

Audi tests its A7 driverless vehicle on Florida highway

29 July 2014, by Bob Yirka



Audi A7

German automaker Audi made use of a Florida law passed in 2012 that allows for testing driverless vehicles on Florida highways this past Sunday and Monday, by requesting a shutdown of Tampa's Lee Roy Selmon Expressway—engineers ran the A7 driverless car through several real-world scenarios to test the cars' abilities. The highway has been specifically designated as a test-bed site for such vehicles.

Audi has stated its intentions to market a [driverless vehicle](#) sometime in the next five years, an ambitious goal considering most states in the U.S. haven't even begun to formulate plans on whether to allow driverless vehicles on the road. Likewise, governments in other countries appear to be mostly still watching and waiting to see what carmakers create—Audi calls its system of sensors, cameras, and computers, Traffic Jam Pilot—a spokesman at the test offered kudos to Florida lawmakers for setting up test facilities for such vehicles, which are of course crucial for testing driverless cars in real-world situations. Audi also made news this past January by giving what has been described as a flashy keynote presentation at the annual CES show in Las Vegas, showing off what had been achieved thus far with the A7.

In the road test, a fully equipped A7 was allowed to drive down the highway at speeds up to 25 miles per hour—at one point Florida Governor Rick Scott, a proponent of driverless vehicles and signer of the bill that allows for testing such vehicles in the state, sat—hands-off—in the driver's seat. The vehicle was tested to see how well it responded to the presence of other vehicles on the highway including when they came into its vicinity—one test even involved a response to a car pulling in front of it unexpectedly.

By all accounts the car performed very well, responding as it was supposed to in the test environment, though there was one communications glitch that halted testing for a little while. Audi is of course, just one of the many car makers testing driverless vehicles, which suggests that someday soon (perhaps as early as a decade from now) drivers will have to relinquish control of their vehicles to computers, sensors and cameras. The consensus is that such cars will be much safer than those with human drivers.

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