From: Manzella, Theresa
To: Callon, Katy
Subject: Fwd: HWY 93 Roundabout
Date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 6:38:57 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Laurie Case <mooseridgemt@gmail.com>
Subject: HWY 93 Roundabout
Date: April 28, 2024 at 7:59:10 AM MDT
To: Theresa.Manzella@legmt.gov

> You don't often get email from mooseridgemt@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

Theresa,

This was also posted on your committee page.

I 'm not against roundabouts but I am opposed to one on a major highway like 93. Highway 93 is the main highway between Missoula and Salmon Idaho very large trucks regularly use the highway as part of their interstate routes. Summertime brings tourists and lots of them. What happens when they come upon the roundabout and slow down or even stop. Some may have never driven on roundabouts and practicing on a major highway is not exactly ideal. I would not want to see one of the out-of-state elderly drivers driving a 40-foot RV towing a boat or another vehicle come upon that roundabout not knowing what to do. They will slow to a stop. They do this on a regular basis in all the roundabouts in Missoula. I would hate to see what will happen when they stop or slow down and get rear ended with someone behind them on the highway or get pushed into oncoming lanes.

Many of our fire departments are very concerned or opposed to it. Ever try to drive a fire truck, log truck, 18-Wheeler in a roundabout in the snow and ice? Not easy. Emergency coverage is bad enough - not blaming our great volunteer fire departments they do a great job but slowing their emergency vehicles down could mean life or death. That area also has a problem with dust when we have wind storms and smoke with zero visibility at times.

We need a traffic light with blinking warning lights ahead of the signal that the light is going to change like the rest of the intersections on 93 (Stevensville, Florence, and the rest of 93). Since most of the traffic will be going north and south when someone wants to enter from the East or West the signal can trigger to stop

the traffic going North and South.

If this is federal funding that is tied to some green initiative then use solar power for the blinking warning lights.

No Roundabout on 93!

Laurie P Case

Hamilton MT

From: Manzella, Theresa
To: Callon, Katy
Subject: Fwd: round-a-bout hearings
Date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 6:38:33 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Scott Ralston <route93tkg@outlook.com>
Subject: round-a-bout hearings
Date: May 7, 2024 at 12:47:12 AM MDT
To: "theresa@manzellaformontana.com" <theresa@manzellaformontana.com>
Cc: "bitterroot59829@yahoo.com" <bitterroot59829@yahoo.com>

Sen. Theresa Manzella,
I have attached two letters, one from myself and one from S&K Transport of Darby, MT. (Owned by Steve and Kelly Ralston)
I may be able to attend the hearing on Wednesday and would be happy to read both letters.

Thank you,
Scott Ralston
Hamilton, MT 59840

Scott Ralston CDL Instructor Hamilton, MT

Concerning the MDOT proposed round-a-bout construction project @ the intersection of HWY 93 and Bell Crossing:

I have been a Commercial Drivers' License instructor in Montana since June of 1999. I have held classes and field training in: Hamilton, Missoula, Great Falls, Kalispell, Libby, Helena and Butte. I have trained over seven hundred Montana men and women to safely drive semi-trucks and navigate intersections, round-a-bouts and turns on both rural and city highways, interstates and secondary roads.

I believe the current situation at Bell Crossing is dangerous, and I am in favor of installing a signal light rather than a round-a-bout. It is also my opinion that there should be a speed reduction to 55 mph about ½ mile to the north and to the south. At ¼ mile (both directions) the speed should be reduced to 45 mph. This would allow truck drivers to brake their truck down in increments and increase highway safety for CMVs and all other road users that includes local residents, commuters and tourists.

The problem with round-a-bouts can be summed up in one word: **bottleneck**

When you have articulated commercial vehicles such as semi-truck and trailer units sharing space and corners with other vehicles, you have some challenges that commercial drivers are professionally trained for, but many motorists don't understand *off-tracking* (the trailer takes a shorter path than the tractor). When you mix heavier and longer vehicles with all other vehicles in a bottleneck, such as a round-a-bout, it becomes a recipe for potentially hazardous events to occur.

I would like to see MDOT provide a safety/cost analysis for the intersection at Bell Crossing. Once residents have that needed information, it would be good to hold a public forum so that we can weigh in before MDOT makes a final decision.

