

FutureStructure

TRANSPORTATION

(/fs/transportation)

U.S. DOT Names 10 Proving Ground Sites for Testing Autonomous Vehicles

The designees will share testing data and research in order to advance driverless vehicle technology.

BY RYAN MCCAULEY ([HTTP://WWW.GOVTECH.COM/AUTHORS/RYAN-MCCAULEY.HTML](http://www.govtech.com/authors/ryan-mccauley.html)) / JANUARY 19, 2017



An Acura RLX at GoMentum Station in Concord, Calif.



The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced ten automated vehicle proving ground test sites that will form a Community of Practice with the goal of advancing autonomous and connected vehicle technology.

The proving ground designees were announced Jan. 19 and include:

- Pittsburgh and the Thomas D. Larson Pennsylvania Transportation Institute
- Texas AV Proving Grounds Partnership
- U.S. Army Aberdeen Test Center
- American Center for Mobility at Willow Run
- Contra Costa Transportation Authority and GoMentum Station
- San Diego Association of Governments
- Iowa City Area Development Group
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Central Florida Automated Vehicle Partners
- North Carolina Turnpike Authority

Randy Iwasaki, executive director of the Contra Costa County Transportation Authority, which operates GoMentum Station (<http://www.govtech.com/fs/Driverless-Car-Testing-May-Spark-a-Tech-Transformation-for-One-California-Town.html>) in Concord, Calif., said he was “honored to be selected as one of the ten locations in the United States. This is the only technology on the planet that can help reduce traffic fatalities to zero.”

The potential for autonomous vehicles is hard to overstate. Productivity could be boosted by less time being spent in transit, cities could dedicate more space to parks by reducing the number of parking garages and mobility-challenged community members could have easier access to jobs. Not to mention safety. There are nearly 40,000 roadway fatalities per year, and more than 90 percent of those are caused by human decisions. This number could fall dramatically with a wide distribution of autonomous vehicles.

As part of the Community of Practice, members will “foster innovations that can safely transform personal and commercial mobility, expand capacity, and open new doors to disadvantaged people and communities,” according to the release (<https://cms.dot.gov/briefing-room/dot1717>).

One major consideration for being chosen was the requirement to share data between designees. This made some of GoMentum Station’s partners nervous about losing their competitive advantage. “I think at the end, they [the station’s partners] looked at it and like us said there may be opportunities to work with test facilities in the U.S. and collaborate on the details,” said Iwasaki. “It is a golden opportunity to help accelerate this technology so that the public can enjoy the benefits if they chose to do so.”

By sharing data, explained Iwasaki, it will save resources by not having to test the same thing that a partner has already done. This also provides community members with a chance to get data from test facilities in different locations.

The list of community members includes sites across the country that will help in understanding how these vehicles operate in different climates. Ideally, the same test could be set up in 90-degree weather in Texas as the blistering cold of Madison, Wis. “Each of the sites have their unique qualities that are interesting,” Iwasaki said. “San Diego offers some high-speed testing with ingress and egress points that offer testing we can't do at the GoMentum Station.”

Community members represent several different types of entities — cities, counties, states and academic institutions are all included. The program was announced (<http://www.govtech.com/fs/DOT-Asks-Autonomous-Vehicle-Test-Sites-to-Prove-It.html>) in November 2016, and the USDOT received more than 60 applications.

“The designated proving grounds will collectively form a Community of Practice around safe testing and deployment,” said USDOT Secretary Anthony Foxx in a statement. “This group will openly share best practices for the safe conduct of

testing and operations as they are developed, enabling the participants and the general public to learn at a faster rate and accelerating the pace of safe deployment.”



Ryan McCauley (<http://www.govtech.com/authors/Ryan-McCauley.html>) Staff Writer

Ryan McCauley is a staff writer for Government Technology magazine, and previously served as the publication's editorial assistant. He was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area and holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California, Berkeley. He currently lives in Davis, Calif., with his girlfriend and their dog — who dislikes most people.

RELATED

DOT Asks Autonomous Vehicle Test Sites to 'Prove It' (<http://www.govtech.com/fs/DOT-Asks-Autonomous-Vehicle-Test-Sites-to-Prove-It.html>)

0 COMMENTS

MORE FROM TRANSPORTATION ([HTTP://WWW.GOVTECH.COM/FS/TRANSPORTATION](http://www.govtech.com/fs/transportation))

ADVERTISEMENT

Become a gov social media pro
in one week.



Sign up for a free crash course

> **Start Learning** <

Brought to you by:  