

## Toronto drives discussions forward on automated vehicle planning

Angela Gismondi January 29, 2018



Planning for automated vehicles (AVs) was at the forefront of a discussion during a recent City of Toronto Public Works and Infrastructure Committee meeting.

“Many auto manufacturers and transportation providers are testing more highly automated vehicles in cities across the globe, including seven companies that are currently permitted to test in Ontario,” stated Ryan Lanyon, chair of an interdivisional working group on AVs at the city, in an email to the Daily Commercial News.

“These vehicles have the potential to reshape our transportation system, impacting road safety, traffic congestion, the built environment and more. It’s important for the City of Toronto to understand how automated vehicles work, what their capabilities could be, and to consider how city services — especially our transportation system — might be impacted.”

Lanyon and Barbara Gray, general manager of transportation services, gave a presentation on a report titled Preparing the City of Toronto for Automated Vehicles, which provided an overview of the steps taken to date and actions proposed to prepare the city.

During the meeting delegations were made by **Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO)**; Dr. Eric Miller a research director with the University of Toronto Transportation Research Institute; and Dr. Judy Farvolden, program director with the University of Toronto Transportation Research Institute.

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— **Bern Grush**

### **Grush Niles Strategic**

The **RCCAO** has been vocal on the matter of AVs and commissioned Toronto-based systems engineer Bern Grush of Grush Niles Strategic to generate several reports on how Ontario must prepare for vehicle automation.

Grush told the Daily Commercial News in a recent interview that provinces and municipalities need to have set goals when it comes to integrating AVs in the future.

“We’ve only set an understanding of here’s all the changes that we have to think about,” he said. “The only feasible solution is to set goals and then everyday look at how you’re doing with your goals.

“You have to be very nimble in your thinking. The problem is you can't necessarily be nimble in infrastructure. You lay down a road, you're kind of stuck with that for a while. Look how easy it is to remove or not remove parts of the Gardiner Expressway.”

A number of motions were made at the meeting pushing further movement on the AV file. They included directing the general manager of transportation services to explore opportunities to collaborate with Sidewalk Labs to develop policy and infrastructure related to AVs; pursue formal membership in the Municipal Alliance for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles in Ontario, a committee organized by the Ontario Good Roads Association; and report to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee in the first quarter of 2019 with specific recommendations and a detailed and comprehensive Automated Vehicle Tactical Plan.

Other motions included support of initiatives that reduce congestion and increase vehicle throughput in the Automated Vehicle Tactical Plan 2019-2021; and that the general manager explore opportunities to enhance partnerships with other levels of government including other municipalities in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, province of Ontario and across Canada.

The motions will be considered by city council at the Jan. 31 meeting.

In October 2016, the city created a new position in the transportation services division called project lead, automated vehicles. The report indicates this was the first staff position focused exclusively on preparing for AVs at any government body in Canada. The position is staffed by Fahad Khan.

“The project lead is responsible for implementing the Transportation Services Work Plan to prepare for automated vehicles and to co-ordinate the work of other aspects of the city through the interdivisional working group,” explained Lanyon. “On a day-to-day basis, the project lead monitors issues in automated vehicles, manages research projects, educates staff, liaises with other levels of government and establishes partnerships with universities and industry.”

The city is also taking other measures to prepare for AVs, Lanyon stated, including engaging the community through a series of consultations later this winter and in spring.

How cities changed during the transition from the horse-drawn carriage to the automobile was also studied by the city.

“That involved a review of the evolution of service vehicles, traffic control devices, and even residential architecture, such as the garage, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries,” explained Lanyon. “The lessons from the past are serving as important indicators of how, and how fast, automated vehicles might impact our streets and neighbourhoods in the future.”