**SELF-DRIVING VEHICLES COMING SOON AND NO ONE**

 **KNOWS WHERE MOTORCYCLES WILL FIT IN**

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There were over 38,300 fatal vehicle accidents in the U.S. in 2015.[[1]](#endnote-1) This was the biggest increase in over 50 years. Imagine this vehicle fatality rate being reduced to near zero fatalities after 2021. If you love to drive your motorcycle or motor scooter, your motorcycle life will change in the near future, quicker than you ever imagined possible. This is probably the biggest threat the motorcycle and motor scooter community has faced. Here is what his happening.

**Self-driving cars are coming very soon—as early as 2020 from most major car manufacturers**

The goal is to have zero fatalities and vehicle accidents from all vehicles. General Motors has predicted most manufacturers will have self-driving cars by 2021.[[2]](#endnote-2) Elon Musk now expects first fully autonomous Tesla by 2018.[[3]](#endnote-3) It is predicted that 10 million self-driving cars will be on the road by 2020.[[4]](#endnote-4) There are two types of self-driving cars: semi-autonomous and fully autonomous. A fully autonomous vehicle can drive from point A to point B and encounter the entire range of on-road scenarios without needing any interaction from the driver. These will debut in 2019. Tesla has already been successful, announcing their intention to have an autonomous vehicle ready by 2018 for consumer purchase. Google’s prototype currently has a fleet of 58 self-driving vehicles being tested on public streets in California, Washington, Texas and Arizona. GM, Daimler, Volvo, Ford, Jaguar Land Rover, Audi and BMW have also announced plans to pursue the technology.[[5]](#endnote-5) Even Yamaha’s motorcycle factory is working toward autonomous vehicles-both for cars, trucks and motorcycles.

The federal government NHTSA announced it will have self-driving car regulations in less than 6 months.[[6]](#endnote-6). Over thirteen other states including Nevada, California, Florida, Louisiana, Michigan, North Dakota, Tennessee and Utah—and Washington D.C. have passed legislation related to autonomous vehicles. [[7]](#endnote-7) The Secretary of the Department of Transportation announced it was allocating 4 billion dollars in FY2017’s budget to accelerate the development and implementation of several policies to pave the way for automated vehicles. One of those policies is to standardize autonomous vehicles among the states. The DOT can and will grant 2500 exemptions to allow manufacturers to put test autonomous vehicles on the road today. It will also consider new regulations that manufacturers propose to allow fully autonomous vehicles if they can be shown to reduce fatalities and accidents. It is a strange situation where well financed industries are leading the way and NHTSA and the DOT are struggling to keep up with the rapid innovation but it forced to embrace what is seen as a possible elimination of all fatalities and accidents (and reducing emissions) close to zero-the ultimate goal that has been discussed for years and is beginning to have wide acceptance in the U.S. as discussed below.

**Louisiana passed legislation for autonomous motor vehicles use in 2016**

Louisiana had three bills introduced in the legislative session in 2016 dealing with the operation and regulation of autonomous vehicles on highways in Louisiana. Louisiana passed and the governor signed into law La. HB 1143 in 2016 that defines “autonomous technology for the purpose of Highway Regulatory Act.[[8]](#endnote-8) HB 233 became HB 1143 provides relative to the regulation of autonomous vehicles operating on the highways of this state. HB 937 was introduced that authorizes the operation of autonomous motor vehicles. This is just the beginning of new laws and regulations.

**Autonomous motor vehicles and the Vision Zero movement**

The idea of a goal to reduce automobile fatalities to zero has been discussed for years before autonomous cars were being built. The Vision Zero concept first appeared in Sweden and dealt with making road design changes and traffic operation changes to reduce fatalities to zero. NHTSA has tried recalls, airbags and many other regulatory changes without success as there were a record 38,300 fatalities from motor vehicles in the U.S. in 2015. Several cities have adopted the Vision Zero concept. Proponents of Vision Zero began pushing the initiative in the U.S. In 2014 and 2015, twelve U.S. cities including Los Angeles, New York City, Austin, Ft. Lauderdale and Seattle announced their own adaptation of Vision Zero using Sweden as the model. Seattle has set goals of meeting Vision Zero by 2030 and to do whatever it takes to meet that goal.

