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Guest contributor Zack Kanter is the founder of several startups in the automotive space and blogs at ZackKanter.com

January 27, 2015 3:02 PM



An image of what a potential Uber-Google car might look like (Photo Used By Permission From Zack Kanter)

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Commentary By Zack Kanter @zackkanter, Entrepreneur and Futurist

I have spent quite a bit of time lately thinking about autonomous cars, and I wanted to summarize my current thoughts and predictions. Most people experts included - seem to think that the transition to driverless vehicles will come slowly over the coming few decades, and that large hurdles exist for widespread adoption. I believe that this is significant underestimation. Autonomous cars will be commonplace by 2025 and have a near monopoly by 2030, and the sweeping change they bring will eclipse every other innovation our society has experienced.

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They will cause unprecedented job loss and a fundamental restructuring of our economy, solve large portions of our environmental problems, prevent tens

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of thousands of deaths per year, save millions of hours with increased productivity, and create entire new industries that we cannot even imagine from our current vantage point.



The transition is already beginning to happen. Elon Musk, Tesla Motor's CEO, says that their 2015 models will be able to self-drive 90 percent of the time. 1 And the major automakers aren't far behind - according to Bloomberg News, GM's 2017 models will feature "technology that takes control of steering, acceleration and braking at highway speeds of 70 miles per hour or in stopand-go congested traffic." 2 Both Google 3 and Tesla 4 predict that fully-autonomous cars - what Musk describes as "true autonomous driving where you could literally get in the car, go to sleep and wake up at your destination" - will be available to the public by 2020.

More: PureWow's Guide To Inspiration Highway

HOW IT WILL UNFOLD

Industry experts think that consumers will be slow to purchase autonomous cars – while this may be true, it is a mistake to assume that this will impede the transition. Morgan Stanley's research shows that cars are driven just 4% of the time, 5 which is an astonishing waste considering that the average cost of car ownership is nearly \$9,000 per year.6 Next to a house, an automobile is the second most expensive asset that most people will ever buy - it is no surprise that ride sharing services like Uber and car sharing services like Zipcar are quickly gaining popularity as an alternative to car ownership. It is now more economical to use a ride sharing service if you live in a city and drive less than 10,000 miles per year. 7 The impact on private car ownership is enormous: a UC-Berkeley study showed that vehicle ownership among car sharing users was cut in half.8 The car purchasers of the future will not be you and me - cars will be purchased and operated by ride sharing and car sharing companies.

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How Uber's **Autonomous Cars Will Destroy 10 Million** Jobs Anc 0:00 hape

Autonomous cars ...

And current research confirms that we would be eager to use autonomous cars if they were available. A full 60% of US adults surveyed stated that they would ride in an autonomous car9, and nearly 32% said they would not continue to drive once an autonomous car was available instead.10 But no one is more excited than Uber - drivers take home at least 75% of every fare. 11 It came as no surprise when CEO Travis Kalanick recently stated that Uber will eventually replace all of its drivers with self-driving cars. 12

UPDATE: Uber Hires Carnegie Melon Robotic Team To Develop Cars

A Columbia University study suggested that with a fleet of just 9,000 autonomous cars, Uber could replace every taxi cab in New York City 13 - passengers would wait an average of 36 seconds for a ride that costs about \$0.50 per mile.14 Such convenience and low cost will make car ownership inconceivable, and autonomous, on-demand taxis - the 'transportation cloud' - will guickly become dominant form of transportation - displacing far more than just car ownership, it will take the majority of users away from public transportation as well. With their \$41 billion valuation, 15 replacing all 171,000 taxis 16 in the United States is well within the realm of feasibility - at a cost of \$25,000 per car, the rollout would cost a mere \$4.3 billion.

