

California plans to allow testing on public roads of self-driving vehicles without human backup drivers by the end of the year, state officials say. The state's Department of Motor Vehicles is seeking public comment on proposed regulations for driverless testing and public use of autonomous vehicles that will no longer be required to have conventional manual controls such as steering wheels and pedals. Current regulations require such vehicles to have those controls, as well as a backup driver.



The state has licenced 27 companies to test driverless vehicles on public roads, including vehicle manufacturers from BMW to Tesla, suppliers such as Delphi and Nvidia, technology companies such as Waymo and China's Baidu, and a long list of self-driving startups. A number of automakers have said they plan to begin deploying self-driving vehicles, some of them in commercial fleets, by 2021.

California initiated a 45-day public comment period on the proposed new rules, to be followed by a public hearing on April 25.