

Comment from Manohar Kanuri

I am in favor of automakers being required to add sound to electric vehicles to alert pedestrians of their approach. However, I believe such added sounds should be limited to standardized sounds that are very close and similar to the sound made by a modern car's internal combustion engine. Every one is familiar with that sound and, more importantly, the sound itself is a low frequency noise that cannot be heard more than a few feet away (unless illegally tampered with). Allowing automakers to offer a choice of branded sounds to consumers is fundamentally flawed as it opens the door to a cacophony of sounds that can be extremely distracting. If higher frequency sounds are added to the branded sounds, they will be audible at greater distances and in large cities, this means elevated noise pollution. Customized sounds that mimic musical notes are especially dangerous given they can easily be mistaken for a pedestrian playing a portable speaker. The NHTSA must rigorously study and evaluate the public health aspects of sounds mimicking current engine sounds versus all other sounds in different settings, including and especially large cities whose residents are already suffering from by harmful vehicular non-engine noise such as honking, anti-theft alarms, and locking alerts. Finally, the NHTSA must acknowledge vehicular noise as a public health issue in large cities and set standards for added noise in consultation with noise and public health regulators and draw on their experience with the deleterious effects of noise.