FALLOUT

The effects of the autonomous car movement will be staggering. PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts that the number of vehicles on the road will be reduced by 99%, estimating that the fleet will fall from 245 million to just 2.4 million vehicles. 17

Disruptive innovation does not take kindly to entrenched competitors - like Blockbuster, Barnes and Noble, Polaroid, and dozens more like them, it is unlikely that major automakers like General Motors, Ford, and Toyota will survive the leap. They are geared to produce millions of cars in dozens of different varieties to cater to individual taste and have far too much overhead to sustain such a dramatic decrease in sales. I think that most will be bankrupt by 2030, while startup automakers like Tesla will thrive on a smaller number of fleet sales to operators like Uber by offering standardized models with fewer options.

Ancillary industries such as the \$198 billion automobile insurance market, 18 \$98 billion automotive finance market, 19 \$100 billion parking industry, 20 and the \$300 billion automotive aftermarket21 will collapse as demand for their services evaporates. We will see the



obsolescence of rental car companies, public transportation systems, and, good riddance, parking and speeding tickets. But we will see the transformation of far more than just consumer transportation: self-driving semis, buses, earth movers, and delivery trucks will obviate the need for professional drivers and the support industries that surround them.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics lists that 884,000 people are employed in motor vehicles and parts manufacturing, and an additional 3.02 million in the dealer and maintenance network.22 Truck, bus, delivery, and taxi drivers account for nearly 6 million professional driving jobs. Virtually all of these 10 million jobs will be eliminated within 10-15 years, and this list is by no means exhaustive.

But despite the job loss and wholesale destruction of industries, eliminating the needs for car ownership will yield over \$1 trillion in additional disposable income - and that is going to usher in an era of unprecedented efficiency, innovation, and job creation.

A VIEW OF THE FUTURE

Morgan Stanley estimates that a 90% reduction in crashes would save nearly 30,000 lives and prevent 2.12 million injuries annually.23 Driverless cars do not need to park - vehicles cruising the street looking for parking spots account for an astounding 30% of city traffic,24 not to mention that eliminating curbside parking adds two extra lanes of capacity to many city streets. Traffic will become nonexistent, saving each US commuter 38 hours every year - nearly a full work week.25 As parking lots and garages, car dealerships, and bus stations become obsolete, tens of millions of square feet of available prime real estate will spur explosive metropolitan development.

The environmental impact of autonomous cars has the potential to reverse the trend of global warming and drastically reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Passenger cars, SUVs, pickup trucks, and minivans account for 17.6% of greenhouse gas emissions26 - a 90% reduction of vehicles in operation would reduce our overall emissions by 15.9%. As most autonomous cars are likely to be electric, we would virtually eliminate the 134 billion of gasoline used each year in the US alone.27 And while recycling 242 million vehicles will certainly require substantial resources, the surplus of raw materials will decrease the need for mining.

But perhaps most exciting for me are the coming inventions, discoveries, and creation of entire new industries that we cannot yet imagine.

I dream of the transportation cloud: near-instantly available, point-to-point travel. Ambulances that arrive to the scene within seconds. A vehicle-to-grid distributed power system. A merging of city and suburb as commuting becomes fast and painless. Dramatically improved mobility for the disabled. On-demand rental of nearly anything you can imagine. The end of the DMV!

It is exciting to be alive, isn't it?

This post originally appeared on my personal blog, www.ZackKanter.com Guest contributor Zack Kanter is the founder of several startups in the automotive space and blogs at ZackKanter.com. You can follow him on Twitter @zackkanter © Copyright 2015 by Zack Kanter and CBS San Francisco. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

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osk · a month ago

what about developing countries? when that ideas realized in USA ... question of the time but lack of world still have bad roads ... especially where we live in ex-USSR. those vehicles will be confused



aw · a month ago

just like google glasses. people pay thousands to get rid of their glasses and now u want them to wear one. people spend 100k to a mil on fancy cars and u think they will now like to share rides? keep dreaming.

2 ^ | V • Reply • Share



Robert Moses • a month ago

"....it will take the majority of users away from public transportation as well."

THAT is the best feature of all, because public transportation is inherently EVIL and should have been BANNED everywhere decades ago.

