Ontario’s 10-year automated commercial vehicle pilot program now underway

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The Ontario government has launched an automated commercial motor vehicles (ACMVs) pilot program. The program aims to evaluate the performance of ACMVs, understand their compatibility with existing road users and infrastructure, and assess opportunities for improving road safety and support the trucking sector.

The pilot program will run until August 1, 2035. It is designed for commercial vehicles that weigh more than 4,500 kg and are equipped with automated driving systems that meet the SAE International’s J3016 standard for Level 3, 4, or 5 autonomy.

Two streams

There are two distinct categories of testing:

- **Driver-supervised stream**: a driver must be present in the driver’s seat and be prepared to engage and take control of the vehicle as necessary.
- **Driverless stream**: no driver is present in the vehicle’s driver seat. An assistant, located either inside the vehicle or at a different location in Ontario, must be ready to provide oversight of the ACMV.

Qualifications

Participants in the program must meet one of the three criteria:

1. have at least 2 years of experience with a “Satisfactory-unaudited” carrier safety rating and be partnered with another carrier that has at least 5 years of experience and a similar carrier safety rating; or
2. have at least 3 years of experience with an “Excellent-audited” carrier safety rating; or
3. have at least 5 years of experience with a “Satisfactory-unaudited” carrier safety rating.

In addition to the above, participants must maintain a minimum of $10 million in public liability insurance coverage.

Application process

To participate in the program, applicants must submit an application package which can be downloaded here. The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) will review the application and contact the applicant to discuss next steps for developing a custom graduated testing framework with performance milestones that are relevant to the applicant's technology and operational use case.

Once the framework has been approved, participants will receive a signed copy of the approval package. A signed copy of the approval package must be kept in all vehicles participating in the pilot program at all times.

The program

The full program conditions can be found here and include but are not limited to the following:

- ACMVs must operate exclusively along MTO-approved routes in a manner that does not cause damage to highway infrastructure, including avoiding interference with curbs, lights or other highway fixtures. The carrier is liable for any damage to highway infrastructure.
- ACMV must clearly display signs with the text "TEST VEHICLE – STAY BACK" on both the front and rear of all vehicles. These signs must meet the specifications outlined in the program conditions so that they are highly visible on the road during both day and night.
- ACMV must be equipped with a functioning and accurate electronic on-board device that records speed, time and date at regular intervals not exceeding five minutes in length. Data from this device must be retained for at least two years and capable of producing a report indicating the vehicle's speed at specified dates and times.
- ACMVs must not carry any regulated dangerous goods requiring placards on the vehicle exterior. ACMVs must not carry livestock or special provision loads.
- Participants must notify MTO via email within 24 hours following any collision or other incident that disrupts traffic or damages property (for example, ACMV stops in the middle of the road and blocks traffic, mounts curb or sidewalk, or damages a sign).
- Participants must inform MTO in advance and obtain approval for their intended testing, including the date of travel, estimated time range, origin/destination locations, the section of highway for intended travel (interchange to interchange) and the expected duration of automated mode operation.
- Participants must engage all local municipalities where they intend to test ACMVs, specifying the proposed locations and times for testing.

Throughout the 10-year pilot, MTO will assess data and information from on-road testing of ACMVs, engage stakeholders, and make amendments to the pilot framework if required.

By

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