Thank you,

Scott Ralston Owner/Director

Route 93 Trucking, Inc., Hamilton, MT

S & K Transport LLC

MC 232283 US DOT 393007
Steve Ralston
Kelly Ralston

PO Box 585 Darby, MT 59829
406-360-4638 Fax 866-557-5812

May 5, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

Kelly and I have been in the trucking business in Darby, MT since 1977. We have seen the roads improve and the traffic worsen. We would like to express our concern for a roundabout at Bell Crossing. It's a very bad idea and I believe it is being done against public sentiment. Please cancel the project or at least put it to a public vote.

Roundabouts are very expensive, especially so if done correctly. Very few are built with enough ground to allow semi trucks and trailers to navigate it while staying in their own lane. This is where I see the most accidents. Cars are not allowing for semi-trailers and horse trailers to use both lanes. They are cost prohibitive to build them as they do, to enlarge them enough to accommodate large trucks and trailers would be ridiculously expensive.

The safest intersection for all traffic at Bell Crossing would be a 45 mph zone with a flashing warning light. This allows both trucks and cars ample time to safely stop.

We should be trying to reduce distracted driving, not increase it. Have you seen the crazy signage required just to navigate a roundabout? Take the second exit when all you want to do is continue straight through the intersection?

The roundabouts are an environmental disaster. If you have a properly set up lighted intersection, half or more of all trucks and cars will continue safely through at 45mph. If you have a roundabout, 100% of ALL traffic will slow to 5 to 10 mph and have to pick backup to highway speed. The fuel required to do this is substantially more than maintaining a 45 mph cruising speed. I know that some will argue that the speed limit is actually 15 or 25 mph but I promise you a semi cannot safely go around one at that speed.

The only way to legally exit a roundabout is to use your turn signal. Very few do, and traffic cops seem to avoid these messes. I suspect if they wrote all the tickets that they should, the public would hate roundabouts even more. There must be a federal subsidy for these, other wise what would possess a public steward of our money to waste over 8 million of our tax dollars on such a debacle?

Thank You

Steve Ralston
S & K Transport LLC

From: Manzella, Theresa
To: Callon, Katy
Subject: Fwd: Victor round about
Date: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 6:38:46 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Dick Riedman <dpriedman@aol.com>
Subject: Victor round about
Date: April 30, 2024 at 8:02:07 AM MDT
To: theresa@manzellaformontana.com

Thank you for taking time to come out last Friday to talk with KPAX.
I understand that there have been accidents but the round about is not the answer.
I am a survivor of of accident in which my Mom was killed so I truly understand the devastation that us felt by family members
If drivers took driving seriously stayed off their cell phones, obeyed the speed limits and used common sense more accidents everywhere could be avoided
I have to say that the police could do more to enforce the law. They pull people over for no front license plates but allow drivers to speed and use their cell phones what's wrong with this picture
Drivers get mad at me when I go 45 and pass me while on their phones.
I am an older driver and the round abouts can get confusing. Drivers get annoyed and tailgate through the round abouts
Putting a stop light at the intersection would also help on foggy mornings being able to pull out onto 93
I truly believe the round about will increase traffic on local roads that aren't built for traffic other than local residents. That would be more expenses incurred that we can't afford.
Phyllis Riedman

Thank you for listening

Sent from my iPhone

MtDOT May 7th, 2024
Public Comment: Bells Crossing Hwy 93

As a School Bus driver in Ravalli County who traverses the valley four times a day from Florence via Hwy 93 and the Eastside Highway to Victor via Hwy 93, I have grave concerns for the proposed roundabout at Bells Crossing.

This intersection is in desperate need of traffic control. To rely on the accident reports from this crossroads is insufficient to calculate the hazards experienced on a daily basis by drivers that are required to use this intersection.

When one takes into consideration the variety of vehicles that travel this road from MANY semi-trucks, utility vehicles including REC vehicles pulling trailers with 60 Foot long utility poles and the “swing” of those loads while navigating turns, to the summertime frequent big motorcoaches pulling a trailer loaded with UTVs with a boat trailer behind, a roundabout seems the least logical solution to this problem if the true goal is to first, reduce accidents and second, to maintain traffic flow.

I have no knowledge of another roundabout in existence on any FIVE-LANE highway in Montana. I see no need for the Bitterroot valley to be the first.

I respectfully request that the roundabout concept for Bells crossing be abandoned and the focus be turned to the proven solution of a traffic light. Traffic lights have provided for SAFE intersection control for the 90 miles of Hwy 93 that provides connectivity and commerce for residents of the Bitterroot valley for many years. There is no advantage to breaking from the norm by installing an experimental roundabout at Bells Crossing.