∧ | ∨ • Reply • Share >

JZQuant • a month ago

This is never going to happen. Autonomous Air pilots have been around for almost 100yrs(I am not kidding) now. Air travel is far more easily automatable and predictable than road travel. Air Planes have fixed routes and fixed spaces and times in air and the information is very well shared across all flight systems . In-fact a full fledged auto pilot system has been in function in all production quality planes for decades now. Yet we still have a pilot and a copilot to monitor it even today. I don't see these fancy cars becoming reality, it just sounds like a marketing gimmick at best.

2 ^ | V · Reply · Share >



MB · 2 months ago

I think the only culture I find more annoying than car culture is tech culture. I hope this article is well archived so we can look back at it in 15 years and laugh (or cry) when we've pillaged our public transportation systems and foregone good urban design in favor of this gimicky junk that we're all just gonna foot the bill for anyways when the next bubble bursts.

∧ | ∨ • Reply • Share >

Walter Jeffries • 3 months ago

I agree with a lot of these ideas BUT the article is written from the city-centric point of view which totally ignores how different life is out in the rural areas. There are still a large number of people living out in rural areas where much of the ideas in this article do not apply for cloud-cars. There is no public transportation, taxies or busses out here. Uber is non-existant out here. Nothing is 36 seconds away. We use specialized vehicles that are dedicated to our functions. The vast majority of the vehicles out in the rural areas are bought used, are old are not just for transporting people or even goods. The autonomous cars are the way of the future but adoption rates are going to be a lot slower than the writer of this article thinks.

1 A V · Reply · Share

Russ McCord Fotografie • 3 months ago

I'm thinking the author of this article lives in lala land. Just image those of us who spend our weekends back and forth to Home dept (yeah auto car stand there while I shove a bunch of 2x4s through the center consul and a couple of bags of concrete). high urban people maybe even the elderly could find uses for this as a supplemental form of transportation, but i think this article also assumes people in the future are never planning on leaving their house. Not to mention the sheer attachment we have to our cars (I will never love a women, as much as I love my Jeep).

1 ^ | V · Reply · Share >

K Ris Andersson → Russ McCord Fotografie • 2 months ago

I think the point is that places like "Home Depot" will have delivery trucks. More and more people will shed their cars and the service industry will pick up the slack. Look at it this way. How many times a year are you at home depot getting a load of lumber? If the answer is 1 or 2, then the importance of buying a big car to haul that is stupid. It makes more sense to rent the Home Depot truck at \$25 per hour than to buy the big hauling truck for \$45,000. It is basic economics. I know more and more people who have actually priced out the cost of Uber-ing where they need to go each day and compared that to what they spend on a car payment, the insurance, the gas, the interest to their financing company and just realize that they are wasting money. For me, I use Uber exclusively now unless there I have to do long-distance driving in which case I rent a car. I am saving literally thousands of dollars a month which I am putting all to my mortgage. So my 30 year mortgage will be paid off in 11 years. So that is 19 years with no mortgage payment that I can then reassign that money to other things. Changing the way you think about money and daily life is what makes people succeed rather than just be a cubicle worker for 40 years.



Bret → K Ris Andersson • a month ago

That is an excellent use of your money and I applaud you for applying it responsibly. Please enlighten me as to how you were spending thousands a month on one vehicle? Unless you were driving a \$50k car almost 20,000 miles a year with a terrible driving record, then I can't imagine how that bill could even top \$1,000.

The bottom line is that automated cars will drastically change life as we know it, but most families outside of major urban locations will still own at least one vehicle. Whether it be for lifestyle functional use, easily accessible transportation, or leisure activity the full change to automated vehicles and no car ownership at all is probably more like 30-50 years away for the full population.

richgilberto · 3 months ago

I just can't wait until I can get to my destination and tell the car to go park itself.

