

Orlando forms partnership to seek national automated vehicle designation

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The **city of Orlando** announced on Jan. 19 that it has partnered with local academic, private sector and government agencies to form the Central Florida Automated Vehicle Partnership — a move that may have made the region a hotbed for vehicle technology to be deployed around the world.

Many U.S. car manufacturers have been working on developing self-driving cars in the past few years.



NARVIKK/ISTOCK

Self-driving cars are on the horizon.

The Central Florida Automated Vehicle Partnership recently developed a proposal seeking to have the region designated by the **U.S. Department of Transportation** as an automated vehicle proving ground.

If selected, this would make Central Florida one of the nation's premier clusters for research and the development of automated vehicle technology across all modes of travel, according to the city. Joining with other designated entities to share best practices, Central Florida will provide the foundation for this new technology and its safe testing, demonstration and deployment.

The partnership's proposal involves research and simulation at the **University of Central Florida** and **Florida Polytechnic University**, as well as safety and policy compliance review with Florida A&M University-Florida State University Colleges of Law.

The partnership's designated safety officer will be FDOT District Five Safety Engineer Anthony Nosse, who has been the district's safety manager for the past 18 years.

The proposal outlines the following proposed test-track facilities:

SunTrax: A long-term partnership between the **Florida Department of Transportation's Florida Turnpike Enterprise** and Florida Polytechnic University to build a new transportation technology

testing facility, including a 2.25-mile, oval track designed for high-speed travel and multiple lanes on a 400-acre site in Polk County. The vision for SunTrax includes the build-out of a simulated downtown urban core and other environments to test transit, vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle interactions with automated vehicles. SunTrax construction will start this spring and be open for testing in fall 2018.

NASA Kennedy Space Center: It will provide the second controlled testing facility, which offers a contained environment with a vast roadway network and secure access. The center can do controlled extreme environment testing for significant weather events and unusual roadway conditions.

Public highways, roadways and transit: Environments like Interstate 4, State Road 540 and State Road 528 will provide automated vehicles exposure to complex roadways with varying sections, ingress and egress merging, construction, both freight and passenger vehicles, work zone safety applications, express buses and highway maintenance. Transit testing on Lynx's Lymmo Orange line in Downtown Orlando would explore the use of automated shuttles and automated shared-use vehicles.

USDOT Secretary Anthony Foxx is expected to announce the selected entities it will designate as automated vehicle proving grounds in first-quarter 2017.

Central Florida Automated Vehicle Partnership members are:

- City of Orlando
- University of Central Florida
- Florida Polytechnic University
- FAMU-FSU College of Engineering
- Florida's Turnpike Enterprise
- Florida Department of Transportation, Districts 5 and 1
- Central Florida Expressway
- Lynx
- NASA, Kennedy Space Center

And commitments of support from the Central Florida community include:

- MetroPlan Orlando
- Orange County
- Greater Orlando Aviation Authority
- Osceola County
- Polk County
- Space Coast Transportation Planning Organization
- Florida Department of Transportation

In September, the Obama administration released its Federal Automated Vehicles policy which details a 15-point safety assessment for self-driving car manufacturers. And in October, the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety issued recommendations to automakers on how to protect connected and automated vehicles from cyber attacks.

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