Respectfully,

Doug Bohn
P.O. Box 815
Victor, MT 59875 406-3569-5592

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 4:08 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 29th April 2024 16:07

First Name:
Marie

Last Name:
Lanier

Email Address:
rierielanier@gmail.com

Subject:
Bell Crossing roundabout

Comment:
I live in Corvallis and use Bell Crossing often. I am against a roundabout. I believe it is an unnecessary expense as the Bell Crossing does not have significantly more accidents than many other intersections in western Montana. There are many simpler and less expensive ways to improve the efficiency and safety of that intersection.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 1:46 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 29th April 2024 13:45

First Name:
Kim

Last Name:
Beck

Email Address:
kbeck@si406.com

Subject:
Bell Crossing Roundabout

Comment:
I live off of Pine Hollow Rd and drive Bell Crossing to 93 every day as I work in Hamilton. I believe a roundabout at Bell Crossing/Hwy 93 would be a mistake and more dangerous then the current state of that intersection. A large number of people do not know how to navigate a roundabout. A roundabout on a off street that has speeds less than 50 mph makes sense. A roundabout on the a main artillery hwy with speed limits of 70 mph does not. I think it would be more cost effective and safe to add merging lanes for those of us that have to enter onto Highway 93. Reduce the speed and give us the space needed to merge into traffic. It is nearly impossible to judge which lane on coming traffic is in. This makes it extremely dangerous. If you are overly cautious entering 93 and wait until you are absolutely certain it is clear, vehicles behind you get impatient and usually go with you with out stopping at the stop sign. I have witnessed multiple near accidents with this exact scenario. Reducing the speed and providing adequate lanes would do the trick and save a ton of money that needs to be used elsewhere.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Sunday, April 28, 2024 7:53 AM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 28th April 2024 07:53

First Name:
Laurie

Last Name:
Paniccia Case

Email Address:
mooseridgmt@gmail.com

Subject:
HWY 93 Roundabout

Comment:
I ‘m not against roundabouts in but I am opposed to one on a major highway like 93. Highway 93 is the main highway between Missoula and Salmon ID very large trucks regularly use the highway as part of their interstate routes. Summertime brings tourists and lots of them. What happens when they come upon the roundabout and slowdown or even stop. Some may have never driven on roundabouts and practicing on a major highway is not exactly ideal. I would not want to see one of the out-of-state elderly drivers driving a 40-foot RV towing a boat or another vehicle come upon that roundabout not knowing what to do. They will slow to a stop. They do this on a regular basis in all the roundabouts in Missoula. I would hate to see what will happen when they stop or slow down and get rear ended with someone behind them on the highway or get pushed into oncoming lanes. Many of our fire departments are very concerned or opposed to it. Ever try to drive a fire truck, log truck, 18-Wheeler in a roundabout in the snow and ice? Not easy. Emergency coverage is bad enough - not blaming our great volunteer fire departments they do a great job but slowing their emergency vehicles down could mean life or death. That area also has a problem with dust when we have wind storms and smoke with zero visibility at times. We need a traffic light with blinking warning lights ahead of the signal that the light is going to change like the rest of the intersections on 93 (Stevensville, Florence, and the rest of 93). Since most of the traffic will be going north and south when someone wants to enter from the East or West the signal can trigger to stop the traffic going North and South. If this is federal funding that is tied to some green initiative then use solar power for the blinking warning lights. No Roundabout on 93! Laurie P Case Hamilton MT

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Friday, April 26, 2024 1:18 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 26th April 2024 13:17

First Name:
Moriah

Last Name:
cochran

Email Address:
moriah.cochran@yahoo.com

Subject:
Opposed -roundabout Bell crossing/Hwy 93

Comment:
I want to voice my concerns about a roundabout being placed near Victor Mt at the Highway 93/Bell Crossing intersection. This is a dangerous intersection, many accidents occur here yearly. A traffic light would be a quick, and affordable solution to this problem. But the transportation department decided a roundabout would be better. This is a terrible idea for many reasons. The cost would be very expensive. I didn't realize the road department had unlimited funding. A roundabout is a huge concrete structure. This is a beautiful part of our valley, a giant roundabout would be an eyesore and eat up a lot of the neighboring property. There are a lot of agriculture vehicles, semi-trucks, campers, large vehicles that go through this intersection. A roundabout is not easy or safe for them or other vehicles in the intersection. We need this area fixed immediately, a traffic light could easily be installed at a fraction of the cost and it would not destroy the neighboring property or be an eyesore. Please spend our tax money wisely.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Thursday, April 25, 2024 1:46 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 25th April 2024 13:46

