

China stepping up strategic push into smart mobility

Officials announce policies to advance intelligent transportation and digital innovation

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China is reinforcing its strategic drive into the smart connected-vehicle industry, with senior officials signaling a new phase of policy acceleration as global automakers and Chinese tech companies work to define the future of mobility.

Intelligent and connected vehicles have become a “strategic direction” for the transformation of the automotive sector, said Xin Guobin, vice-minister of industry and information technology, at the 2025 World Intelligent Connected Vehicles Conference.

The three-day event, which concluded on Saturday, was organized by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Transport, and the Beijing municipal government.

Xin announced that MIIT will formulate a new development plan for the upcoming 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), covering intelligent connected and new energy vehicles.

“We will support technological innovation, promote the deep integration of artificial intelligence and the automotive industry, and accelerate breakthroughs in next-generation architectures and high-performance chips,” Xin said. “We will also push forward standard-setting for combined driver-assist and autonomous driving systems, improve vehicle production access, and regulate market competition.”

China has already built a comprehensive ecosystem spanning smart cockpits, autonomous driving, and cloud connectivity, with more than 60 percent of new pas-

senger cars now equipped with combined driver-assist functions.

Pilot projects for vehicle-road-cloud integration are currently underway in around 20 cities, featuring more than 35,000 kilometers of test roads and over 11,000 roadside intelligent units.

The Ministry of Transport is also preparing implementation guidelines under its “AI + Transport” initiative, emphasizing that smart connected vehicles and autonomous-driving technologies will play a central role in building a scalable and replicable intelligent transport network.

Minister Liu Wei said the future lies in an “intelligent, multilayered transport system driven by technological innovation”, underscoring that progress depends on cultivating locally developed “new quality productive forces”.

The policy push goes beyond innovation and deployment — it also focuses on regulatory refinement and safety assurance.

Xin said MIIT will accelerate the drafting of standards for combined driver-assist and autonomous vehicles, optimize production licensing procedures, and promote fair competition.

China’s urgency on this front follows growing safety concerns.

According to the State Administration for Market Regulation, in 2024 alone, 2.56 million vehicles were recalled due to driver-assist system issues, accounting for 23 percent of total recalls that year.

A draft notice jointly prepared by the SAMR and the MIIT aims to strengthen recall consistency management for smart NEVs, while curbing exaggerated marketing

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and unfair competition practices.

The industrial developments are being closely watched by global automakers and technology companies.

Jochen Goller, a member of BMW Group’s board of management, said the transition toward intelligence, electrification and decarbonization is reshaping the global auto industry and creating new opportunities for international collaboration in China.

He said China is not only BMW’s largest single market worldwide, but also a frontier for technological innovation and a key driving force for industrial transformation.

Goller said BMW will continue to pursue a dual-driven strategy of independent innovation and open collaboration, integrating more deeply into China’s innovation ecosystem.

Li Shufu, chairman of Geely Holding Group, said that the industry has moved beyond conceptual exploration into an era of real technological breakthroughs and practical application.

“Software now defines the automobile,” he said, adding that AI has become the new engine of growth, and Geely is advancing the concept of ubiquitous AI across its value chain — from architecture and powertrain to the cockpit.

Zhu Huarong, chairman of China Changan Automobile Group, described intelligent connected vehicles as the “true future of mobility”, predicting that next-generation digital vehicles will evolve into fully automated automotive robots.

Cao Xudong, CEO of Chinese autonomous driving startup Momenta, said the industry has entered a phase of reflection and regulatory consolidation after years of rapid expansion.

He sees the establishment of mandatory national standards as a milestone for achieving high-quality, mature development.

“In the future, assisted-driving systems will handle the vast majority of driving mileage — up to L3 and L4 levels that enable hands-off, eyes-off operation,” Cao said, predicting that such capabilities could spread rapidly after 2030.

William Li, founder of Chinese NEV maker Nio, argued that the mission of autonomous driving should focus on safety first.

“The priority should be to reduce accidents. Only on that foundation can we achieve the goal of freeing human attention,” he said.

Short Torque

Country rolls out plan to expand charging network

China unveiled a three-year action plan on Wednesday to improve its electric vehicle charging infrastructure as part of broader efforts to boost consumer confidence and accelerate EV adoption nationwide. By the end of 2027, China aims to establish a nationwide network of 28 million charging facilities, with public charging capacity surpassing 300 million kilowatts, sufficient to meet the needs of more than 80 million EVs, as outlined in the plan. Key measures include upgrading urban fast-charging networks, expediting the installation of charging facilities in expressway service areas, and addressing rural charging infrastructure shortages. The plan also emphasizes improving charging access in residential areas and scaling up private charging facilities. As of the end of August, the number of EV charging facilities stood at 17.35 million units, up 53.5 percent year-on-year.

Stellantis-Pony.ai joint self-driving testing

European auto group Stellantis and Chinese autonomous driving company Pony.ai said on Friday that they had signed an agreement to jointly develop and test self-driving vehicles in Europe. The partnership will combine Pony.ai’s autonomous driving software with Stellantis’ electric, medium-sized van platform designed for Level 4 — or hands-off, eyes-off — driving. Pony.ai, founded in 2016 in China and operating fully driverless robo-taxi services in major Chinese cities, will manage its European operations through its Luxembourg-based division. Testing will begin with the Peugeot e-Traveller model in Luxembourg, with a rollout across European cities from 2026, focusing on safety, performance, and regulatory compliance, the companies said. The partnership will initially focus on light commercial vehicles, a segment where Stellantis, through its Pro One

commercial vehicle business unit, holds a leading position in Europe.

