

5A Jackson Wong

Letter to the editor - Who's self-driving your car?

Dear Editor,

I would like to start by saying I'm incredibly excited for the future of autonomous vehicles. Just think about all the possibilities: signal-free intersections, no speed limit for highways, exceptionally low road fatalities. Speaking of fatalities, it seems that governments are always slow in accepting a standard where human driving is considered dangerous. We should not let unattainable perfection be the enemy of the good. One fatality in all the millions of self-driven miles shows that computers are already better drivers than humans. This innovation will clearly reduce fatalities. The technology should be approved for use on highways as soon as possible, and the data being recorded will improve the software, and it will be able to deal with more complex environments.

For now, there won't be lots of cars with no human driving capability, so a human can take over the vehicle as needed. In this particular case, the human wasn't watching out even though he had complained that the car made mistakes. He knew it wasn't perfect, but he took his eyes off the ball anyway. I haven't seen the Tesla crash video, but for all I know, the light was such that a person wouldn't have seen the truck either. With the advance of better sensors, cars would have a much better sense of its surrounding than a human does, and could see threats where human can't. With that, highways could be a lot safer to ride and could reach a higher speed without the worry of crashing into the back of someone's car.

Aside from fatalities, there's also a huge possibility --- we may finally be able to eliminate traffic jams and urban gridlocks. Remember how stressful it is when you just can't get through two blocks without a red light? If every car on the road communicated with each other, they could coordinate speed and find a way to let everyone pass without ever needing to stop at an intersection. This wouldn't be possible with human drivers. It'll be a common scene seeing all the cars passing each other in dazzling speed, near missing each other like they're about to crash with just a slight miss, but you'll never have to stop for a red light, or get stuck behind a long snail of internal combustion engines.

With all that, and an emission-free road side, I could already smell the air getting a lot fresher on my way home.

Yours faithfully,
Jackson Wong