

# THE HANSEN REPORT ON AUTOMOTIVE ELECTRONICS

## Editorial Notes

Dear Reader,

Adam Millard-Ball, an associate professor of urban planning at UCLA, likes cities where it is safe to walk or bike and where the air quality is good. He also likes autonomous vehicles, “to the extent that they will nudge cities toward being good places for pedestrians and bicyclists.” A research article published by him way back in October 2016 has lately gotten more notice, at least among the public and city planners, if not by the automotive industry. In the paper’s abstract he writes: “I used game theory to analyze the interactions between pedestrians and autonomous vehicles, with a focus on yielding at crosswalks. Because autonomous vehicles will be risk averse, the model suggests that pedestrians will be able to behave with impunity, and autonomous vehicles may facilitate a shift toward pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods.”

“Pedestrians are much better at playing chicken than computers,” Millard-Ball told me recently. Unlike human drivers, who might be crazy, drunk or distracted, autonomous vehicles will always defer to pedestrians. In urban areas that are dense with walkers, such as Manhattan, autonomous vehicles will too frequently be slowed to a crawl or gridlocked. Pedestrians and cyclists will surely rule the streets.

Some have suggested that technology can overcome the pedestrian-AV power imbalance. One developer suggested

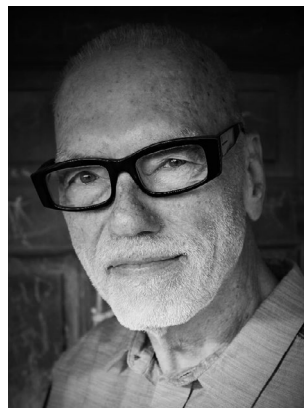
that offending pedestrians could be scared away by “safely” lurching the AV toward the offending pedestrian. That might work the first few times but pedestrians will soon learn that the threat is an idle one.

Autonomous vehicle developers will have to recalibrate the anticipated market for robotaxis. Robotaxis may be fine in the suburbs or in towns where there are few pedestrians and where they can beneficially coexist with bicycles. But they won’t be fine when they have to fight with pedestrians for the right-of-way. They will lose that fight.

Cordially,



Paul Hansen  
Editor



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