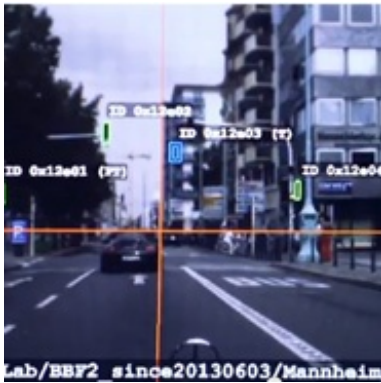


EVENTS / CAUSES

Mercedes shapes auto industry's future with self-driving vehicle

September 13, 2013



By JOE MCCARTHY

German automaker Mercedes-Benz is working to ensure the reliability of its autonomous vehicles, having already exhibited the technology needed to navigate streets without human intervention.

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The automotive brand will have to overcome numerous hurdles before an autonomous vehicle becomes available to the public, but keeping consumers updated will generate interest in the project. Similarly, Mercedes-Benz' full-throttle approach to autonomy will likely spur other brands to increase their research into similar designs.

"Technology drives interest and sales regardless of the product," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami, FL.

"There are leaders and there are followers," he said "Leading is better."

Mr. Ramey is not affiliated with Mercedes-Benz, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Mercedes-Benz](#) did not respond by press deadline.

Mapping the future

Mercedes-Benz's S 500 Intelligent Drive research vehicle has successfully navigated rural and urban streets during a 62 mile drive.

To illustrate this ground-breaking achievement, a video was released to show fans the autonomously driven trip.



Video still

A spokesman for the brand describes its decision to dive directly into the development of autonomous technology that can handle regular traffic. He explains that the current S-class technology is not that far away from the autonomous technology.

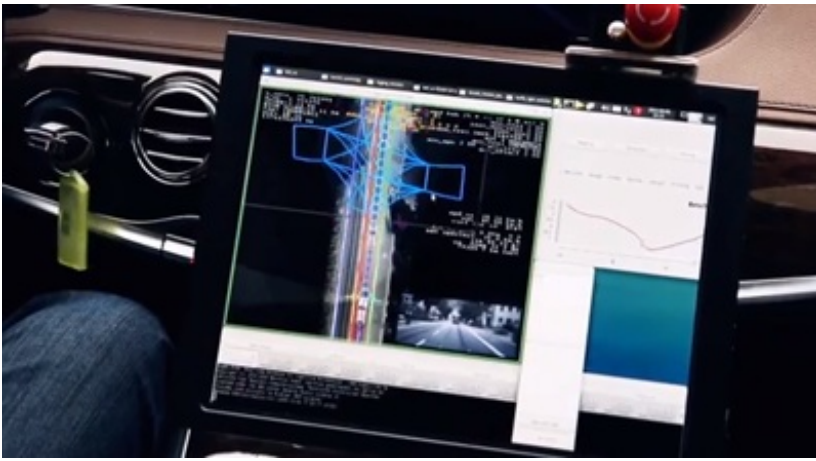
The route chosen for this journey was inspired by the route taken during the first over-land drive a 125 years ago.

Narrow rural roads and busy city streets are both encountered in the route.



Video still

Engineers describe the autonomy technology's ability to position the vehicle on a centimeter-scale. With cameras, the vehicle is able to match photographs taken of the surrounding area to maps in the brand's database ten times a second.



Video still

The vehicle must not only identify nearby objects, but also predict them.

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/CKqJccK_EkM](https://www.youtube.com/embed/CKqJccK_EkM)

Mercedes-Benz autonomous long-distance drive

Ultimately, Mercedes-Benz intends to create a vehicle that can make the right decisions in any situation within a fraction of a second. Realizing the project on a large-scale still requires much more research.

Diving into projects

Other luxury automakers are concentrating on different kinds of forward-thinking vehicles.

For instance, German automaker BMW is augmenting the i series mission of sustainability with the debut of the BMW i8 at the Frankfurt International Motor Show Sept. 10 that targets racing fans and environmental enthusiasts.

The show allows consumers to examine and test-drive the brand's latest model, placing an emphasis on the i series. Following the release of the highly anticipated i3 model, the i8 may transform consumer's conceptions of what a sustainable vehicle can achieve ([see story](#)).

With the advent of autonomous vehicles, however, much more than the auto industry will be transformed.

"The affluent are advancers," Mr. Ramey said. "They may not be digital natives, but they are digital apostles."

Final take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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