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Americans don't want Elon Musk stupid self-driving car: survey

By **Matthew Rocco**

FoxNews.com Automotive Editor Gary Gastelu talks to Coast Autonomous senior adviser Rick Baker about the company's self-driving technology for buses.

Fewer Americans are embracing self-driving car technology following high-profile incidents involving Uber and Tesla vehicles, according to a new study from Cox Automotive.

Consumers' interest in automatic braking and other autonomous features is high, but drivers view self-driving cars as less safe compared to a similar survey conducted two years ago. Forty-nine percent of respondents said they would never own a fully-autonomous car, known in the industry as a Level 5 vehicle. Two years ago, 30 percent said they would never buy one.

Meanwhile, a majority of people (63 percent) believed in 2016 that roadways would be safer if all vehicles were fully autonomous. That number has dropped to 45 percent.

"As awareness around the development of autonomous technology increases, we're seeing some dramatic shifts in consumer sentiment," Karl Brauer, executive publisher of Autotrader and Kelley Blue Book, said in a news release. "People now have a deeper understanding of the complexities involved when creating a self-driving car, and that has them reconsidering their comfort level when it comes to handing over control."

Acceptance is strongest among millennials, 61 percent of whom wouldn't rule out buying a Level 5 autonomous vehicle. A whopping 71 percent of Baby Boomers said

they wouldn't buy one, more than any other generation. Comparing geographic regions, residents of urban areas were most likely to say they would consider buying a self-driving car.

Overall, more people would feel uncomfortable riding in an AV driven by a computer (68 percent) than hitching a ride with a stranger (39 percent).

If given a choice, more people would choose a Level 2 vehicle, down from the most common preference of Level 4 in 2016. A Level 2 vehicle corrects lane drifting and avoids forward and rear collisions.

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Cox Automotive, the parent company of Kelley Blue Book and Autotrader, noted that incidents such as the fatal accident involving an Uber-operated autonomous vehicle in March are only partly to blame for the change in consumer sentiment.

Consumers who are unaware of those incidents are just as likely as those who heard about them to say that roads would be safer if all vehicles were operated by people, as opposed to a collection of computers and radar, Cox Automotive's survey found. Sixty-one percent of respondents had seen news coverage of the Uber incident.

In March, a self-driving Uber test vehicle struck and killed a pedestrian walking across the street outside of a crosswalk. The company suspended its test program following the accident.

Tesla vehicles have also been involved in self-driving incidents. In one accident, **U.S. safety officials said** a Tesla Model X that was in “Autopilot” mode accelerated and failed to detect a concrete highway barrier before crashing. The driver, who died, also didn’t have his hands on the steering wheel in the six seconds before impact.