

Team Gray Progressing Toward 2007 Urban Challenge*Hosts Near-Perfect Site Visit - Expects Invitation to National Qualifying Event*

Metairie, LA – Tuesday, July 3, 2007 – Personnel from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) were present on June 26 to judge the performance of Team Gray’s entry into the 2007 Urban Challenge, a competition designed to accelerate development of autonomous vehicles for use by the military. An autonomous vehicle is neither piloted nor remotely controlled, but is provided an electronic roadmap of the relevant area and assigned a destination. From that information the autonomous vehicle calculates the best route and obeying relevant traffic regulations, travels to its destination. Should a route become blocked or unavailable, the vehicle will adjust its planned path and find another route to complete its mission.

DARPA’s evaluation of the vehicle’s behavior will determine whether or not the team will be selected to compete in the National Qualification Event (NQE) in October. The test was conducted at the Louisiana State Police Emergency Vehicle Operations Center in Zachary, Louisiana, and was filmed for the Discovery Science Channel as part of a program to be broadcast later in the year.

Team Gray’s vehicle, “Plan B” was driven by the GrayMatter AVS™, an autonomous vehicle system designed for civilian and military automotive applications. This commercially-available unit accommodates a wide variety of drive-by-wire systems and environmental sensors. For the purposes of the Site Visit, “Plan B” was equipped with vehicle actuators often used by the handicapped to facilitate operation of a motor vehicle provided by Electronic Mobility Controls, LLC located in Baton Rouge. “Plan B” mounted laser scanners mounted at each corner to see any obstacles in its path and a GPS system to monitor its position on the roadway. Thus equipped, “Plan B” was completely prepared to tackle the challenge of the Site Visit.

“Plan B” demonstrated its ability to negotiate situations representative of those that will be encountered in a final round of field testing in October. Team Gray’s vehicle was assigned four different missions, in two of which it encountered other vehicles on the course. During one run, “Plan B” was required to identify and pass a stopped vehicle in its lane. In another, human-driven vehicles were used to present a variety of situations that might be encountered at a four-way intersection. “Plan B” made all tests look simple as it obeyed normal traffic rules, transitioning smoothly from one scenario to another.

While other teams competing in the DARPA Urban Challenge use auxiliary generators or heavy-duty alternators to supply sufficient electricity to their power-hungry computers, actuators, and sensor platforms, “Plan B” completed the entire Site Visit using only 168 watts of power, roughly the power available from a normal vehicle’s cigarette lighter socket.

DARPA officials were pleased with the vehicle’s smooth and consistent driving style, a credit to the capabilities of the GrayMatter AVS™. In addition, the multiple hardware and software safety systems standard in the AVS™ greatly exceed DARPA’s expectations for its autonomous vehicle competitions. DARPA will reveal on August 9th the list of teams that successfully completed the Site Visit and will progress to the national qualifying event to be held in the “western US” in late October.

Team Gray began development of autonomous vehicles in response to the 2005 DARPA Grand Challenge. Their vehicle “KAT-5” finished fourth in a 132-mile race across the Nevada desert without any human interaction. Their cumulative success is a compelling story that points towards an expected strong showing at the Urban Challenge this fall.

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