Playing a Pioneering Role

Dear Reader,

Why do we need autonomous cars? Not for a more comfortable ride, certainly. It is clear that the real issue is greater safety. The population of the world is growing and there are more and more vehicles on the streets. This has led to an increase in the number of collisions, particularly in large cities. The fact that the number of fatalities on the roads has risen only slightly in recent years is a good sign. In the past, the curve has been much steeper than it is today. However, we need automated or autonomous cars to ensure that the curve becomes flatter. The result will be more efficient traffic, a more consistent flow of vehicles, a more defensive driving style and a significant improvement in road safety.

Another positive consequence of the drop in the number of vehicles on the roads is a reduction in CO₂ and noise emissions. Despite this, we will still need to focus closely on the subject of exhaust gas treatment in future. A total of 27 professors from the WKM (the Scientific Society for Automotive and Engine Technology) have called for an objective discussion on the future of the combustion engine, together with an honest evaluation of its CO₂ emissions, of the kind carried out by our editor-in-chief Dr. Alexander Heintzel in his online comment entitled “Endlich Fakten statt Propaganda” (Finally facts instead of propaganda) on SpringerProfessional.de.

And when will autonomous cars be arriving? This is where the experts disagree, largely because of the differing constraints involved. In his study, Eric Heymann from Deutsche Bank Research comes to the following conclusion: “Autonomous driving is not a Utopian

dream. But several decades will pass before digital cars represent a large proportion of the vehicles on the roads. This is unlikely to happen before 2040.” The ethics committee of the German Federal Ministry of Transport has played a pioneering role in this area and drawn up the first guidelines of their kind in the world. “This means that we are the leading country in the field of smart mobility,” says Alexander Dobrindt, Germany’s transport minister.

In the interview that starts on page 20, Ralph Lauxmann from Continental takes a more optimistic view of the form the transport transition could take, involving the use of people movers. We need to discuss this subject in more detail. ATZ will be at the Frankfurt International Motor Show on stand A08 in hall 4.1 on the press and trade days (12 to 15 September) and we look forward to talking to you.

With best regards,

Dipl.-Ing. Michael Reichenbach
Deputy Editor in Chief