



AT OPPOSITE ENDS

A move to ban driverless trucks passes in California at the same time eight states are working together to share information and collaborate on actions surrounding AV development. The different stances speak volumes.

Two recent pieces of news about autonomous vehicles came across my desk recently. What struck me most about these two news items is that they represented two distinctly different views about autonomous vehicles — one could argue that they are on the opposite ends of the spectrum.

The first was an announcement that the California State Assembly [voted to ban autonomous/driverless trucks](#) requiring that a safety driver be present in any autonomous truck. The bill was heavily supported by the Teamsters union.

The other news item was about departments of transportation from eight states collaborating to develop a forum for sharing information about autonomous vehicles. According to its website, [AccelerateAV.org](#) is an online forum for collaboration between public and private sector automated vehicle stakeholders for sharing ideas, networking and discussing challenges and opportunities. The eight states involved are Connecticut, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia.

The folks who were in favor of California AB 316 cited safety concerns as the reason they supported the bill. Those who support the formation of the forum think better communication and collaboration are needed as autonomous vehicles continue to evolve.

Currently most autonomous vehicle testing includes having a safety driver on board, which makes sense given the nascent nature of the technology.

I don't want to get into the who's right and who's wrong here. But what strikes me about these two announcements is the difference in attitude. No one wants unsafe vehicles on the road whether those vehicles have drivers or not. But the news out of California suggests an attitude of resistance to change and perhaps not fully understanding the difference between autonomous vehicle technology and advanced driver assistance systems, which as the name implies, are there to assist drivers and are not designed to fully operate a vehicle without a driver.

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The eight states that have launched the forum seem to have the attitude that this technology is going to continue to develop, and we are all best served by sharing lessons learned, especially on things like necessary infrastructure, licensing and interactions with law enforcement — all legitimate concerns when it comes to autonomous trucks.

From where I sit, autonomous trucks are going to



play some role in trucking's future. But like most technologies they are not going to be right for every aspect of the trucking industry.

When it comes to technological changes — regardless of the industry — there are always going to be people who want to jump in and forge ahead immediately and others that never want to see a change to the status quo.

I think with autonomous vehicles — especially autonomous trucks — there needs to be a push for innovation tempered with caution about moving too rapidly. Technology is a tool to achieve a certain goal, but we need to have a clear understanding of the benefits and challenges a technology presents and what it can and cannot do.

It seems to me that sharing information and collaboration between all the stakeholders is a

sensible way to move forward with autonomous vehicles. We need to keep the safety of everyone in mind and I don't think anyone will argue with that, regardless of how they view autonomous vehicles.

About the Author: Denise L. Rondini has reported and commented on the truck parts and service market since 1982 and continues to do so today on a freelance basis as president of Rondini Communications. As the former executive editor and publisher of *Successful Dealer* magazine and executive editor of *Truck Parts & Service* magazine, she routinely covered both the OES and independent aftermarket channels. She wrote major feature articles for both magazines and helped determine the editorial direction of the publications. She has spoken at dealer meetings and given presentations for trucking industry manufacturers and suppliers on aftermarket topics. She earned a bachelor of arts in Communications Arts from the University of Dayton and attended the Kellogg Management Institute at the J. L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management of Northwestern University, where she was awarded a Masters Certificate in Business Management.



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