Autonomous

Dear Reader,

Automated driving has now also become an issue for top-level politicians. It was even mentioned by the US President in his recent State of the Union Address. Barack Obama sees autonomous driving as the future for our century. In his address, he said he wanted to “put tens of thousands of Americans to work building a 21st century transportation system”. Obama left it to his Transportation Secretary, Anthony Foxx, to fill out the details a few days later at the Naia in Detroit. Together with Ford, Delphi and Google, Foxx announced that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) would be proposing best-practice guidance to industry in the next six months on establishing principles of safe operation for fully autonomous vehicles.

The key point is the interpretation of functional safety. Vehicle manufacturers can submit regulatory interpretation requests to NHTSA, for example as BMW recently did concerning its remote self-parking feature. BMW's assistance system did not at first comply with the safety standards in some federal states, which caused the company to submit a request. Foxx confirmed that the feature now complies with the standards. Such standardisation issues are becoming increasingly important, as the tests are complex and expensive. Open and direct communication must be established not only among OEMs, suppliers and development service providers, but also with authorities such as NHTSA.

Suppliers too are involved in a similar exchange of ideas. For example, Continental has launched an internet platform at www.2025AD.com and invites people to take part in a global debate on the future of automated driving.

But do drivers really want autonomous driving at all? A working group at Arthur D. Little examined the question of which companies are most trusted by end cus-

tomers to develop a reliable autonomous vehicle to production readiness. Surprisingly, Google and Apple achieved the highest scores – except in Germany, where the capability of the two companies to launch an autonomous vehicle onto the market is trusted by only 14 and 10 % of the respondents respectively. Germans have more confidence in domestic premium manufacturers. For example, 38 % would prefer autonomous vehicles from Audi and Volkswagen, while 37 % would favour models from Mercedes-Benz and BMW. It means that Google und Co., as well as OEMs, still have a lot of persuading to do.

Legal, insurance and technical questions still need to be answered, and the ideal platform for this is the Second International ATZ Conference on Driver Assistance Systems on 13 and 14 April in Frankfurt/Main, where experts will discuss the transition from assistance functions to automated driving. It would be nice if developers can present their finished series-production vehicles in 2025 and proclaim, just like Barack Obama did back in 2008: “Yes, we can.”

Dipl.-Ing. Michael Reichenbach
Deputy Editor in Chief