



# Report: Government support vital if UK is to lead connected vehicle development

A new report published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) and industry analysts Frost & Sullivan says the UK is well positioned to lead the development of connected and autonomous vehicles (CAV). But it warns that “sustained support from government” and an orderly departure from the European Union are needed to maintain the momentum.

The report, entitled *Connected and Autonomous Vehicles: Winning the Global Race to Market*, indicates that the UK could reap 62 billion pounds in “annual economic benefits” from CAV deployment by 2030. Government and industry have already committed 500 million pounds to CAV research and development, and there are a number of trials, projects and systems already deployed.

The report estimates that one in five miles travelled by vehicle users in the UK could be automated by 2030.

“A transport revolution stands before us as we move to self-driving cars and the UK is in pole position in this 62 billion-pound race,” said Mike Hawes, chief executive of the SMMT. “Government and industry have already invested millions to lay the foundations, and the opportunities are dramatic: new jobs, economic growth and improvements across society.”

The development of a CAV sector in the UK promises more than 20,000 new jobs in the automotive sector, with 55% of those to be highly skilled, and as many as 420,000 new jobs in the wider technology and industrial sector, according to the report.

Autonomous vehicles could save the average car driver almost 42 hours in travel time annually, the report says. Moreover, commuters stand to benefit from a 20% increase in average speeds per journey because of reduced congestion and smoother traffic flows. Frost forecasts that 20% of all miles covered in the UK could be autonomous in future. The UK will start deployment with shorter journeys in automated taxis in geofenced urban areas.

But the positive outlook can be negatively affected by political factors, the report warns. Specifically, an orderly departure from the EU is needed to maintain technological collaboration with European partners.



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The SMMT said a no-deal Brexit would result in lasting damage to the UK's reputation as a politically stable destination for inward investment, putting the potential benefits of CAV development at risk.

At a press conference ahead of SMMT Connected event in London, Hawes said the UK automotive sector was far from being a sunset industry, despite recent setbacks and instead at the forefront of innovation. However, he reiterated that Brexit had undermined the UK's reputation for political stability and continued to waste valuable time and investment.

"We need the deadlock broken with 'no deal' categorically ruled out and a future relationship agreed that reflects the integrated nature of our industry and delivers frictionless trade," he said.

### Essential building blocks

The report identifies three critical areas that could help the UK make the most of the opportunity to develop autonomous vehicles: supportive regulation, enabling infrastructure and an attractive market.

The UK is currently host to more than 80 collaborative projects geared toward connected and autonomous driving. It already has the world's first insurance legislation for autonomous vehicles (AVs) in place and is currently conducting a comprehensive review of road transport. It also has four major CAV test beds and three additional test sites for highways, rural and parking. The UK is one of the top four countries with regulations that will enable CAV deployment, alongside the Germany, the US and South Korea. The country ranks top in the report's CAV deployment index.

"The UK already has the essential building blocks – forward thinking legislation, advanced technology infrastructure, a highly skilled labour force, and a tech savvy customer base – to spearhead CAV deployment over the next decade," said Sarwant Singh, senior partner and head of mobility at Frost & Sullivan. "However, it will require sustained and coordinated efforts by all key stakeholders, especially the government, to realise the significant annual economic benefits forecast for the UK from CAV deployment by 2030."

By Marcus Williams



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