



Florida Continues to Create Incentives to Attract AV Testing

Insights

12.02.19

We reported last year that Florida had created a legal framework in an attempt to motivate companies to test their AVs in the Sunshine State. This past year has seen further efforts on the part of lawmakers – and these efforts appear to already have borne fruit.

On July 1, 2019, a new law went into effect in Florida that allows AVs to operate on public roads without anyone behind the wheel. The new law mandates that companies testing AVs build systems, whether audible or visible or both, that alert humans when there's a system failure. Also, safeguards must be in place so that the cars satisfy a "minimal risk condition" position, meaning they might have to pull over and put on emergency lights. Individuals in the driver's seat do not have to adhere to Florida's cellphone ban while behind the wheel and owners of the AVs also have to report a crash right away or install a system that will contact law enforcement immediately.

In addition to passing the new AV law, Florida is also in the process of building an AV car test site in Polk County. The goal for the AV test site, known as SunTrax, is to assist Florida in its efforts to obtain a modern transportation system that meets the needs of its residents, businesses, and visitors. The first phase of development involved the building of a 2.25-mile oval track on 475 acres, which was completed in May 2019. SunTrax has now started its second phase of development, which will see shipping containers that can be reconfigured created on the track's infield to simulate city-like buildings. Additionally, the infield will include an area to simulate pick-up and drop-off scenarios and an augmented reality pad to create simulated environments.

The new AV law has already resulted in several additional companies testing their vehicles in Florida. This past fall, Waymo tested its AVs for several weeks in a closed course in Naples. Human drivers also tested Waymo AVs on public roads in Miami and on highways between Orlando, Tampa, Fort Myers, and Miami.

Additionally, Starsky Robotics is currently testing vehicles in Florida, and the company plans to deploy 25 self-driving trucks by the end of 2020. The company tests AVs on a closed-off rural road in Lake Okeechobee. It also has three AVs currently on the road on Florida freeways.

Companies previously operating AVs in Florida are also continuing their testing of the impact of deliveries via AVs and the consumer reaction to the same. In Miami-Dade County, for example, Ford and its tech partner, Argo AI, continue to test out its AV technology, after launching a pilot program in 2018.

Employers in Florida can continue to monitor developments in the AV industry by visiting [Autonomous Florida](#), a program of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, and regularly visiting this blog.

By gaining an understanding of consumer preferences and reactions to autonomous vehicles, employers can begin strategizing about how to best take advantage of them in the future. Employers should monitor the progress of commercial AV ride-share services in order to ensure that their policies and procedures related to data privacy, confidential information, remote work, and workplace safety are adequately up to date to address potential issues that may arise due employees being able to work while traveling.

Related People



Brett P. Owens
Partner
813.769.7512
[Email](#)