

GM seeks US approval for car with no steering wheel

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General Motors hopes to have a car on US roads by 2019, the Cruise AV, which requires no human intervention and has no steering wheel, no pedals and no manual controls

General Motors is seeking approval from US regulators for an autonomous vehicle with no steering wheel or pedals, the automaker announced Friday.

GM asked the Department of Transportation to allow it to deploy the Cruise AV that will travel the roads without human intervention.

It describes the vehicle as "the first production-ready vehicle built from the start to operate safely on its own, with no driver, steering wheel, pedals or manual controls."

A video with jazzy music showed off the new model, which is based on the all-electric Chevrolet Bolt but boasts a strikingly spacious windshield devoid of a steering wheel.

The company announced the Cruise AV ahead of the Detroit Auto Show, which kicks off this weekend. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, who is devising rules on autonomous driving, is scheduled to appear at the annual extravaganza on Sunday.

"We are asking for approval to put these vehicles on the roads in 2019," GM spokeswoman Stephanie Rice said.

"We have not yet shared detailed on locations, but we currently test our driverless cars in downtown San Francisco, Phoenix, and metro Detroit, and we plan to expand to New York City this year."

The application to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration seeks to exempt GM from a number of federal standards that cannot be met with a driverless car. For example, the new model will have an alternative location for an airbag that would normally be in the steering wheel, Rice said.

GM executives have said they planned to introduce a large-scale fleet of self-driving taxis by 2019, a timeframe some analysts consider ambitious.

"If we continue on our current rate of change, we will be ready to deploy this technology in large scale in the most complex environments in 2019," GM President Dan Ammann said during an investor call in November.

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