



Blue Book BRIEFING

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New Definition of "Driving Machine"

- Jack R. Nerad, executive editorial director and executive market analyst for Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com

Can a machine drive a car? And if a machine is driving the car, is the machine the driver? According to recent reports regarding an unpublished letter from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to Alphabet, Google's parent company, that is the newly minted federal government decision on what is a very thorny issue.

As Reuters [reported](#), "U.S. vehicle safety regulators have said the artificial intelligence system piloting a self-driving Google car could be considered the driver under federal law, a major step toward ultimately winning approval for autonomous vehicles on the roads."

No steering wheel, no brake pedal, no problem?

Indeed, as the report suggests, the apparent decision is groundbreaking. Many states prohibit the operation of a motor vehicle without a driver, so deciding that the system driving the car is, in fact, the "driver," paves the way for Google to continue developing autonomous vehicles notable for their lack of traditional steering wheel, brake pedal and other traditional driver controls. Occupants in the Google cars couldn't drive them if they wanted to, and that is a distinctly different course from that of the automakers pursuing the autonomous driving dream. In the carmakers' model, the front seat occupant can take over driving duties if need be or even if they simply want to. This could provide a backup in emergency situations that the driving system might not be able to handle. Of course, it is possible that the human couldn't handle such a situation either, depending upon the circumstances. Google's decision to eschew the steering wheel reflects its belief that a human might simply make a bad situation worse when pressed.

Again quoting from the Reuters story, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Chief Counsel Paul Hemmersbaugh wrote, "NHTSA will interpret 'driver' in the context of Google's described motor vehicle design as referring to the [self-driving system], and not to any of the vehicle occupants. We agree with Google its [self-driving car] will not have a 'driver' in the traditional sense that vehicles have had drivers during the last more than one hundred years."

Who is responsible?

Key questions begged regard liability when things go awry. If the Google driving system is regarded to be the driver, does this mean that Google will assume all the liability a human driver assumes when she or he takes the wheel? Of course, it's safe to believe Google will assume liability in its test vehicles, but one has to wonder if it will be willing to assume that liability for Google cars in private hands. Taking a leap from there, perhaps Google doesn't expect for its vehicles to be owned by individuals. This suggests an entirely new personal transportation model in which one or more gigantic companies own all the individual transport devices.

If this sounds like science fiction to you, be assured that it is not. In fact, if the vehicles and their makers are responsible for the safety of their occupants, it might be in everyone's best interest that they be owned - and maintained - by big entities with deep pockets. That scenario begs yet another question: In the future, will the individual who owns and operates his or her vehicle be seen as a maverick or even an outlaw? If that's the case, then I might end up a wanted man.

...IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN I MIGHT
END UP A WANTED MAN.

JACK R. NERAD

Check out the very latest news stories by visiting KBB.com and clicking the *KBB.com Top Picks* tab on the home page. The following latest news stories by KBB.com's editorial staff went live on the site or were updated during January 2016.

Latest News:

[2017 Acura NSX Super Bowl ad preview offers the chance to win a ride](#)

[2017 BMW B7 Alpina xDrive boasts more power](#)

[2017 Buick Encore previewed in Opel Mokka X](#)

[2017 Chevrolet Camaro 1LE to offer V6 and V8 power](#)

[2017 Chevrolet Trax gets fresh look, new features](#)

[2017 Ford Explorer XLT Sport Appearance Package unveiled](#)

[2017 Honda Ridgeline return offers a chance to score a first drive](#)

[2017 Hyundai Elantra opens at \\$17,985](#)

[2017 Hyundai Santa Fe/Santa Fe Sport upgraded](#)

[2017 Jaguar F-Type SVR to debut in Geneva](#)

[2017 Kia Niro Hybrid Utility Vehicle to offer high-mileage fun](#)

[2017 Kia Optima Hybrid and Plug-in Hybrid revealed](#)

