

## Automobiles

# Draft Brussels legislation on connected car technology hits snag

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A proposal for self-driving cars to communicate with each other using a WiFi-based system hit a roadblock yesterday, with critics arguing for a neutral approach that would leave the door open for 5G technology.

The European Parliament's transport and tourism committee rejected the draft legislation on the issue ahead of a full vote in the chamber that was due to take place next week.

The parliament is likely to follow the committee's approach, but one person close to the process said that the draft legislation favouring a WiFi system may still pass because it is strongly supported by carmakers including Volkswagen. If the legislation is rejected, a debate over the technology standard will have to be revisited after the European elections.

The EU plan in its current form was opposed by the telecoms industry and some European governments, notably Finland and Spain, that want a technology-neutral standard for connected cars. The fear is that a move to back the WiFi-based approach would block 4G and 5G technology in the future as the two systems would not be compatible.

"The current rules would effectively exclude 5G from connected driving standards in Europe: this means putting the continent in the slow lane," said Phillip Malloch, chairman of telecoms trade body ETNO.

The debate over whether the short-range WiFi-based system favoured by some governments and some carmakers is preferable to the cellular V2X technology has raged in recent years.

The WiFi system offers more immediate benefits on safety as 5G networks are yet to launch fully in most European countries, but proponents of V2X argue that the cellular system will create a vastly safer road system over time and that a 4G version has been tested.

Telecoms companies have also argued that the European Commission has itself extolled the benefits of 5G networks to support connected cars only later to champion an older technology.

Andrus Ansip, a commission vice-president responsible for the digital single market, has written to his counterpart Violeta Bulc, the transport commissioner, to warn that the proposed law would lead to a "slow and patchy" deployment of connected car technology.

Una proposta di legge di Bruxelles sulla tecnologia per l'automobile connessa incontra un ostacolo