First Name:
Joe

Last Name:
Mackey

Email Address:
jrmackey71@gmail.com

Subject:
93 and Bell crossing intersection

Comment:
I do not want a roundabout built at the 93 and bell crossing intersection. I watched multiple roundabouts get built in Summit County, CO. It caused endless accidents, worse traffic and continuous road construction. If this intersection is so prone to accidents; then I propose installing another traffic light or lowering the speed limit in that area.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Wednesday, April 24, 2024 9:58 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 24th April 2024 21:58

First Name:
Helen

Last Name:
Wolff

Email Address:
helemae1@aol.com

Subject:
PLANS FOR ROUND-A-BOUT TO BE BUILT AT HWY.93 AND BELL CROSSING

Comment:
I LIVE ON GRACE lN. IN STEVENSVILLE. GRACE LN. IS 1/4 MILE FROM THE BELL CROSSING INTERSECTION. WHEN I LEAVE MY HOUSE EVERYDAY, I HAVE TO TURN LEFT OR RIGHT ON HWY. 93. SOMETIMES, I HAVE TO SIT AND WAIT FOR SOME TIME, BEFORE I CAN PULL OUT ONTO 93. DUE TO TRAFFIC. IF THIS ROUND ABOUT IS BUILT, THEY NEED TO FIGURE OUT THE IMPACT IT WILL HAVE ON THOSE OF US WHO LIVE IN THE CLOSE PROXIMITY TO IT. BECAUSE WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO LEAVE OUR HOMES. IF ITS DIFFICULT NOW, IT WILL ONLY GET WORSE WHEN CARS HAVE TO SLOW DOWN TO PREPARE FOR THE UPCOMING ROUND-A-BOUT. IT WOULD BE SO BAD FOR US, THAT WE WON'T EVEN BE ABLE TO GET ONTO THE HWY. PLEASE CONSIDER THIS. IF YOU THINK IT WILL PREVENT ACCIDENTS AT THE INTERSECTION, THINK AGAIN, BECAUSE IT WILL ONLY CAUSE MORE ACCIDENTS BY GRACE LN. AND OTHER STREETS.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2024 8:41 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 11th April 2024 20:40

First Name:
Helen

Last Name:
Sabin

Email Address:
hsabin1@gmail.com

Subject:
roundabout on Hwy 93 at Bell Crossing

Comment:
This is one of the worst ideas ever presented to this valley and its residents. I have had at least 300 calls from citizens who are just now learning about this nonsensical idea and they are all complaining about the waste of money on this project when roads in the Bitterroot Valley are in sad repair and need attention! I don't know where you all are on this idea but here in the Bitterroot folks are angry at this waste of money for this purpose. Please re-assign that money to fixing the roads in the valley. If that is a "traffic hazard" area, put up flashing signs on all four corners or a stop light. That would probably cost less and be more effective. Please let me know your thinking so I can include it in a newsletter that goes out to about ten thousand in the Bitterroot valley. Thanks

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

Montana Legislative Interim Transportation Committee Meeting, May 8, 2024

U.S. 93 Bell Crossing Roundabout Project Discussion

Public Comment:

Jean Belangie-Nye, president of the Bitterroot Trail Preservation Alliance
321 O'Connell Drive, Lolo, Montana 59847 (406) 370-1783

A roundabout at Bell Crossing, the main reason that I am here! Back in the 90's, I was a chair of several Highway 93 Focus Groups and a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Highway 93. I am a fifth generation Bitterrooter, who has been driving Highway 93 South for the last 61 years. At this point, I am neither for nor against the roundabout. It will depend on design and future growth predictions in the area.

I would request that the Montana Department of Transportation do the following:

- Hold public meetings for stake holders and the public. Stakeholders should include neighbors to the roundabout, truckers, the schools and bus drivers, pathway users, and wildlife experts.
- Keep an up to date and accessible website with pertinent information including meeting times and contacts
- Advertise all meetings on the radio and t.v. stations in the Valley
- Provide models of the proposed roundabout with eventually one that folks might drive on
- One major consideration should be the ability to propose as part of the design a lower speed limit for entering and exiting the roundabout. Other states have multiple speed limits depending on the use and design of the highway. Montana has 3
- Caution flashing lights as part of the signage for an up-coming roundabout
- Additional Highway patrols for Montana Highways!

