

Honda & BMW Experiment With "Autonomous Motorcycle"

Most connected vehicle technologies have focused squarely on the car, but BMW and Honda are working to develop autonomous driving technologies that work on two wheels. Both BMW and Honda have already added plenty of connectivity to their cars, but now the two automotive giants are working with the University of Michigan and Australian startup Cohda Wireless to put networking smarts into their motorcycles.

Adelaide-based Cohda designs radio systems and software that will not only link nearby vehicles on the road to each other, but also to the road itself. The idea behind its autonomous car technology is to create an ever-changing ad-hoc network of vehicles communicating their intentions and interacting with the infrastructure of the road.

Known as vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) and vehicle-to-infrastructure (V2I), these technologies could help power self-driving cars of the future. The University of Michigan Transportation Institute (UMTRI) runs one of the key test-beds for that technology, and its lab is running an ongoing trial of 3,000 connected vehicles in Ann Arbor, Mich., which is where Honda and BMW will put their connected motorcycles through the paces, according to a report on GigaOM.com.

Motorcycles may not have much room on their instrument panels for the connected infotainment systems going into today's cars, but they could definitely benefit from any technology that makes mounting a motorcycle safer, and one of the major goals of V2I and V2V efforts is to reduce accidents and improve safety on the road. Vehicles could make quicker and better driving decisions than drivers because they would be able to access more info from the networks around them and react to it nearly instantaneously (they're also less easily distracted than human drivers).

As for motorcycle applications, Cohda and UMTRI plan to test technologies that let bikes talk to traffic lights, roadside beacons and other cars, warning them of green lights about to turn red and dangerous curves ahead requiring them to slow down. By using a long-range secure form of Wi-Fi, a motorcycle could communicate with a car long before the drivers can see one another as they both approach a blind intersection.

Previously, a riderless motorcycle was developed in 2005 by graduate students from UC Berkeley to compete in a 150-mile off-road race for autonomous vehicles to further develop self-navigating vehicles for the Department of Defense.

responsibly pay less and those who don't pay more."

While no one's rates will be affected by the pilot program, the experiment is one of the ideas coming out of the Motorcycle Review Committee, a group formed in the wake of a storm of controversy after SGI had proposed boosting motorcycle rates an average of 73% to compensate for high injury claims. Government-owned SGI later withdrew its proposal and came back with some milder proposed increases for motorbikes, including the telematics pilot program that could begin as early as this season.

Canadian Insurer To Track Motorcyclist Behavior With "Telematics"

With an eye to calibrating insurance rates, Saskatchewan Government Insurance plans to use new technology to track how fast and how far motorcycles go. It's called telematics and someday could be used to help set insurance rates, among other things, but for now SGI is just trying the technology out with a pilot program.

It's looking for several hundred motorcycle users to volunteer to have their bikes equipped with telematics technology. The "black box"-type gadgets would record speed, braking, mileage and location. The volunteer riders would have weekly updates on their driving behavior, to show them what information SGI would be looking at.

"Usage-based insurance is the ultimate in rating fairness because it essentially lets the driver control their own insurance rate through their driving behavior," said Donna Harpauer, the minister responsible for SGI. "Simply put, those who drive

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