

# Why Don't All New Cars Have Rearview Cameras?

By [TERESA TRITCH](#), The New York Times, Taking Notes BLOG, February 26, 2014, 1:05 PM



*George Gutierrez for The New York Times, A rearview camera system.*

The Times's Matthew L. Wald [reported recently](#) on the Transportation Department's enthusiastic embrace of a plan to require all new cars to broadcast their location, speed, direction and other data, and to receive similar data from other cars, so as to warn drivers of impending collisions.

I am all for preventing accidents and am amazed by the new technology. I confess to skepticism of officials' claims that the data would not be used to abuse privacy, but I am open to being convinced otherwise.

What I don't get is the big fuss over a future safety innovation — it is expected to take three years to even draft the new requirement — when the Transportation Department and the White House have for years delayed carrying out an existing safety law to require rearview technology in new cars.

The rearview law, enacted in 2008, is intended to prevent deaths and injuries that occur when drivers are backing up. Each year, back-over accidents kill some 230 people, mostly children, and injure another 17,000. When the law was passed, Congress gave the Transportation Department until February 2011 to issue a rule telling carmakers how to comply. Lawmakers also gave the Transportation secretary the ability to extend the deadline if it "cannot be met."

Lo and behold, the Transportation Department has declared repeatedly that the deadline cannot be met. The White House budget office, which is supposed to vet new rules, abetted the delay: It had a draft of the rule under review for 19 months, from December 2011 to June 2013 — a process that is supposed to take no more than four months — at which point the Transportation Department said it wanted to re-study the issue and set a new deadline of January 2015.

Last October, safety advocates sued, asking a federal court to order the issuance of a final rule within 90 days. The case is pending. In late December, the department resubmitted its rule to the White House for another round of vetting. The White House could complete its review process any day — or continue to hold up the show.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the delays have been political. Both the [Administrative Conference](#) of the United States, an independent agency that advises the federal government on regulatory issues, and [The Washington Post](#) have reported recently that many rules — on health, safety, the environment — were delayed in 2011 and 2012 in order to avoid criticism of new regulations before the November 2012 election. Republicans were set to attack any new regulations as "job killing," while the auto industry has resisted mandatory rear-view cameras in part because it makes more money selling them as options.

Some delayed rules have been issued since then, though some of them have been given effective dates beyond the 2014 mid-term elections, while others are still pending — including the rule on rear view technology.

Future and futuristic technology is all well and good. But people are being killed and injured today in accidents that today's technology could prevent, if only the political will could be found to require its use.

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