Montana & Autonomous Vehicles – Panel & Legislative Framework Review – Public Comment:

Jean Belangie-Nye, private citizen

At this point in the development of autonomous vehicles, I am seriously concerned about the vehicles operating of the roads of Montana. A member of my extended family was recently involved in a crash with a heavy load of rock on his flatbed semi that he was driving. Fortunately, the cab video recorded his speed level which was appropriate when he hit the black ice on a notorious curve north of Lolo on Highway 93 South. Traffic was basically backed up for the 2 south bound lanes for 10 hours.

My concerns are as follows:

- How fine-tuned are the vehicles for differentiating rapidly changing weather conditions?
- Can they differentiate between animals and humans on the highway?
- Will they avoid hitting both animals and humans?

- Cell coverage is limited in Montana. Satellite connection is even more limited, What or who controls the vehicles inboard map?
- Autonomous and electric vehicles run silent, and as a result give no warning to users on the road before the vehicle.
- What is the liability protection when the vehicle is involved in a crash?

MDT Bicycling the Big Sky Map

Public Comment:

Jean Belangie-Nye, president of the Bitterroot Trail Preservation Alliance

Fantastic! A much needed product and compliments the Bitterroot Trail Bollard Project. A few recommended changes.

- I have been dealing with bicycle issues since the early 90's and mopeds have never even been mentioned! On the other hand, there is a constant discussion regarding e-bikes. Mopeds on the other hand have 2 definitions one that refers a low powered electic or fuel driven 2 or 3 wheeled vehicle, The other also defines an e-bike that can go no faster than 30 miles per hour, I think definitions must be specific to the law. In short there is no definition of moped in the law. I would have no problem with a moped in the bike lane in heavy traffic areas, but not on pathways or sidewalks.
- The map does not designate the trail systems such as the 54 mile Bitterroot Trail System. They reduce deadly and expensive crashes!
- On the stay Visible section – Don't be invisible ~ Ditch the Black or Dark colors from dusk to dawn!

General Public Comment:

Once again the discussion came up with my optometrist regarding LED lights on cars and night driving; seems that it is one of the major complaints of her patients.

In short, is there any way that LED headlights can be aimed so the light from the headlights do not hit the driver's face in an on-coming car? The major offenders are pick-up trucks and large SUV's, although there are some brands and models of regular cars that are also offender.

Thank you,

Jean Belangie-Nye

Public Comment

There is a new vehicle in Missoula,

An electric car for old people commercial passenger car mini electric car.

Changli made in Jiangsu, China seats 1, top speed 20 miles per hour. Sells for $1,780. Seats 1 with a 3 point seat belt. This vehicle did not have a bill of sale or license on it. Who knows if they have VIN numbers. It sells on AliBaba.

It was driving and just barely fits in the 4'6" bike lane on a very busy 39th Street. The driver must assume that it is allowed to function as a bike, since she pulled in front of a friend of mine who was getting ready to make a right on green, even though in that situation a cyclist would have yielded to the car. Fortunately, his passenger saw the car.There are cyclists in Missoula that feel that they have right-of-way at all times until they receive a ticket.

I would like to include pictures but my iphone refuses to talk to my computer.

Jean Belangie-Nye

TIC Meeting Public Comment on Passenger Rail (8 May, 2024)

Dear TIC Members,

My name is Nicholas Lauer and I work for the German Federal Railway (Deutsche Bahn [DB]) as a railway infrastructure planner. I grew up in New Hampshire and have therefore been a customer of Amtrak for much of my life despite now living abroad. This has allowed me the opportunity to compare our railway system in the US with the one in Germany and Europe as a whole. While at first glance, it may appear that these two systems do not have much in common, Amtrak is actually well structured by international standards which means that many of the lessons I've learned over here can apply to what Montana would like to do. **If the question is 'can passenger trains also work for Montana?' I believe the answer to be yes. In the next section are some reasons why and some of the things that Germany does when serving more rural areas.**

I also believe that it is in the best interests of Montana's government to support passenger rail in the state, even if only on a bureaucratic level. That said, I believe that there is also a case for financial support, but that is for committee members to decide after reading what is presented below. All opinions in this public comment are my own and do not reflect the positions of my employer. In writing this comment I am speaking of my own accord in an unofficial capacity. This comment is already rather lengthy, so I have left out any photos, they are available on request.

