

Volkswagen demonstrates “Temporary Auto Pilot” (w/ Video)

29 July 2011, by Bob Yirka

Volkswagen, the German car manufacturer who has stated its goal of becoming the largest car maker in the world, has demoed a new addition to the growing list of driver assisted automobile test features from a variety of car makers. The new system, called Temporary Auto Pilot (TAP) uses production ready technology to assist drivers during times of inattention, thereby hopefully reducing accidents.

The system has been incorporated into a [test vehicle](#) and a video made of it in action. What's most striking about the demo, is perhaps the lack of various gizmos hanging off of, or sitting on top of it, making it look like an ordinary vehicle.

Demonstrated was an ability to keep the moving vehicle in the right position in the lane (hands free), ability to maintain posted speed limits, automatic speed reduction around construction zones, disallowance of passing on the right (slows the vehicle), emergency braking (when sensing an object in its path), and a driver distraction warning (a verbal wakeup call). Not seen in the video, but still included in the system is automatic slowing of the vehicle when approaching a bend in the road.

The car achieves all this via the use of radar, cameras, ultrasonic sensors a laser scanner and something called an "electronic horizon"; all connected to a computer, naturally.

The idea says [Volkswagen](#) on the [website](#) for the new system, is to assist the driver during times when drivers are most likely to need it, such as during traffic jams, or on long monotonous drives. It's these situations where the most help is needed, they say, because it's when most non-alcohol related [accidents](#) occur. An interesting idea, not mentioned by Volkswagen or any other maker of driver assist systems, is if such a system might actually help prevent accidents due to [drivers](#) that have been drinking.

The TAP is part of the EU funded HAVEit project that was created in 2008 to develop automated driving systems for cars to lower the number of accidents, especially those related to driver inattention or distraction.

What's not clear is if such a system is actually sold to consumers, which appears likely soon, who will bear liability in accidents? While most current laws would likely indict the driver for any accidents, that could change if consumers begin suing car companies, and winning, if they feel the automated system actually contributed to a crash, or worse perhaps, failed to prevent a crash the consumer was promised the car would avoid.

Volkswagen has made it clear that the system is meant to be used as a driver assist, not a replacement for driver attention. What's surprising here though is that [car](#) companies such as Volkswagen don't seem to be doing much testing to see if such systems really would prevent accidents, or worse, cause them to increase due to driver's coming to rely on them too heavily.

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