



**National Conference of State Legislatures
Office of State-Federal Relations**

U.S. DOT Releases Updated Autonomous Vehicle Guidelines

Sept. 20, 2016

On Sep. 20, the National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) [issued](#) updated guidance for the safe development of highly autonomous vehicles (HAVs). The policy update is broken down into four parts:

- Vehicle performance guidelines.
- Model state policy.
- NHTSA's current regulatory tools.
- Possible new regulatory actions NHTSA believes could be helpful in ensuring the safe deployment of HAVs.

Most important for states, NHTSA is clear in its guidance that states retain their traditional responsibilities for vehicle licensing and registration, traffic laws and enforcement, and motor vehicle insurance and liability regimes. The model state policy included in NHTSA's policy release is in no way binding on states wishing to take action regarding use of HAVs in their state.

For potential HAV manufacturers, the policy includes a set of 15 best practices regarding the safe pre-deployment design as well as development and testing of HAV's before commercial sale or operation on public roads.

Separately, NHTSA issued an enforcement bulletin regarding its authority to issue recalls on such automated technology. The notice has a particular focus on semiautonomous technologies where the driver can allow the car to take over certain aspects, which NHTSA believes could result in increases in distracted driving.

For any further questions or concerns regarding NHTSA's release, please contact NCSL staff [Ben Husch](#) (202-624-7779) or [Kristen Hildreth](#) (202-624-3597).

Key Documents

- [NHTSA Federal Automated Vehicles Policy](#)
- [Fact Sheet](#)
- [State Legislation on Autonomous Vehicles](#)