



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

April 12, 2019

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Chair
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee for the hearing entitled “Enhancing Vehicle Technology to Prevent Drunk Driving” on March 14, 2019.

I respectfully request that the two attached articles from the *Washington Post* and *The Verge* be included in the hearing record as an addendum to my written testimony. The articles describe technology that may soon be placed into vehicles that can detect if a driver is impaired and safely guide the vehicle to the side of the road. While this is no way an endorsement of the system described in the articles, it is an excellent example of the ability of technology to curb the scourge of drunk driving.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Subcommittee to reduce the needless deaths and injuries caused by drunk drivers that occur on our Nation’s roads every day. Thank for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

Joan Claybrook
Advocates’ Board Member
President Emeritus of Public Citizen, and
Former Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Transportation

Volvo says in-car cameras will monitor drivers and take action to prevent distracted or impaired driving

The company said the move was part of its Vision 2020 safety campaign to reduce serious injuries and fatalities in its vehicles

By Fredrick Kunkle
March 20

Volvo plans to install cameras in its vehicles that will monitor drivers for signs of distracted or impaired driving and take action if it appears that a driver's behavior becomes dangerous.

The Swedish automaker, which recently announced that it would limit the top speeds of its cars as a way of making highways safer, said Wednesday the cameras would be part of a system that would slow the vehicles and "safely park" them on the side of the road if they detected that a driver was becoming incapacitated or if the driver's attention had lapsed for a long time. The technology would also summon help from its 24/7 assistance center.

The announcement -- though welcomed as a possible step toward reducing traffic deaths -- raised a host of questions about civil rights, not to mention operational details about technology that is both making judgments about a person's behavior and possibly seizing control of his vehicle.

Jay Stanley, a senior policy analyst at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), said he sees parallels to the use of data recorders in vehicles that function somewhat like the black boxes in airliners. The devices continuously record and write over data about the vehicle's speed and other factors. In the event of a crash, however, the data recorders preserve a snapshot of data in the moments before impact.

"My assumption is that auto safety advocates, police, etc. are going to want that data available to them after crashes. That means, in some ways, that the camera becomes not just something helping you out, but potentially an eye of the state," Stanley said.

Volvo should be transparent from the first about what the camera would monitor and how, right down to the software coding that would control the devices, and the public should have a say in how the information will be used, Stanley said.

"I think people should have as much control as possible over what's being collected, how it's being shared, and who it's being shared with," Stanley said. "We want these devices to be working on our behalf, not as snitches. No one wants a snitch looking over their shoulder all the time, a robotic snitch."

Volvo's new technology will focus on visual alertness -- such as eye movements, pupil reactions and scanning behavior -- as well as overall reaction times and other control-related behavior to assess the driver's condition, a company spokesman said in an email. He also said no data will be stored and nothing would only be shared with owner's consent.

"We take the privacy of our customers very seriously," he said. "We are talking about addressing behavior for the safety of our drivers, not being an extension of law enforcement."

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) expressed guarded optimism about the development, saying driver-assist technology has the potential to make streets and highways safer. But the GHSA also said people already have the ability to avoid driving while distracted or impaired and shouldn't have to wait for a high-tech solution.

"As new technology advances, it's important to remember that drivers are already equipped with a powerful technology tool -- their brain -- to stay sober and focused while behind the wheel," a spokeswoman said.

Volvo, whose announcement was covered by the Verge and other tech news media, said the move was part of its Vision 2020 safety campaign to reduce serious injuries and fatalities in its vehicles. Earlier this month, Volvo said it would limit the top speed in its vehicles to a little more than 112 mph.

The efforts fall in line with initiatives in the United States and other countries such as Vision Zero to find ways to reduce traffic deaths, particularly among vulnerable users such as pedestrians and bicyclists.

Stanley, who bicycles, said the need for strong measures to combat impaired and distracted driving are on display all the time, but that doesn't mean that civil rights concerns have to be sacrificed to achieve greater safety.

"I don't need any convincing of the dangers of distracted driving I see it every day. I live in terror of it every day," he said. But civil rights can be addressed, too, even as the places that people can be free of monitoring seem to be shrinking.

"I do think the walls are closing in on us with new monitoring mechanisms surrounding us at every turn," Stanley said. "Some of those monitoring systems may be justified, but many of them are not, and we need to ask careful questions about each new one."

--This posting has been updated to correct the top speed limit.

