

AUTOMOTIVE

BMW, Daimler link on autonomous advancement

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BMW Group and Daimler AG are working together on autonomous driving. Image courtesy of BMW and Daimler

By STAFF REPORTS

Automakers BMW Group and Daimler AG are heightening their partnership by working together to advance autonomous driving.

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A new long-term strategic cooperation will see the partners join to tackle technologies geared toward driver assistance, autonomous highway driving and parking. The competitive groups are already working together on a joint mobility project, looking to pool their collective expertise and talent to tackle the changes happening in transportation ([see story](#)).

"Autonomous driving is one of the most revolutionary trends for us at the moment, and the entire Daimler Group is working very hard on it," said Ola Kllenius, member of the board of management of Daimler AG, responsible for group research and Mercedes-Benz Cars Development, in a statement. "As always at Daimler, our top priority is safety.

"Instead of individual, stand-alone solutions, we want to develop a reliable overall system that offers noticeable added-value for customers," he said.

Teaming up

BMW and Daimler have signed a memorandum of understanding on their joint technology project. Building on synergies and their respective talent pools, the partners are working together in an effort to put themselves at the forefront of autonomous technology.

The partners aim to have new technologies available in the middle of the next decade.

Following the existing partnership, BMW and Daimler will be able to discuss the possibility of extending their deal to tackle higher-level autonomy, such as driving in urban areas.

Autonomous driving is categorized into levels, with zero providing no help to the driver, while levels one through three offer autonomous features while still requiring that a driver be at the wheel or able to take control of the vehicle. This partnership will focus on next-gen autonomy, between the third and fourth levels.

At level three, a driver needs to be available to take the wheel, but they do not need to monitor the environment. Level four vehicles will be able to drive by themselves, and a passenger might have the option to take the wheel.

While they are working together on next-generation technology, BMW and Daimler will continue to develop their own current generation innovations.

BMW has more than 70 test vehicles around the globe, allowing it to collect data. The automaker also has an Autonomous Driving Campus in Unterschleissheim, Germany, and is planning to roll out level three automation in the production model of its iNext vehicle, due to hit the market in 2021 ([see story](#)).



CES attendees could experience a virtual drive in the BMW Vision iNEXT. Image credit: BMW

Daimler has a pilot program with Bosch launching in San Jose in California's Silicon Valley that will focus on vehicles driving in urban areas. The automaker also has plans to debut autonomous vehicles with features between levels three and five by the beginning of the next decade.

"As we continue to pursue our strategy, we are combining the expertise of two technology leaders," said Klaus Frhlich, member of the board of management of BMW AG, development, in a statement. "At the BMW Group, long-term partnerships within a flexible, scalable, non-exclusive platform are fundamental to advancing the industrialization of autonomous driving.

"Combining the key expertise of our two companies will boost our innovative strength and speed up the spread of this technology," he said.