1 ^ V • Reply • Share >



JKO · 3 months ago

It's very optimistic, and of course, Google/Uber would LOVE to be your complete, one stop, transportation monopoly. Could this work in an urban area? Sure, but I look at my own job, where I travel from an urban area to one suburb three times a week, one rural farming community another day of the week, and another suburb far west of my city every Friday. I also have to bring a lot of different and bulky items with me to do my job, and have the ability to keep them completely secure while the vehicle is parked. I also fail to see how this works in bad weather when I want to actually take a road trip with my family up to Denver (10 hours away). It may be "safer" but it's not really better, and I don't like Uber/Google's "Ten Million Jobs out of the economy? So what?" Attitude.

2 ^ Reply • Share >

dwss5 → JKO · a month ago

JKO wrote:

"It's very optimistic, and of course, Google/Uber would LOVE to be your complete, one stop, transportation monopoly."

Not to mention Google/Uber of course using current & future technology to obtain, store and spread to its "partners" & the government the COMPLETE information about you, your family, your friends and ANYONE you have ever met or corresponded with!!

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1 ^ | V • Reply • Share >
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Dave Black • 3 months ago

This is a solely utilitarian view of the automobile and fails to see the "emotional utilities" provided by individual car ownership.

LanceSmith • 3 months ago

"A merging of city and suburb as commuting becomes fast and painless."

Uh, even more urban sprawl!

Sunsurfergal • 4 months ago

There are two different points here. One is about taking the stress of driving away from the busy driver and I agree with it. Driverless cars will prove to be a safer alternative. However, the second point is about shift in economy due to reduction in manufacturing because more people would carpool and not everyone would need an automated car. Wait-- I thought that driverless cars would make driving popular among the teens as well as the elderly (who currently rely on others to drive them around). Besides, carpooling is not going to be more or less popular because of automation--it's already an option available to us even today but people have a love affair with their own vehicles. As long as Americans long to own fancy looking cars (driverless or not)-auto manufacturers will be in business. BMW and Volvo have already created fancy looking autonomous cars. How can new money in newly gentrified cities like San Francisco give up on their obsession to own a designer self-driven auto?

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∧ | ∨ • Reply • Share >
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Vontre • 4 months ago

This article is very optimistic about the technical feasibility of fully autonomous, goanywhere cars. Google's car relies on a ton of precached data to operate and only works in a small, extremely predictable zone. Navigating a complex, 3 dimensional world is currently something only a living thing with a brain can do and replicating this in a computer system is utterly impossible with current understanding of AI and computer power. The reason you're predicting a herculanean leap in standard of living is because this is a herculanean leap in technology. Expect self-driving cars to be far more limited in versatility and mostly confined to the concrete jungle at first, the software will need to be very tightly integrated into EVERYTHING going on with the city streets to have any chance of working in the next decade.

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∧ | ∨ • Reply • Share >
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Ruby_Red • 4 months ago

So there's some fantasy in this article, or at least some excessive optimism. First, for those who don't live in urban/suburban areas, granted, this doesn't apply. For gear heads, even if much of this were to come true, there will be specialty cars that address vour interests.

But for the aging Baby Boomers, simplifying the maintenance issues around cars, and not having to drive as your focus and hand to eye coordination is a boon. If the costs of this type of transport can become so low that it is much cheaper than driving yourself, it's also a win.

However I don't see how the traffic is going to be reduced unless ride sharing is also part of the story. The only way an urban expressway is going to have less vehicles on it is if the vehicles are holding more people. Now what would be really clever is a scheduling model that lets a car pick up 5-7 people heading in the same general direction during rush hour, and then drops some of them off at a way station, where they are picked up for the final legs of their journeys. It's doable technology, is a shift in how we picture these cars - more the size of a minivan than a smart car, and more infrastructure for the transfers.

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1 ^ V • Reply • Share >
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Morte Bene · 4 months ago

Come out of your urban bubble. This will not work in spread out suburban and rural areas. Come to Dallas or Colorado Springs or Phoenix... or go to the semi-suburban more rural areas at their outskirts. Try going to Mount Airy NC, upstate Vermont, or eastern Washington. Tell us again that this will displace those vehicles. WRONG. Get out of your bubble.

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1 ^ V • Reply • Share >
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Joe · 4 months ago

Too bad they don't work in rain and snow. Or with bad roads that have no striping. Keep hyping.

