

# Texas

## Smoothing the road for self-driving vehicle development

Texas has made a concerted effort in recent years to entice tech talent and businesses out of California. Now, it's making a play to best the Golden State when it comes to self-driving vehicles. Self-driving vehicles have cruised roads in Austin since 2015, and self-driving shuttles made their debut in Arlington's entertainment district in 2017. More recently, in October 2017, self-driving trucks built by startup Embark began hauling cargo from El Paso to Palm Springs, California.

Still in a pilot program stage, the trucks have a human at the wheel. But in 2017, Governor Abbott signed a bill specifically authorizing testing on public roads without a driver in the car, and state leaders are looking at how data sharing could help make widespread use of self-driving vehicles a reality. Embark will field an SDV fleet to ferry smart fridges and other appliances to their destinations.

"You think about how you drive these days using Waze, Google Maps or whatnot, what we see is a future where everyone involved in transportation — from you and I in the vehicle to emergency responders to the folks who are actually developing the automated vehicles — is using and sharing data," said Tom Bamonte, program manager for automated vehicles at the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

When it comes to other disruptive tech, however, the Lone Star State is less welcoming. Texas has several laws that ban drone use near critical infrastructure — such as oil and gas drilling sites and cattle feeding lots. Such regulations are better covered by federal jurisdiction.

Sources: (Wired) (Washington Post) (Texas Tribune) (Fort Worth-Star-Telegram) (Dallas Morning News)

### WHAT DID WE DO RIGHT?

A state bill allows the use of connected braking systems, which automatically slow cars in a fleet if a lead car brakes.

### WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER NEXT YEAR?

Texas can ease restrictions on drones and short-term rentals. Short-term rentals are operational but face significant hurdles in Austin and San Antonio.

### WHERE HAVE WE MOST IMPROVED?

A state law legalized ridesharing statewide and preempts restrictive regulations in cities including Austin, improving the state's grade from a 'C' in 2017.

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| Best & Brightest         | B  |
| Fast Internet            | B- |
| Grants Advanced Degrees  | C  |
| Tech Workforce           | B- |
| Tax Friendly             | B  |
| Attracts Investment      | B- |
| Entrepreneurial Activity | B+ |
| Ridesharing              | A  |
| Short-Term Rentals       | C+ |
| Sustainable Policies     | B  |
| Self-Driving Vehicles    | A  |
| Drones                   | D  |



### Entrepreneurial Activity

More than two million new jobs were created at firms with fewer than 50 employees between Q2/2011 and Q4/2016, for a per capita rate of roughly 74.56 new jobs per 1,000 residents.



### Attracts Investment

Texas drew more than \$57 per capita in venture capital and spent more than \$622 per capita in research-and-development investment.



### Fast Internet

Over 60 percent of Texan households have internet connections of at least 10 mbps, and 41 percent enjoy speeds of 25 mbps or more.



### Sustainable Policies

Electronics recycling laws and their implementation by state regulators have evolved over the years to keep pace with industry change. Still, recycling electronics has become increasingly burdensome.

## In Northeast Texas, Girl Scouts Get a Leg Up in STEM Subjects

Thousands of Girl Scouts in the Lone Star State will have a new way to explore STEM subjects outdoors.

The STEM Center of Excellence at Camp Whispering Cedars is the latest endeavor by the Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas to promote science, technology, engineering and math education for girls from kindergarten through high school.

The 92-acre campus on the outskirts of Dallas is equipped with a range of features, each designed to tie into a STEM field. A ropes course will be used to teach physics, and an archery range will offer real-world examples of motion and energy concepts.

The camp is designed to prepare girls and young women to meet a booming demand for workers in STEM fields. "If we don't prepare girls now for these jobs, they will miss out on these opportunities to reach their full potential for themselves and our community," said Jennifer Bartkowski, CEO of Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas.

PHOTO CREDIT: Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas | Source: (Dallas Business Journal)