[2017 Mercedes-Benz Sprinter Worker flexes its muscle](#)

[2017 Nissan Armada bows in Chicago](#)

[2017 Nissan Titan half-ton pickup revealed](#)

[2017 Porsche 718 Boxster and Boxster S unveiled](#)

[2017 Ram Power Wagon is one mean machine](#)

[2017 Toyota Tacoma TRD Pro returns](#)

[2016 BMW M3/M4 Competition Package: More power, sharper handling](#)

[2016 CES Video Roundup](#)

[2016 CES Video Roundup, Part II](#)

[2016 CES Video Roundup, Part III](#)

[2016 CES Video Roundup, Part IV](#)

[2016 Chevy Silverado 1500 Realtree Edition breaks cover](#)

[2016 Chrysler 200S/300S Alloy Editions dressed to impress](#)

[2016 Ferrari GTC4Lusso unveiled](#)

[2016 GMC Sierra All Terrain X bows this spring](#)

[2016 Honda CR-V: A Family Adventure](#)

[2016 Jeep Cherokee Overland adds upscale touches](#)

[2016 Mini Clubman ALL4 arrives this spring](#)

[2016 Mini JCW Convertible unveiled](#)

[2016 Porsche Boxster Spyder: Is this the Boxster for you?](#)

[2016 Subaru Crosstrek Special Edition is ready in red](#)

[2016 Volvo XC90 T5 to join lineup](#)

[All 2017 Ford F-150 Ecoboost models to have Auto Start-Stop](#)

[Apple CarPlay Now Offered On These Models](#)

[First 2017 Acura NSX auctioned for a record \\$1.2 million](#)

[GM Performance and Racing Center opens](#)

[IIHS study finds automatic-braking cuts collisions by 39 percent](#)

[Mercedes-Benz Sprinter Extreme Concept: Big and bold](#)

[Mitsubishi previews Geneva concepts](#)

[NAIAS: KBB Ones to Watch](#)

[Nissan Kicks crossover U.S. bound?](#)

[Opel GT Concept set for Geneva](#)

[Opel GT Concept: A study in avant-garde](#)

[Pininfarina Concept teased](#)

[Recall Checks Urged in New Campaign](#)

[Scions to become Toyotas](#)

[Subaru XV Concept teased for Geneva](#)

[This Week in Car Buying: Find a used GM car with KBB's help](#)

[This Week in Car Buying: Ford's real friends & family program](#)

[This Week in Car Buying: Luxury incentives brewing; Trucks dominate](#)

[This Week in Car Buying: Snow slows sales as economy cools](#)

[This Week in Car Buying: Used car wave builds](#)

The following new-vehicle reviews written by KBB.com's editorial staff went live on the site or were updated during January 2016. To see any new-vehicle reviews from KBB.com's editorial staff, please visit KBB.com and click on the *Car Reviews* tab, then select the make and model.

Video Posted to KBB.com:

[2016 Audi TT](#)

[2016 Chevrolet Malibu](#)

[2016 Hyundai Tucson](#)

[2015 Ford Focus](#)

Written Stories Posted to KBB.com:

Highlights

[2016 Chicago Auto Show](#)

[16 Best Family Cars of 2016](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Kia Optima](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Subaru Outback](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Nissan Pathfinder](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Honda HR-V](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Honda Civic](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Chevrolet Tahoe](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Chevrolet Malibu](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Honda Odyssey](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Toyota Sienna](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Toyota Highlander](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Honda Pilot](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Honda Accord](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Chevrolet Impala](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Kia Sedona](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Hyundai Sonata](#)

[16 Best Family Cars: 2016 Honda CR-V](#)

[Best Family Cars 2016 Runners Up](#)

[Best Family Cars of 2016: Child Safety Seats](#)

