

A Hands Free World – By: Sidni S.

It's shocking to hear that self driving cars will hit the streets as early as 2020. I feel excited for change and worried about the consequences at the same time. With these self driving vehicles the average time it takes to travel from point A to point B decreases. The environment benefits from using less and safer emissions. It's overall becoming a safer way to travel with the help of new innovative sensors. Despite my enthusiasm I fear that these self driving cars will become an issue when they cause crashes. Thousands of accidents have already been reported in the past year due to self driving cars especially in Florida and China. In this case someone has to be responsible for the accident but who?

In the case of a self driving semi truck causing an accident several questions must be asked before determining who is liable. Certain companies like Tesla for example require manual operation in certain circumstances. The driver must drive the car by hand in rural roads city traffic and whenever a semi is connected to its truck. In my opinion if the crash was caused by manually driving the vehicle that person should take responsibility for any damage. If the car was on autopilot then I believe the car company should be held liable for all damages. Damages may include fixing or replacing any cars that suffered any destruction medical bills road costs and any landscape remodeling. It's fair because the car was manufactured by the company and made an error not caused by the driver. The reasons for company liability include the road being in normal conditions any sensor malfunction that would hinder the car from working properly any miscalculations caused by faulty machinery and any parts of the car that should be fixed or replaced. All of these put the driver and other people on the road in danger of injury. But the real question is should the government help cover these costs?

Ideally the government should enforce all of the rules of liability I explained above. However it's not realistic to say that the car company will willingly pay for all costs for each and every accident if liable. That's where the government comes in. The Department of Transportation (DOT) should help pay for these costs because self driving cars is a business that will soon be incorporated in daily life and the government should support it. Some of the things that they need to be aware of are safety policies for manufacturing and testing self driving vehicles especially large ones like semi trucks and commercial vehicles. There should be specific safety standards and extensive tests done to the vehicles to ensure the driver's safety before being sold. The DOT should pay for all tests to protect its citizens. The exterior of these self driving cars need to be made with special metal one that crumbles to reduce trauma to the driver and passengers. The government should also consider replacing some street signs highway lines and road conditions to make self driving safer.

Although I believe in government support I'm not against implicating taxes to partially pay for this transforming new technology and infrastructure. It'll lessen the liability burden on car companies involved in car crashes especially ones with injuries. Overall I can't wait to see the change in our transportation in the next decade. I hope that this can positively affect everyone's lives and our environment.