

Truck platoon

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This morning the UK government announced they were trialling a

"truck platoon". A truck platoon is a convey of (at the moment) semi-autonomous trucks. Up to three I believe. This is the first time I've heard of this idea, as it was this week its the first time that I have heard of motorways fitted with overhead wires so that trucks with pantographs can use electricity for part of their trip. This is happening in Germany and is being trialled on some autobahns. Each truck platoon is controlled by one driver by wifi. This idea has been [trilled](#) in other parts of the world. It being sold as partly being good for the environment. But is it? Its a little known fact but trucks have appalling economy. Even diesel powered trucks cannot manage as much as 10mpg (usually about 7 in the EU and about 5 in the US). There are two possible reasons why driving in close convoys as a truck platoon might help fuel economy. The first is that they all will drive at a consistent speed. The second is that driving close to another vehicle reduces drag. Cyclists like Chris Froome utilise this effect in the Tour de France. I can see both reasons for improvements in economy as being valid. I think the effect will be marginal. However I think the real reason is to get autonomous vehicles on our roads. This will wipe out a whole sector of jobs and despite having being driven in a car with semi-autonomous cruise control I'm not sure I'm happy about driverless trucks on our roads. If you want major improvements in fuel economy then you need to look elsewhere in the trucks' design. Neil

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