

Expect more GTHA traffic congestion with rise of automated vehicles: report

VAUGHAN, ONT. (CNW: Oct. 27, 2016) – Four billion automated vehicles will be registered to drive worldwide by 2050 if current ownership trends continue, says a report released today. That means Ontario needs to aggressively prepare for more traffic congestion, new transportation options and a shift in the role of car ownership.

“Ontario Must Prepare for Vehicle Automation” 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.

Among the report’s key points:

- With 100,000 people moving to the GTHA every year, congestion initially will worsen when AVs are introduced, competing for space on Ontario roads with today’s everyday, driver-controlled vehicles but will steadily improve through 2030.
- Two competing forms of automated vehicles are coming to our roads: (1) semi-automated vehicles, which need drivers and are household-owned; and (2) fully automated vehicles, such as robo-taxis and robo-shuttles owned by government and/or private businesses.
- Each fully automated vehicle eventually will replace at least four non-automated vehicles (what you’re driving now). 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.”



Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario – which commissioned the report – 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 says. “As has been done elsewhere, we need to test driverless taxis and shuttle buses, and to build the necessary infrastructure.”

WHO IS GRUSH?

Grush is a trained systems engineer and an automated vehicle strategist with transportation consultants Grush Niles Strategic (Toronto and Seattle). He writes the blogs EndOfDriving.org and Grushhour.com.

WHAT IS RCCAO?

This labour-management construction alliance has advocated for infrastructure investment for 11 years, commissioning 39 independent, solutions-based reports to help inform decision-makers.

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