs), offer potential benefits in terms of safety and efficiency, but are complex and introduce risks unique to each application. NHTSA cannot sit back and wait for problems to arise with such developing technologies, but must demonstrate strong leadership. For AVs, this means deep and sustained engagement with industry, State and local governments, and technical safety experts. It also means the creation of a Safety Framework consisting of guidance and, yes, regulation. Realization of the mobility and safety benefits from AVs depends entirely upon consumer trust, which must be rooted in safety. The technical and policy challenges surrounding these new technologies must be addressed. Failure to do so will result in products that the public will not accept and the agency will not tolerate.”
- Mr. Morrison’s nomination is expected to be approved by the Senate later this year. His full testimony can be [found here](#).

NHTSA Submits Second Biannual Report to Congress on ADS-Equipped Vehicles and Reiterates Updating Framework for AVs is “Top Priority”

- In its **July 2025 Report** to Congress, NHTSA reiterated USDOT Secretary Sean Duffy’s **April 24, 2025**, identification of “the accelerated establishment of a regulatory framework for AVs as one of the Department’s top priorities.” NHTSA’s stated three key principles guiding its focus on “swiftly” updating the AV regulatory structure are (1) “[p]rioritize the safety of ongoing AV operations on public roads,” (2) “[u]nleash innovation by removing unnecessary regulatory barriers,” and (3) “[e]nable commercial deployment of AVs to enhance safety and mobility for the American public.”
- The Report also provided updates on the state of NHTSA’s current ADS research and rulemakings. Of note, NHTSA has recently conducted research to “assess ADS sensing modalities with augmented reality objects in ADS performance testing, with the aim of developing test methods that can integrate virtual and real-world elements.” NHTSA will continue to research how augmented reality testing could translate to “real world driving assessments.” NHTSA has also continued to research potential injuries to children who may be seated in a traditional driver’s seat in an ADS-equipped vehicle during an air bag deployment event. This is part of NHTSA’s overall review of how self-driving vehicles may be designed in a way that caters to non-traditional seating positions or users, such as wheelchair users or non-traditional facing seats such as in an automated shuttle.

These activities follow the USDOT’s April 2025 statement on its commitment to advancing the nation’s autonomous vehicle (AV) regulatory framework in late April of this year.

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