

Driverless smart trucks could improve road safety



As the age of driverless cars nears, we're seeing many softwares that make driving safer and more autonomous, including a [minority report system](#) and an add-on for [personalizing Tesla vehicles](#). Now, new startup [Otto](#) has designed and developed a kit that turns traditional 18-wheel commercial trucks into smart, self-driving vehicles. The company recently announced the successful completion of its first autonomous drive using its new package of sensors, cameras, hardware and custom-coded software.

The majority of freight in the United States is transported via commercial trucking, and Otto's founders, many of whom are former Google, Apple and Tesla employees, see the kit as an essential buy for owner-operators. Otto's self-driving kit keeps the trucks in a single lane, at a certain speed, with the ability to slow down or stop as necessary. The computer program is able to decide when an intervention by the driver is necessary, and if the driver doesn't respond, to pull over and stop at the nearest safe spot. The retrofitting package works on trucks built since 2013, and Otto's founders are working with several US states to update regulations in order to allow the technology to be used.

At around USD 30,000 per kit, the retrofitting package is a fraction of the cost of the technology used in self-driving cars. Could autonomous driving technology be adapted for use in urban public transport systems?

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