

# Intellectual Property and the Emergence of Autonomous Vehicles

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A substantial financial investment on the Pennsylvania Turnpike signals the first of what likely will be billions of dollars spent in the state, across the country, and around the world to prepare for autonomous vehicles.

The technology and testing on autonomous vehicles has advanced far enough that Pennsylvania has contracted for a \$100M data infrastructure upgrade to improve electronic communications along a portion of the state's turnpike.

The installed fiber optic network will improve communications between turnpike administrative centers, a step necessary for the implementation of more advanced tolling systems. The [infrastructure improvements](#) would also prepare for the heightened data communication needs that will accompany autonomous vehicles and other intelligent transportation technologies.

With those billions of dollars associated with autonomous vehicles signaling the growth of a lucrative market, companies are rapidly innovating to gain an edge in the burgeoning industry. While testing and preparations for autonomous vehicles remain in the early stages of implementation, the race for ownership of the intellectual property protecting various technological advancements in this realm is well-developed and booming. The rate of patent application filing in this area, even more than a decade after the initial patents were issued, remains high as companies look to protect their research and development on the way toward actual implementation. [Trade secret disputes](#) have also been widely publicized and have commanded large damages for the appropriation of proprietary technological information.

The conception to deployment timeline of autonomous vehicles reveals the importance of establishing an intellectual property strategy and developing an intellectual property portfolio early in the research and development process. If you are innovating in any technological area, it is important to consider how intellectual property intersects with your business strategy, even if the particular market has not yet developed to the point of commercialization. Contacting the attorneys in our [Intellectual Property Practice Group](#) at the beginning of research and development will allow us to chart a path to best protect any intellectual property that arises out of your innovative efforts, sometimes even long before the innovation enters the real-world.

If you have any questions about protecting your technology for autonomous vehicles or the emerging technology surrounding autonomous vehicles, please [contact me](#).

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