

Comment from James Stratford

I have much experience with automation from the marine and shipping industry. With over 35 yrs of sea going experience I observed and participated in the development and adoption of dynamic positioning technologies (DP). DP is the marine example of an automated ship that can position and maneuver itself. It has been my experience that the implementation of these technologies is very different from the concept and design with quite spectacular and unexpected failures occurring. Often unintended system interactions or failures occur which are not predictable or understood in the design and testing phase.

Marketing, profit, and sales goals often have as much or more influence on the use of these technologies as practical improvements to safety. Those influences can have a detrimental impact on safe implementation. My recommendation is be very restrictive and direct the testing of the systems to places other than the public road ways. Driving, as we all know, has changed very much in recent years as our culture has changed. Safe driving decisions often happen on an intuitive level for a commercial driver and the importance of anticipating what is going to happen next with early action is critical. That level of driving control can not and is not capable with any technology. It is not a question of position, speed, and control...it is a question of understanding and prevention. There will be system failures. The first of those failures will raise serious questions in the public arena on who permitted the use of these technologies and why. I recommend conservative and cautious advancement of these systems.