[2016 Chevrolet Equinox Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Ford Escape Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Ford Focus Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Ford Fusion Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 GMC Acadia Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 GMC Terrain Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Honda Accord Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Hyundai Santa Fe Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Hyundai Sonata Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Jeep Cherokee Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Kia Forte Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Kia Optima Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Kia Sportage Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Lexus GX Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Mitsubishi Lancer Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Nissan Rogue Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Toyota Camry Buyer's Guide](#)

[2016 Toyota Highlander Buyer's Guide](#)

Vehicle Coverage:

First Drives/Reviews

[2017 Hyundai Elantra First Review](#)

[2016 Buick Cascada First Review](#)

[2016 Cadillac CT6 First Review](#)

[2016 Nissan Sentra First Review](#)

[2016 Volkswagen Beetle Dune First Review](#)

Long Term Vehicle Updates

[2016 Acura MDX Long-Term Update: Road Trip Lite](#)

[2016 Chevrolet Colorado Long-Term Update: Comfort](#)

[2015 Hyundai Genesis 3.8 Long-Term Update: Road Trip](#)

[2015 Kia Sedona Long-Term Update: Moving Day](#)

Quick Takes

[2016 Kia Optima EX Quick Take](#)

[2016 Volvo S60 T5 Inscription Quick Take](#)

KBB.com Expert Reviews:

[2016 BMW 2 Series](#)

The 2016 BMW 2 Series hearkens back to the days when BMWs were small, nimble and relatively affordable.

[2016 BMW X1](#)

All-new for 2016, the BMW X1 crossover SUV loses some verve but gains new safety features and enhances interior room and exterior presence.

[2016 BMW X5](#)

BMW's premium X5 SUV for 2016 continues to set new benchmarks, adding a new plug-in hybrid for the well-off eco-conscious set.

[2016 Buick Cascada](#)

Buick's first droptop in 25 years, the new Cascada is a stylish, solid and well-appointed 2+2 compact with surprisingly sporty character.

[2016 Buick Encore](#)

The 2016 Buick Encore adds an upscale edge to a compact SUV big on style, substance and value.

[2016 Buick LaCrosse](#)

With its replacement on deck for 2017, the 2016 Buick LaCrosse luxury sedan remains a comfy cruiser worthy of your consideration.

[2016 Buick Verano](#)

Buick luxury and style come together in an affordable luxury compact to create the 2016 Buick Verano.

[2016 Chevrolet Silverado HD](#)

The 2016 Chevrolet Silverado HD is the truck for Chevy lovers who need significantly more muscle than what the standard Silverado offers.

[2016 Chevrolet Sonic](#)

Whether as a sedan or hatchback, the 2016 Chevy Sonic is fun, frugal and a good value that competes well with rivals like the Ford Fiesta.

[2016 Fiat 500](#)

More than just another cute subcompact, the 2016 Fiat 500 offers an impressive array of features, performance and style at a good price.

[2016 Ford Taurus](#)

Big, comfy and quiet, the 2016 Ford Taurus remains a full-size family favorite with a slightly menacing side in SHO form.

[2016 Ford Transit](#)

The 2016 Ford Transit elevates the American van to a level of versatility and efficiency inconceivable just a few years back.

[2016 GMC Sierra 1500](#)

GMC's 2016 Sierra may be more upscale than comparable half-ton pickups from Toyota, Ford or Ram, but it's no less capable.

2016 GMC Sierra HD

The 2016 GMC Sierra HD pickup truck delivers the kind of muscle and might you won't find in any foreign competitor.

2016 Jeep Renegade

The 2016 Jeep Renegade may be the smallest vehicle to wear the iconic Jeep name, but it's big on personality, value and capability.

2016 Land Rover LR4

The Land Rover LR4 is a true luxury SUV and a true off-roader, but its rugged capabilities come at the cost of efficiency and practicality.

2016 Land Rover Range Rover Sport

Some SUVs tout supreme luxury, others their off-road prowess. In the 2016 Land Rover Range Rover Sport, you get the best of both.

2016 Mercedes-Benz GLE Coupe

As the athletic counterpart of the Mercedes-Benz GLE SUV, the GLE Coupe trades practicality for unique design and dynamic performance.

