



# Harvard Model Congress

## Boston 2024

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# AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

# UPDATE

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With the progression of technology and artificial intelligence, Congress has looked toward legislation that addresses prominent issues, such as the safety of autonomous vehicles. In the summer of 2023, the House Subcommittee on Innovation, Data, and Commerce held an important legislative hearing that discussed safety, economic impacts, mobility challenges, and data privacy. This legislative hearing titled "Self-Driving Vehicle Legislative Framework: Enhancing Safety, Improving Lives and Mobility, and Beating China" helped craft two discussion drafts focusing on the Self-Drive Act (2017) and Title 49 United States Code (Grigorian et. al 2023). Yet, even with this discussion of how autonomous vehicles can continue to develop, a question that remained was safety. These were the same setbacks from previous autonomous vehicle legislation.

Data remains a prominent fault in enacting any legislation for autonomous vehicles. While the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is the primary organization for collecting data on autonomous vehicles, the participants in the legislative hearing raised their concerns about the completion and accuracy of the data. The topic of data brought into discussion the idea of expanding NHTSA's ability to increase the number of autonomous vehicles on public roads yearly from 2,500 to 100,000. (Grigorian et. al 2023). While this was only discussed, the NHTSA will continue its current practices of its rulemaking schedule. This legislation hearing is a landmark and path forward for bringing attention to regulations regarding autonomous vehicles.

With a large push for data, researchers have begun to utilize artificial intelligence (AI) to their advantage. The biggest challenge that researchers currently face for autonomous vehicle testing is the high cost and time in natural testing environments, such as public roads, and the limited data sets. At a University of Michigan vehicle testing facility, researchers have moved towards AI-based testing environments, where they train the cars when to employ certain maneuvers (Bates, 2023). With AI, researchers can create various environments, cultivating a greater data set. This new research method is an advancement toward the data required for regulating autonomous vehicles.

As autonomous vehicle regulation begins to circulate in Congress, people have slowly seen the vehicle presence increase in their cities. In Texas, Tribune journalists

noted their questions about autonomous vehicles, including the state regulations. The journalists walk readers through the legalization of autonomous vehicles, the mechanics, experience, and safety concerns. They spoke about how the cruise vehicle had a malfunction about a nonexistent collision, raising concerns for the accuracy and function of the AVs (Reyes, 2023). While there has been a stall for regulations, it's clear that autonomous vehicles are becoming a prominent discussion and a growing public interest.

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