

The Inevitability of Automated Vehicles Brings Hope, Uncertainty, and Many Questions

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With the recent boost in technological advances, it is no surprise automated vehicles (AVs) are slowly but surely making their way to the forefront. [The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA) is reconsidering the necessity and appropriateness of some 75 current safety standards amidst the call for exemptions of requirements purportedly only relevant when humans are driving, such as steering wheels and mirrors.

AVs will certainly impact the approximate [15.5 million U.S. workers](#) currently using cars or involved in the production of cars for occupational purposes. For certain types of industries, including truck drivers and taxi cabs, AVs may ultimately eliminate jobs and diminish income capacity. Still, some [analysts](#) predict that in the near future AVs will create the innovation needed to shift the workforce and workforce demands in a positive light, so that substantial changes in these industries result in new types of output activity. By creating new needs and new skillsets, the introduction of these vehicles might create unique opportunities for human drivers to work alongside them.

But the mark of AVs also ventures into uncharted legal territory, as important differences in humans and machines could change how we think about [accountability in the law](#). Where humans use judgement to make decisions that effectively break laws, such as swerving into the next lane to avoid a car door opening, automated vehicle technology may not have such luxury. And if given such capacity to disobey the law in emergencies, who will be held liable when accidents occur at the hands of the machine? While our laws are rooted in morality, reasonableness, and prohibitions, such principles do not squarely apply where a machine does not have equivalent capability. Therefore, both foreseeable and unforeseen consequences of integrating automated technology will consistently affect our societal, legal, economic, and political landscapes.

Whether we are prepared or not, automated vehicles are coming and bringing both the potential for great benefits and unintended effects that will change our understanding of the world around us. What does all of this mean for human drivers? We have yet to know. It does, however, present an opportunity to get ahead of all the issues sure to surface from the use of the technology.