NHTSA is looking at this new technology as a tool it can use to reach “the goal”. The goal being discussed first in Europe and now in the U.S. to have zero fatalities by taking out the human error factor in the operation of all vehicles. With 8 fatal accidents per day and 1147 non-fatal accidents due to distracted drivers in the U.S. according to one NHTSA study, autonomous vehicles look like the solution to reach the zero fatality/accident goal.[[9]](#endnote-9) A recent CNN report reports that DOT, NHTSA and technology industries such as Google believe autonomous motor vehicles will eliminate human induced fatalities and automobile accidents, by removing the drivers, is the answer.[[10]](#endnote-10) Emissions reduction is another advantage cited by several sectors including the DOT and NHTSA. Both car manufacturers and even motorcycle manufacturers have developed electric cars. Tesla has announced it will have for sale an electric autonomous vehicle in 2018. Previously Tesla announced such a vehicle would be available in 2020.

**Motorcycles and Zero Accidents?-Where do they fit in?—No one knows**

What is totally unanswered is where motorcycles fit in to this plan for the future. Sweden’s Cales Tingvall, Director of Sweden National Road Administration came out and said the Vision Zero in that country would include the elimination of motorcycles. Tingvall, one of the original creators of Vision Zero, directly said that for the success of the initiative that, “We must prevent the recruiting of new motorcyclists. In long-term thinking, I regret to say that motorcycles must go.” He has made other statements suggesting that motorcycles and Vision Zero could never find a real consensus. Motorcycles in Europe are over 10% of all motor vehicles compared with the U.S. motorcycles being only 3% or all motor vehicles. What has the DOT and NHTSA proposed as to how motorcycles will fit in to this new world of autonomous vehicles? They have said nothing but that autonomous motor vehicles will be designed to detect and avoid motorcycles in meetings with motorcycle lobbyists like the MRF (Motorcycle Rider Foundation).[[11]](#endnote-11)

**Yamaha has a novel approach-a robot that drives a motorcycle and can be retrofitted to drive existing cars and trucks**

Yamaha even has a working autonomous robot motorcycle that operates on a race track at speeds up to 100 mph.[[12]](#endnote-12) The Yamaha Motobot robot is still learning and increasing its skills. It even has a voice and brags it is learning every day and says it was designed to and it will surpass the skills of even MotoGP world champion Valentino Rossi soon. What Yamaha is aiming for is a robot that can drive existing cars and trucks with self-driving capabilities. Yamaha is betting this robot in a vehicle would be an even quicker way to get more autonomous vehicles on the road quicker.

**Conclusion**

Technology is rapidly advancing to make autonomous cars, trucks and motorcycles the only vehicles on the road. Industry is actually leading the way and forcing safety regulators to accommodate them to reach what government regulators alone have failed to do with recalls, building standards and more safety devices in vehicles, namely the goal to eliminate all fatalities and accidents from cars, trucks and motorcycles. This autonomous driver technology will change all our lives and your riding your motorcycle or motor scooter in the very near future. If you do not belong to a motorcycle rights group that lobbies for motorcycle rights, now is the time to take action.

We all need to fight this fight or lose all our motorcycle rights and freedoms. Consider joining A.B.A.T.E. and the M.R.F today and participating in the legislative battle that will be fought on federal and state levels.

1. http://www.newsweek.com/2015-brought-biggest-us-traffic-death-increase-50-years-427759 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.driverless-future.com/?page\_id=384 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.driverless-future.com/?page\_id=384 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.businessinsider.com/report-10-million-self-driving-cars-will-be-on-the-road-by-2020-2015-5-6 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. MRF Report For Immediate Release August 5, 2016, “Driverless Car Manufacturers Await Guidance from Agency, Motorcyclists Raise Concerns, Questions” [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.wired.com/2016/01/the-feds-want-rules-for-self-driving-cars-in-the-next-6-months/ [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. http://www.ncsl.org/research/transportation/autonomous-vehicles-legislation.aspx [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. La. H.B. 1143 (2016) http://www.ncsl.org/research/transportation/autonomous-vehicles-legislation.aspx [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. National Center for Statistics and Analysis, [Distracted Driving: 2013 Data](http://www.distraction.gov/downloads/pdfs/Distracted_Driving_2013_Research_note.pdf), in Traffic Safety Research Notes. DOT HS 812 132. April 2015, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: Washington, D.C. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/01/health/distracted-driving-not-just-texting-pokemon-go/index.html [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. MRF Report For Immediate Release August 5, 2016, “Driverless Car Manufacturers Await Guidance from Agency, Motorcyclists Raise Concerns, Questions” [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/innovations/wp/2015/10/30/yamahas-robot-can-ride-a-motorcycle-today-eventually-it-might-be-your-chauffeur/ [↑](#endnote-ref-12)