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Self-Driving Semi-Trailer Trucks: An Exercise in Futility or a Future Reality?

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Reminiscing of the days of afternoon cartoons, The Jetsons futuristic society always seemed far-fetched and nothing more than fantasy. Fast forward 30+ years... while the concept of a flying car still seems far off, innovations in technology have brought the reality of autonomously driven vehicles closer than ever. Automobile manufacturers, ride-sharing companies and Silicon Valley are all in, and this is equally true for the trucking industry, with Mercedes Benz, Tesla, Walmart, Waymo and Uber currently experimenting with autonomous semi-trailer trucks. Uber, for instance, has successfully tested autonomous semi-trailer trucks on long distance hauls in Arizona. Waymo is also testing self-driving trucks in Atlanta.

A safety driver in the driver's seat is positioned to monitor the roadway and navigate any challenging sections of highways and city streets. Industry analysts argue that autonomous semi-trailer trucks are safe and more efficient. With a trucker shortage on the horizon, the nation's hard-working, dedicated truckers should not fear this infusion of technology into the lifeblood of our country, since there are routes, loading procedures, inspections and certain logistics that no computer or robotics can take away. The ultimate goal, would be to increase efficiency, safety and jobs (including job training and salaries). Certainly, there will be some legal and regulatory potholes, but this future reality would be a victory for all Americans.