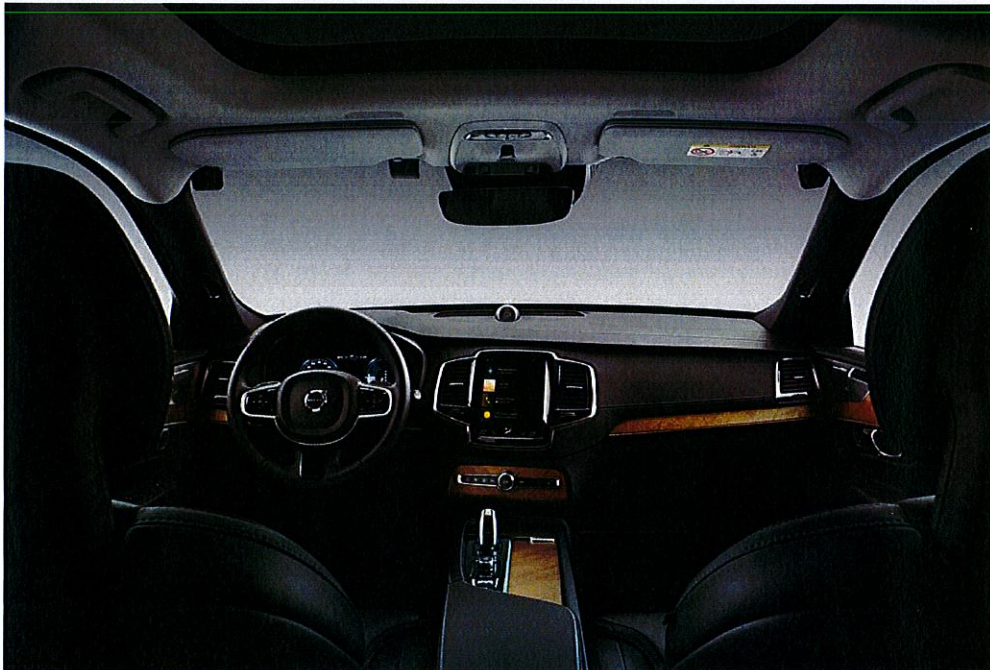
Fredrick Kunkle

Fredrick Kunkle runs the Tripping blog, writing about the experience of travel. He has also covered politics, courts, police, and local government in Maryland and Virginia. **Follow** 

Volvo will use in-car cameras to combat drunk and distracted driving

If you're drunk or distracted, the car could intervene by actively slowing down and safely parking the car

By [Andrew J. Hawkins](#) | [@andyjayhawk](#) | Mar 20, 2019, 12:12pm EDT



Volvo said on Wednesday it will use cameras installed inside its vehicles to monitor driver behavior and intervene if the driver appears to be drunk or distracted. It's a risky move by an automaker, even one with a reputation for safety like Volvo, which could raise concerns among privacy advocates.

Volvo's in-car cameras will monitor eye movements to gauge driver distraction and / or intoxication. If a driver looks away for a period of time, such as at a smartphone, or fails to keep their hands on the steering wheel, a representative from Volvo's on-call assistance centers will call them to check in. Drivers who aren't watching the road, or even have their eyes closed, will be warned as well. If they don't respond, the car will slow and even stop. The system will roll-out to all Volvo cars by early 2020.

THIS COULD RAISE CONCERNS AMONG PRIVACY ADVOCATES

This follows Volvo's recent announcement that it will be limiting the top speed on all of its vehicles to 180 km/h (112 mph) in a bid to reduce traffic fatalities. Volvo is framing these new policies as key components in its Vision 2020 goal, in which no one is killed or seriously injured in a Volvo vehicle by 2020. Over the years, the company built its reputation on safety and quirky designs, and today's announcement is meant to underline that.

"When it comes to safety, our aim is to avoid accidents altogether rather than limit the impact when an accident is imminent and unavoidable," Henrik Green, senior vice president for research and development at Volvo Car Group, said in a statement. "In this case, cameras will monitor for behavior that may lead to serious injury or death."

The use of in-car cameras to monitor drivers is not completely unprecedented. Cadillac uses infrared cameras facing the driver to power its advanced driver assist system, Super Cruise. The camera tracks the driver's eye movements, allowing for a "hands-free" driving experience. If the driver's attention wanders, Super Cruise uses an escalating series of audible and vibrating alerts to ensure the driver keeps their eyes on the road.

As cameras proliferate in the name of safety, there's a real chance they can be misused to invade privacy. At an event in Sweden Wednesday, the company preemptively dismissed this criticism by likening it to early objection to seatbelt laws.



Automakers are already collecting lots of information from your car today, but mostly for vehicle analytics. GM has said that the camera in its Cadillac cars isn't recording anything; it's just a buffered video feed to make sure Super Cruise works as it should.

Volvo didn't respond to questions about access to the vehicle's camera, but in a statement clarified that the exact technical setup of the camera has yet to be decided.

"With the cameras, Volvo aims to collect data only in the ambition to make its cars safer and only the data that is required for the systems," a spokesperson said in an email. "The cameras will not record video and no data will be gathered without the user's consent. Exact technical setup is yet to be determined."

Update March 20th, 1:18PM ET to include statement from a Volvo spokesperson regarding privacy concerns.