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# Driverless-Car Coalition Sees 'Significant Barriers' in Calif. Proposal

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SACRAMENTO — California regulators on Wednesday got a polite but often critical earful from autonomous vehicle developers who said that the Department of Motor Vehicles' latest round of [draft regulations](#) are too restrictive.

The proposed rules, released last month, open the door for driverless cars to roll out on Golden State roads without foot pedals or steering wheels—a significant, industry-sought change from an earlier proposal. But car manufacturers appeared at a public workshop in Sacramento to complain that the latest requirements for data collection, local government approval and state permitting are too onerous, particularly compared to [voluntary guidelines](#) issued by federal regulators in September.

"As it stands, the DMV's proposal contains some provisions that will create significant barriers to the full-scale deployment of an autonomous fleet," said David Strickland, counsel for the Self-Driving Coalition for Safer Streets, an industry group that includes Google Inc., Lyft Inc. and Uber Technologies Inc.

Eighteen companies have obtained permits to test autonomous vehicles in California under specific testing rules enacted in September 2014. Crafting deployment regulations for actual commercial sales and operation of driverless cars has been a much longer and more tedious process. The federal government created a new wrinkle for states such as California last month when transportation officials unveiled new policies giving themselves the lead role in overseeing software-driven cars.

The federal guidance included a voluntary 15-point safety assessment that automakers would be encouraged to complete. Developers said Wednesday that California's proposed regulations would effectively place those voluntary rules in state law —and enact additional ones.

"As [the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration] made clear in its guidance, they are the agency responsible for vehicle safety performance in the United States," Strickland said. "We believe these additional [DMV] requirements related to vehicle safety run contrary to the intent of

the NHTSA guidance."

Carmakers also criticized a requirement that they provide one year of driverless-car safety data before seeking an operating license. The critics called that time period arbitrary.

"Data generated by one car driving 12 months could be similar to the data generated by a small fleet of cars driving just one week in California or anywhere else," said Ron Medford, director of safety for Google's self-driving car program. "Rather than choose an arbitrary time frame, we believe companies should demonstrate that they are safe to deploy using the safety criteria set forth in the NHTSA guidance."

Medford said that the additional 12 months' waiting period "provides no clear safety benefit."

Manufacturers also balked at a proposal that would require local authorities to approve driverless-car testing in their jurisdictions, and they questioned whether a data-collection mandate unfairly targets autonomous cars.

State officials did not specifically address the criticisms at the forum, which was billed as a public comment opportunity.

"While we're excited by the potential benefits of this technology, our focus has been and continues to be on safety," Brian Kelly, the secretary of the California State Transportation Agency, said at the start of Wednesday's hearing. "This technology raises complex policy questions for how the vehicles will operate on California's roads."

Regulators, Kelly said, are "seeking to provide a clear path for both the safe and efficient testing and ultimate deployment of this technology."

The DMV has not set a deadline for completing a final set of operating regulations.

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