Trucking Industry Calls On Federal Government to Clarify Automated Truck Rules

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Due in part to concerns about potential implementation of conflicting state rules governing automated and connected trucks, the American Trucking Association (ATA) recently endorsed its first comprehensive policy on automated trucks and related emerging technologies. The ATA’s new policy discusses safety, the respective roles of the federal and state governments, uniformity across state lines, infrastructure, and education.

Expressing that automated and connected vehicles have the potential to reduce motor vehicle crashes and related fatalities, the ATA calls for a coalition with government, academia, research institutions, and the private sector to demonstrate increased safety related to automated and connected vehicle technology. The ATA notes that within the application of automated and connected trucking technology, there remains a role for drivers due to their duties and requirements beyond operating the vehicle.

Uniformity Needed in Automated Trucking Technology Rules

According to the ATA, federal and state laws and regulations should not require or limit different levels of automation. The ATA emphasizes that conflicting or duplicative state and federal would delay development and implementation of the new technologies’ potential safety benefits, fuel savings, emissions, and transportation improvements. Uniformity in automated trucking rules across the states is crucial for the trucking industry.

The policy urges uniformity and calls on the federal government to take sole responsibility for drafting and regulating performance and technical specifications for automated and connected trucks and, if necessary, to use preemption to achieve uniformity goals. Different states should not have different automated trucking rules. Outdated safety laws and regulations should be revised as data demonstrates a specific technology’s ability to increase safety.

Pursuant to the policy, states would continue to maintain responsibilities that do not interfere with interstate commerce. States should take steps toward removing existing barriers that may stifle innovation, testing, and deployment of advanced technology.

Existing Federal Legislation

Recently, the House passed the Safely Ensuring Lives Future Deployment and Research in Vehicle Evolution – or SELF DRIVE Act – concerning the regulation deployment of self-driving cars and updating federal rules that apply to them as well as addressing the respective roles of federal and state governments. Proposed federal legislation to regulate automated driving systems does not thus far address automated trucks.

The ATA is advocating for similar attention to the automated and connected driving systems in the trucking industry.

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