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1 ^ Reply • Share
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DisquisTL • 4 months ago

It's not going to reduce the number of vehicles on the road significantly.

If people wanted to transport themselves in a way that the government could go to a single choke point and shut down their ability to travel, there's already public transit, like BART, which has had cellular services and station shutdowns already in order to shut down protests.

Predicting that autonomous vehicles belonging to Uber will reduce traffic congestion is ridiculous (and therefore, I am ridiculing the idea in this sentence).

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∧ V • Reply • Share >
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Mike · 4 months ago

I think it's a bit premature to sound dire warnings about driverless cars destroying the economy. Although I don't doubt that the general timelines indicated won't occur (driverless cars being commonplace by 2025, for example), the very same warnings have been sounded for decades with regards to automation. We did lose thousands of jobs. We had to adapt. It won't stop there. Automation will continue forever. Worrying about it is like worrying about dying. Sure.... it will happen, but worrying about it will do no good. Preparing for it... that will help. Automation will open up new frontiers in terms of careers. At this point, it would be good to start looking at ways of taking advantage of automation so that those of us at the floor of the economy (factory workers who no longer have jobs, etc) are able to make a living somehow. But in the year 2025, we will be here looking at this article in the wastebin of time and realize that things have changed... and they have stayed the same... in many ways.

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2 ^ | V • Reply • Share >
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John • 5 months ago

Cyclists can rejoice at this as well, not only will there be less chance of you being side swiped by some idiot, but if it starts raining you can order a car to come and pick you and your bike up for the trip home.

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∧ | ∨ • Reply • Share ›
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dwss5 → John • a month ago
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John wrote:"...but if it starts raining you can order a car to come and pick you and your bike up for the trip home."

That's assuming 1) that you're fortunate to be well within a major metropolitan area where Uber's autonomous cars are prevalent, and 2) that the available Uber autonomous cars even CAN easily accommodate your bike.

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1 ^ V • Reply • Share >
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dolfinack • 5 months ago

Absolute trash. This will never be allowed to happen. It simply won't be trusted.

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1 ^ V • Reply • Share >
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John → dolfinack • 5 months ago
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Nor would we ever allow private data or medical records be transmitted over the internet...

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6 ^ V · Reply · Share >
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Philip Wesley Yates → John • 4 months ago
epic win
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bpi • 5 months ago

Just make cars speed limited vis a vis GPS, to wit, if you are in a 40 MPH zone then the car will not exceed 40 MPH. Would save thousands of lives

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∧ | ∨ • Reply • Share >
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sandra schmidt → bpj • 4 months ago
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Sounds about as boring, predictable and wimpy as most "innovations" being introduced into our increasingly non-self-reliant Brave New World.

Dave Andersson • 5 months ago

And how exactly will automated cars navigate in rough off road situations and roads that are either not on google maps, or are just a dirt path in the deserts/mountains? Not all of us are perpetual city slickers who spend all our lives in the concrete jungle. Some of us like to venture out into legitimate wilderness. And half the roads in those areas aren't't officially marked on any maps. And potholes and washouts definitely aren't marked on any maps.

I'd love an electric truck or cargo van... But I wouldn't trust a car to know how to handle itself on an old mountain forest road outside the range of cell phone service.

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2 ^ Reply • Share
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sandra schmidt → Dave Andersson • 4 months ago
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There is nothing like having your hands on the wheel and your foot on the accelerator. There is nothing like the roar of a gas engine.

Cigar Smoker → sandra schmidt • 4 months ago

There is nothing like the torque of a silent electric vehicle going 0-60 in under 2 seconds. Electric cars will blow away anything gas powered.

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1 ^ V • Reply • Share >
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BigYaz8 → sandra schmidt • 4 months ago

There was nothing like sitting at the front of the wagon, holding the reins to a team of horses, either. For CENTURIES. But times change, and society adapts...and progresses.

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2 ^ | V • Reply • Share >
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Drasen • 5 months ago

Seems like small steps to innovation and the future, don't fear the change.