2016 Nissan Altima

With its significant update, the 2016 Nissan Altima midsize sedan remains competitive with stalwarts like the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry.

2016 Nissan JUKE

From its zippy manners to its polarizing looks, the Nissan Juke crossover SUV zigs where others zag. At around \$21,000, it packs value, too.

2016 Nissan Leaf

The 2016 Nissan Leaf EV continues to improve on the promise of the electric vehicle, with an extended-range option and a low base price.

2016 Nissan Pathfinder

The 2016 Nissan Pathfinder remains a smart choice among 3-row SUVs thanks to its sedan-like ride quality and family-friendly features.

2016 Tesla Model S

Tesla's Model S for 2016 is a game changer, offering everything a traditional combustion-engine luxury sedan does without the harmful emissions and unpredictable fuel bills.

2016 Toyota Prius C

The 2016 Toyota Prius C delivers class-leading fuel economy in an inexpensive 5-door hybrid that is both cute and functional.

2016 Toyota Prius

America's perennial hybrid bestseller, the 2016 Prius is all-new, with best-in-class EPA ratings, improved drivability, and snarky styling.

2016 Volkswagen Beetle

With its distinctive styling and fun attitude, the 2016 Volkswagen Beetle rekindles America's love affair with Germany's most famous car.

2016 Volkswagen CC

The 2016 Volkswagen CC provides more exclusivity than the Passat, yet doesn't cost nearly as much as other European 4-door coupes.

2016 Volkswagen Eos

The 2016 Volkswagen Eos gets an extended lease on life, with a limited run of discounted models. But hurry. When they're gone, they're gone.

2016 Volkswagen Golf SportWagen

The 2016 Volkswagen Golf SportWagen offers more room and comfort than many compact SUVs, plus better fuel economy.

2016 Volkswagen Passat

Updated for 2016 with new style and tech, the Volkswagen Passat boasts excellent driving manners and exceptional roominess.

New-Car Sales to Jump 9 Percent in February 2016, According to Kelley Blue Book

American Honda Expected to Increase Despite Civic Stop-Sale; Mid-Size Trucks Are Fastest Selling Segment

IRVINE, Calif., Feb. 25, 2016 -- New-vehicle sales are expected to increase 9 percent year-over-year to a total of 1.37 million units in February 2016, resulting in an estimated 17.9 million seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR), according to Kelley Blue Book [www.kbb.com](#), the vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry. With this growth, this could be the highest February sales total since 2000, when sales hit 1.5 million units... [MORE](#)

10 Best New-Car Deals for February 2016 by KBB.com

Kelley Blue Book Ranks Top Lease, Financing and Cash Back Deals Available This Month

IRVINE, Calif., Feb. 16, 2016 -- For shoppers on the lookout for a new-car deal, the experts from Kelley Blue Book [www.kbb.com](#), the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry, have assembled their list of the 10 best lease, financing and cash back deals for new cars available in February 2016 from a variety of auto manufacturers... [MORE](#)

2016 5-Year Cost to Own Award Winners Announced by Kelley Blue Book

Hyundai, Acura Respectively Earn Brand, Luxury Brand Wins for Lowest Projected 5-Year Ownership Costs

IRVINE, Calif., Feb. 10, 2016 -- The 2016 model-year brand and category winners of the fifth annual 5-Year Cost to Own Awards, recognizing new vehicles with the lowest projected ownership costs, were announced today by Kelley Blue Book, [www.kbb.com](#), the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry. These awards are based on Kelley Blue Book's 5-Year Cost to Own data for new cars for the initial five-year ownership period... [MORE](#)

Kelley Blue Book Fair Market Range Helps Consumers Navigate Growing Trend Toward Online Vehicle Shopping

KBB.com, General Motors Relationship Provides Fair Market Price Range for Buyers through Automaker's New Online Shopping Service for Pre-Owned Vehicles

