

Automakers Sell Your Driving Data - The REPAIR Act Could End That

July 20, 2025 - Cars today are no longer just machines-they're surveillance hubs on wheels. They collect everything from location and speed to braking habits. Representative Neal Dunn (R-Fla.) says that data is "incredibly detailed" and automakers are selling it to insurers, brokers, and even foreign entities-often without asking drivers first

Under the current system, manufacturers tightly control who gets access to this data and diagnostic systems. That allows dealerships to effectively bull-rush independent repair shops. As a result, repair costs stay high, wait times stretch out, and consumers are nudged toward pricier dealership repairs-or even to buy new cars earlier

The REPAIR Act-introduced in February 2025 as H.R. 1566 in the House and S. 1379 in the Senate-is designed to change that. It would require manufacturers, within six months of becoming law, to supply owners and their designated repair providers with:

- All vehicle-generated data (via OBD ports, wireless, telematics).
- Critical repair information-like manuals, tools, wiring diagrams-on the same terms manufacturers grant their dealers.
- A ban on forcing car owners to pick brand-name parts or dealerships for any non-warranty work.

Supporters of the bill say it would bring real-world savings. By unlocking competition, owners could shop around for better deals-whether at a local garage or even fix their car themselves. Plus, it hands control of personal driving data back to the driver, stopping the downstream sale of that info without permission.

A bipartisan trio of senators-Elizabeth Warren, Jeff Merkley, and Josh Hawley-has slammed automakers for objecting to right-to-repair while quietly monetizing owner data. They call it "hypocritical" and "profit-driven," and point out there's no evidence that independent repair shops pose any bigger security risk than brand dealerships.

Automakers argue that opening access could expose trade secrets or pose cybersecurity risks. But advocates counter that the legislation leaves room for encryption and security measures, and federal agencies (the FTC and NHTSA) are directed to set standards and enforce protection.

If the REPAIR Act becomes law, everyday drivers could benefit like this:

- Cheaper, faster repairs: Local shops would have official access to the tools and data they need.
- Data privacy control: Your driving patterns aren't sold without your say-so.
- Freedom of choice: You pick who fixes your ride-dealer, indie, or self-with equal access.

The bottom line is simple: The REPAIR Act aims to make cars less about corporate control and more about driving freedom, financial fairness, and your privacy. And unless you're secretly moonlighting as a dealership lobbyist, it's hard not to root for that.

by Jim Malmberg

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