The Trucker's Perspective of Autonomous Trucks

The vast majority of OOIDA members are against autonomous truck technology (ATT) for a variety of different reasons, including safety, job security, and cost, both for the technology itself and for infrastructure. Though a few believed that ATT would benefit a few specialized operations, such as mining, most held the technology to be impractical and unreliable for our nation's highways. One member wrote, "Mechanical and electrical items wear and break, an operator needs to be alert and ready to take control. Airplanes have autopilot, trains have tracks, and both still need skilled operators. I don't see an automated truck making its own delivery, and the liability is still high." Other comments regarding the impracticableness of ATT include:

- I think it's the silliest thing I've heard in a long time. Self-driving trucks is something that may sound good, in theory, to a desk jockey. In the real world, in my world, too many things happen, on a DAILY basis, that require actual interaction and input, from a HUMAN, that a computer is unable to handle. I'm not as smart as a computer. My reaction time may not be as fast as a computer. But a computer can't do my job. If a computer is that smart, it doesn't WANT my job. MAYBE Transportation is just too involved. Whether you pull a van, reefer, flatbed, tanker, hopper, oversize, etc., I don't care what you pull, there's a lot more involved than just driving. Interesting theory. I don't see it as practical in day-to-day trucking.
- It might work for some applications but I don't believe an automated truck will be able to handle tarps, chains, binders and straps.
- I believe autonomous trucks will only be useful in a very limited capacity, such as running from one location to another location with parameters that are pre-programmed. But for general deliveries, you'll always need a driver in the truck. An autonomous truck can't follow directions from a police officer, figure out how to approach a customer from another direction due to construction, or communicate with a shipper or receiver to use another dock door when one is broken. The infrastructure to fuel autonomous vehicles is a long way off and will require a person to do that as well. The same is true for dropping and hooking trailers.
- I am totally against it, computers are built by humans and humans make mistakes and eventually that truck will fail and when it does it could be catastrophic. It will have a devastating impact on the driving industry. Large companies will opt for the autonomous truck whereby eliminating hundreds of thousands of truck driving jobs.
- This will never work due to the human error factor. Not everything is 101010. There are decisions that have to be made on the fly and this type of truck will fail in that aspect.
- It scares me from a safety standpoint. If there is something that goes wrong, who's held accountable. Anything made by man can be broken or hacked. Also, if there is no one driving the truck and monitoring its systems, I feel that maintenance of the equipment will degrade and make the trucks even less safe than they are now. Anticipation of weather related issues also worry me. Who will chain the truck up for snow and mud? Who will do the simple roadside repairs? There is more to driving the truck than monitoring gauges, I find a lot of 'It doesn't feel right' is as important as the gauges. Things like driveline vibrations, abnormal air usage that is still within the regulations.

- I love technology; however I don't see autonomous trucks as a good thing for the industry, or the country. There is far too much risk. There are data breaches at least monthly and hackers continuously trying to hack the next system (for whatever reason). It will create a very serious terrorist risk, not to mention the risks of system glitches, power outages, etc. I don't think the nation's highways need to become the next big video game for hackers with destruction on their minds. Besides, they still haven't been able to make a vending machine that works right more than 75% of the time! Then there's the liability side of it. Are insurance companies really going to sign up for this? I see nothing but extremely high costs and a massive disaster.
- The idea of sharing the highway with computer controlled vehicles just isn't appealing. Computers just are not capable of having empathy or common sense and there in lays the problem. They can only do what their program tells them to do.
- Airliners don't really need pilots. Planes can back themselves out of docks, taxi to the runway, takeoff, navigate, land, and taxi back to the ramp, but would you get on a plane without a human pilot? I think the same would go with trucks. No one would want to share the road with a driverless vehicle no matter how cool it is.
- I think any autonomous vehicle technology is a waste of time at this point. Our government can't keep our current infrastructure in good shape now, how are they going to keep the infrastructure needed for autonomous vehicles in place? Also, the belief that autonomous vehicles will save lives is untrue because the computers put into autonomous vehicles are manmade, and man is not perfect. Neither will the autonomous vehicles.
- Professionally speaking, what a nightmare. An autonomous truck cannot hear an air leak, feel a turbo wearing out, may or may not be able to back into a dock door, not sure, and sensors, gauges, and electronics malfunction. Thank you for asking. I hope no one loses their life over this.

OOIDA Members are strongly opposed to the rapid advancement of ATT and view it as a push by large motor carriers to drive down wages. Moreover, members are curious to see just how a truck driver will be defined in a world with ATT, stating that "drivers will have to have an information technology background." Other members believed that drivers should be classified as "operating engineers" with higher pay. Regardless, many viewed ATT as an expensive and unnecessary technology that would push small owner-operators out of business. To summarize, "it has pros and cons. At present the cons are leading."