IRVINE, Calif., Feb. 9, 2016 -- With car shopping increasingly moving online, all parties, including automakers, dealers, online car-buying services and third-party sites, are playing a major role in shifting the traditional automotive industry to meet consumer demands for a simpler, easier car buying experience. Kelley Blue Book, the only vehicle valuation source trusted by both consumers and the automotive industry, recently worked with General Motors to provide the Kelley Blue Book® Fair Market Range to GM customers shopping the Factory Pre-Owned Collection, which offers nationwide inventory of former GM company-owned, off-lease and daily rental Chevrolet, Buick, GMC or Cadillac vehicles., [www.kbb.com](#), the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry, today announces its inaugural Best Auto Tech Award winner, the Sensus system in the 2016 Volvo XC90... [MORE](#)

Audi R8, Audi Brand Score Highest Among Car Shopper Traffic Following Super Bowl 50 Commercial, According to Kelley Blue Book

Kia Optima, Hyundai Genesis and Toyota Prius Among Top Models with Significant Traffic Spikes on KBB.com

IRVINE, Calif., Feb. 8, 2016 -- The Audi R8 increased 7,780 percent in new-car searches on KBB.com following its commercial, the most of any advertised model during Super Bowl 50, according to Kelley Blue Book [www.kbb.com](#), the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry... [MORE](#)

Kelley Blue Book Names 16 Best Family Cars of 2016

KBB.com Editors Conduct Extensive Real-World Tests, Determine Vehicles that Best Fit Various Family Needs; All-New Car Seat Section Details How Rear-Facing & Forward-Facing Child Seats Fit in Each Winning Car

IRVINE, Calif., Feb. 4, 2016 -- The vehicles deemed the 16 Best Family Cars of 2016 were announced today by Kelley Blue Book, [www.kbb.com](#), the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry. After extensive testing and evaluation, with a keen focus on safety, comfort, convenience, spaciousness for both passengers and cargo, and fit of various rear-facing and forward-facing child safety car seats, the KBB.com expert editors recommend their choices for a diverse group of vehicles that best meet the needs of today's modern families... [MORE](#)

New-Car Transaction Prices Rise Nearly 3 Percent in January 2016, According to Kelley Blue Book

Truck and SUV Strength Power Average Transaction Price Growth; Volkswagen Group Pricing Takes Hit in January

IRVINE, Calif., Feb. 2, 2016 -- The analysts at Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry, today report the estimated average transaction price (ATP) for light vehicles in the United States was \$34,112 in January 2016. New-car prices have increased by \$919 (up 2.8 percent) from January 2015, while declining \$553 (down 1.6 percent) from last month... [MORE](#)

January New-Car Sales Impacted by Historic Blizzard, Down 3 Percent Year-Over-Year, According to Kelley Blue Book

Consumer Demand for Jeep Could Be Slowing; Compact Car Segment Will Be the One to Watch in 2016

IRVINE, Calif., Jan. 28, 2016 -- New-vehicle sales are expected to decrease 3 percent year-over-year to a total of 1.12 million units in January 2016, resulting in an estimated 17.1 million seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR), according to Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry... [MORE](#)

About Kelley Blue Book (www.kbb.com)

Founded in 1926, Kelley Blue Book, The Trusted Resource®, is the vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the automotive industry. Each week the company provides the most market-reflective values in the industry on its top-rated website KBB.com, including its famous Blue Book® Trade-In Values and Fair Purchase Price, which reports what others are paying for new and used cars this week. The company also provides vehicle pricing and values through various products and services available to car dealers, auto manufacturers, finance and insurance companies, and governmental agencies. Kelley Blue Book's KBB.com ranked highest in its category for brand equity by the 2015 Harris Poll EquiTrend® study and has been named Online Auto Shopping Brand of the Year for four consecutive years. Kelley Blue Book Co., Inc. is a Cox Automotive company.