

Dockets #NHTSA-2019-0016 and #NHTSA-2019-0017

2019-Mar-15

Dear Sir,

Today NHTSA made a request for public comment which was summarized by Bloomberg News as “ask[ing] the public if robotic cars should be allowed on streets without steering wheels or brake pedals”.

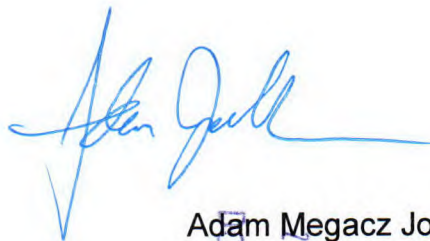
As a microchip designer and software engineer with a Ph.D. in Computer Science from UC Berkeley I feel qualified to comment on this matter.

NHTSA’s duties require that it MUST NOT allow these vehicles on our roads.

When it comes to dealing with unexpected circumstances the human mind is, by far, the most advanced system we know of. This will be the case for as long as humans are hired to program computers. There is no need to reconsider this question until all the programmers are unemployed. I don’t expect that to happen anytime soon.

It is true that machines can sense things that humans cannot see and can react faster than humans can. This does not mean that machines make good drivers. It means that machines make good systems for augmenting human drivers – systems like ABS brakes and radar proximity warnings.

Why are we considering autonomous cars when don’t yet have autonomous freight trains? Piloting a freight train is a vastly simpler problem than piloting a car, for the simple reason that trains don’t require steering. At minimum NHTSA should forbid driverless cars until the majority of the nation’s freight trains have been operating without any human input (even in emergencies) for several years.



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