

Congestion will rise then fall with advent of automated vehicles: report

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VAUGHAN, ONT.—Ontario needs to aggressively prepare for more traffic congestion, new transportation options and a shift in the role of car ownership as automated vehicles become a reality on Ontario's roadways, suggests a new report commissioned by **the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO)**.



The report, titled Ontario Must Prepare for Vehicle Automation that was released Oct. 27, looks at how corporations, consumers and government can influence the role of automated vehicles (AVs) in the province, including how AVs will impact urban planning, infrastructure and traffic congestion, indicates an RCCAO media release.

Four billion automated vehicles will be registered to drive worldwide by 2050 if current ownership trends continue, says the report.

Andy Manahan, RCCAO executive director, says it's important to start addressing public policy issues surrounding preparation and governance for automated vehicles.

"Pilot projects will be critical for Ontario to become a leader in the AV field," Manahan said.

"As has been done elsewhere, we need to test driverless taxis and shuttle buses, and to build the necessary infrastructure."

Manahan said the infrastructure needed for the next 20 years may be different than what's needed for the 20 after that. The rise of the semi-automated vehicles, he said, could spur on the expansion of roads and parking, but AVs may not use all of that new infrastructure efficiently.

He said fully automated vehicles will cause a gradual change in requirements for lanes and parking for private vehicles, moving toward an increasing number of publicly shared vehicles.

The report says that with 100,000 people moving to the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) every year, congestion initially will worsen when AVs are introduced, competing for space on Ontario roads with today's every-day, driver-controlled vehicles, but will steadily improve through 2030.

The RCCAO said two competing forms of automated vehicles are coming to our roads: semi-automated vehicles, which need drivers and are household-owned; and fully automated vehicles, such as robo-taxis and robo-shuttles, owned by government or private businesses.

The report suggests that each fully automated vehicle eventually will replace at least four traditional vehicles. As AVs roll out, the relationship between people and cars will change: more will become riders, fewer will be owners.

"In the 2020-2035 period, semi-automated vehicles will account for a much larger portion of the initial automated market," says report author Bern Grush, a Toronto-based transportation consultant.

"Based on GTHA population growth, congestion will get worse as desirable, semi-automated vehicles encourage outward urban growth, leading to longer commutes and higher parking demand.

"But from the mid-2030s onward, fully automated vehicles could begin to transform Ontario's transportation system as fewer people would need to own a vehicle. If this happens, less parking will be needed and traffic will ease."