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1 ^ | V • Reply • Share >
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Stan • 5 months ago

Written by a non-car guy, for sure. Automobiles are more than utility to some of us; however, reduced traffic would be most welcome.

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∧ V • Reply • Share >
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MazuX • 5 months ago

Very very good laugh. Another silly boy from SV. I love driving cars, and most of people too. Cars are still there for decades, and I could see the driverless cars as the next Google Glass: something that could make a lot of money for inventors, but has no point for users. Life is not a series of figures, it's emotion, love, fear, adrenaline, feelings.

But SV silly boys only see figures and funding, and are thinking they will save the world. Very funny text, that made my day.

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3 ^ | V • Reply • Share
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Matthew Malpeli → MazuX • 4 months ago

So, you enjoy sitting in traffic stopping and starting along smog filled congested roads do you? You enjoy having to spend your commuting time concentrating on the road? You enjoy the financial burden of car ownership? Enjoy the threat of being plowed into by a drunken driver?

I imagine that manual vehicles will still be made, but for the track only. Much like how horses were relegated to recreational activities at the end of the 19th century. That actually sounds like a thrilling hobby to me. A much better one than wasting an hour of my day negotiating traffic.

Corbin • 6 months ago

One good solar flare & this will all be over.

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1 ^ V • Reply • Share >
      sandra schmidt → Corbin • 4 months ago
      ROFLMFAO. Preach it, Jay!
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Yaya DeMarco • 6 months ago

Theoretically, if one owned an autonomous car wouldn't the need for Uber decline? Just have your car come pick you up.

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∧ | ∨ • Reply • Share ›
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Matthew Malpeli → Yaya DeMarco • 4 months ago

I would imagine that companies would provide auto owners with hacks to link to a network so that they could hire it out as a taxi when they don't need the vehicle. Set vehicle to taxi, set time you want the vehicle to return and where. Viola, you're now profiting from vehicle ownership rather than paying for it.

The democratisation of economic activity is starting to gather pace. 3D printers are not far away from achieving 'direct to manufacture from design' at speed.

Daniel → Yaya DeMarco • 5 months ago

The demand for Uber's driver service would go down. The demand for Uber's autonomous vehicles would go up.

And the point of the article was that you won't have to own an autonomous car. You would just pay for an autonomous one to pick you up and drop you off somewhere for about \$0.50 a mile.

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2 ^ V · Reply · Share >
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Political_One • 6 months ago

Have they forgotten that driving is fun especially in a luxury or sports car?

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1 ^ V • Reply • Share >
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Matthew Malpeli → Political_One • 4 months ago

Driving a sports car is fun on a race track. In peak hour traffic it's a lot less so. Personally I'd rather jump into a self driver and play Playstation than deal with traffic, luxury, sports or otherwise.

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sandra schmidt → Political_One · 4 months ago
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Exactly. What fun would it be to ride in one of those limp-a-long, golf-cart, death traps?

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1 ^ V • Reply • Share >
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Anthony → Political_One • 4 months ago
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That attitude is one shared by predominantly the older generation. Younger people consistently report that if they had to choose between owning a smart phone or a car they'd choose the phone. Wrap your mind around that one as you prepare for the coming world.

sandra schmidt → Anthony • 4 months ago

A world of dependant zombies who are joined at the hip to their "smart" phones, as they become increasing detached, lacking in self-reliance and drive. Sounds grand!

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1 ^ | V • Reply • Share >
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Vontre → sandra schmidt • 4 months ago
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I detect a bitter, out of touch old person. :)

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∧ | ∨ • Reply • Share >
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sandra schmidt → Vontre • 4 months ago

Detect away. You can't deny the facts, but if it makes you feel

1 ^ | V • Reply • Share >

Daniel → Political_One • 5 months ago

Sarah Smith • 6 months ago

Who is going to be liable when these auto cars crash? Surely, not the owner, if the owner wasn't driving the vehicle at the time of the crash

∧ | ∨ • Reply • Share >

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