Ex-McLaren chief named as new CEO of Porsche

Former McLaren CEO Michael Leiters will take over from Porsche chief Oliver Blume from the start of 2026, as the luxury German carmaker struggles with US tariffs, weakening sales in China, and a costly reversal of its electric vehicle strategy in favor of the combustion engines that once made it highly profitable. Leiters is a well-known figure in the sports car world, having held senior roles at McLaren, Porsche, and Ferrari. During his tenure as Porsche’s SUV director from 2000 to 2013, he played a key role in developing the carmaker’s Cayenne model. Porsche said on Friday that its supervisory board had appointed Leiters to replace Blume, who faced increasing investor pressure to step down and focus on his concurrent role as CEO of parent company Volkswagen.

Li Auto opens first overseas store in C. Asia

Chinese new energy vehicle startup Li Auto has opened its first overseas retail center in Uzbekistan, marking its entry into the Central Asian market and a new phase in its global expansion. The company’s inaugural authorized overseas retail center opened in Tashkent, Uzbekistan’s capital, primarily selling three extended-range electric vehicle models (the L9, L7, and L6) to local consumers. The company plans for all new models launched in 2026 to comply with overseas market regulations. It also plans to open retail centers in Almaty, Kazakhstan’s largest city, and in the capital Astana in November. The company has already established R&D centers in Germany and the US. Li Auto is a late entrant among China’s NEV startups expanding abroad, following peers such as XPeng and Nio, which began exploring overseas markets several years ago.

MOTORING-AGENCIES

Global collaboration crucial for vehicle safety evaluation

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In light of the ongoing electrification and intelligent transformation of the automotive industry, experts at the 2025 NCAP World Congress emphasized the need for a more collaborative global auto evaluation system to foster technological innovation and facilitate real-world data sharing.

NCAP, or the New Car Assessment Program, is a globally recognized auto safety evaluation system with 11 regional institutions covering Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania. Over the past 50 years, it has guided consumer choices and driven automakers to make safety technologies standard rather than optional.

Iain Cameron, chairman of Global NCAP, said that as technology is “moving faster than ever”, the NCAP community and its partners must collaborate closely to ensure that technological progress benefits all road users and strengthen road safety safeguards. This collaboration aims to achieve the United Nations’ goal of halving road deaths and serious injuries by the end of this decade.

He made the remarks at the conference in Shanghai last week, which was attended by representatives of NCAP groups.

Emerging issues such as battery safety, autonomous driving ethics, and data security have become increasingly prominent amid the electrification and intelligent transformation of the industry, making it urgent to build a global auto safety community with a broader perspective, said An Tiecheng, chairman of the China Automotive Technology and Research Center, which oversees China NCAP.

NCAP serves as a crucial supporting force in this process, while mandatory safety regulations in various countries define the bottom line for auto safety, An said.

Michiel van Ratingen, secretary-general of Euro NCAP, said that despite the rapid development and proven lifesaving benefits of



Experts share insights on auto safety evaluation issues at the 2025 NCAP World Congress, which was held in Shanghai from Wednesday to Friday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

advanced driver assistance systems, the core challenge is ensuring their stable performance in complex real-world scenarios. Cases of excessive reliance on ADAS by drivers have been reported in both Chinese and European markets.

He added that the 2026 rating update will incorporate multivariable assessments such as weather, lighting, and road conditions. This aims to raise the threshold for high scores and urge automakers to optimize system performance in non-ideal scenarios.

To streamline efforts among global NCAP groups, joint teams have standardized test parameters, such as the collaboration between China NCAP and Euro NCAP on mobile progressive deformable barrier indicators, which helps reduce redundant investments.

Additionally, mutual recognition models and agreements, such as the China-EU carbon footprint evaluation, enable cross-regional data reuse, lowering compliance costs for automakers.

As a core force in China’s auto safety evaluation, China NCAP has been providing forward-looking solutions grounded in local conditions and enriched by a global per-

spective, said Li Xiangrong, director of the CATARC’s Car Assessment and Testing Center.

He noted that China NCAP has facilitated the formulation and revision of over 10 mandatory national vehicle safety standards and has incorporated unique Chinese traffic scenarios into its evaluation items, supported by the China In-Depth Accident Study database.

For instance, considering the high density of pedestrians and electric bicycles on Chinese roads, China NCAP has expanded the pedestrian head simulation test area from 2,100 millimeters to 2,300 mm and introduced the advanced Pedestrian Legform Impactor, which better simulates real collision scenarios.

These solutions have been referenced by international counterparts such as Australian NCAP and Latin NCAP, Li said.

Since its first vehicle crash test in 2006, China NCAP has undergone six major revisions, developing a high-standard safety testing and evaluation system. According to An, the center has completed around 2,000 crash tests on 580 models from 120 automakers to date.