Rail in Germany

Railway transportation has a massive impact on the daily lives of millions in Germany. But **it isn't just the large population centers which have easier access to transportation** and therefore economic opportunity. What sets the German railway system apart from others around the world and even in Europe is the concept of a *regional* network. When most people think of trains in Europe, they picture sleek high speed trains whisking passengers between major cities and population centers. A good example of this type of network is the French rail system, which has primarily high speed lines radiating from Paris. Germany does still have an extensive network of this type, albeit a bit different than its neighbors. And in the US, although slower than in Europe, this type of service is what Amtrak operates in the Northeast and on some long/middle distance routes. By contrast, **the German regional network is served by regional services which mainly connect small towns and midsize cities within a region or state.** Regional services, perhaps better translated as local services, are how the majority of Germans travel by rail. It is important to realize that while German cities are incredibly dense, this density prevents urban sprawl and leaves large parts of Germany filled with self contained villages separated by farmland. **While railway services between cities are great for many, it is the regional services that have the greatest impact for a place like rural Germany or Montana.** And it is these local services and a focus on smaller places which have allowed Germany to maintain a strong railway network which serves almost every village and town. As a German resident, I can use these services on an unlimited basis for 49 euros per month. That cost cannot be beat. **In short, Germany has many rural towns and the government has made an active decision to invest in their continued success through better railway service.**

I also need to make a clear distinction about how railways in Germany and much of the world operate. While most freight operators and many passenger operators are private companies,

the infrastructure is largely owned by the government through DB InfraGo. This system is similar in funding and structure to how the US Interstate system operates, where carriers and individuals travel on roads funded and owned by states/federal govt. In the German case, the German govt through DB is also a major operator of long distance, regional, and freight rail services. This setup, although not perfect, allows freight and passenger services to coexist without a reduction in service quality for DB or private freight services. I mention this to prove the point that **freight and passenger services are not diametrically opposed, rather they can function together under the correct conditions.**

I also want to lay out some of the things which Germany does well which may be options for Montana in the future (even if they are not directly applicable right now). There are also a few things mentioned to avoid:

- **Some long distance train services do service smaller towns in between big cities**. Deutsche Bahn purchased lower cost to operate multiple units (IC2 Trainsets) which have a lower capacity than their normal long distance trains and the company has been running them to communities which serve as countywide hubs between major cities. The strategy is usually to pick a well connected large town and route these special intercity lines over them between big cities. These towns act as collector hubs for areas underserved by normal intercity services. These lines are faster than regional services but also stop at less places.
- **There are several tiers of regional service.** Germany runs different types of local train service.
    - RB trains make every possible stop on a given route no matter the town size.
    - RE will often run on the same route as an express, usually cutting the smallest stops but still stopping more than the aforementioned special long distance trains.
    - S-Bahn service has increased in many areas and functions like American commuter rail, except that the trains often continue through major cities as opposed to stopping and going back the same way. This allows greater equipment utilization.
    - These categories are of course not strict and there is variation. Some services run for very long distances if a given region is larger. Others are short and serve only a handful of stops on a branch line in order to better feed the mainline.
- **Frequency**. It may not be an option in the beginning, but more frequent service expands the opportunities which people have. They also learn to rely on it, just as they would a personal vehicle.
- **Germany got rid of overnight trains, do not do that.** Germany cut overnight services to save costs (despite demand) and unfortunately this has reduced options for many people, especially students and those with lower incomes. There are people for whom overnight trains make a lot of sense, especially in rural communities where it takes a long time to get anywhere. Proving my point about demand, the Austrians run an overnight service called Nightjet which has been immensely popular.
- **Stations are incredibly important and should be central to any planned service.** In Germany, station quality varies widely. The best stations here and in the US are

destinations in their own right. They are community hubs which may contain local small businesses and often are a part of the community. The worst stations are poorly maintained, dirty, and places of last resort which drive away customers who have other options. Make sure that the station buildings are well maintained, centrally located, and have some sort of small business. Being able to bike to them is also critical, as most people arriving in a small town will not have access to a car. **There should be options for people to live near the stations, but also to work near them. A well utilized station can drive revitalization of an entire neighborhood and in turn that neighborhood can be well planned to drive usage of the station!**

Benefits of Rail Service for Small Towns

Jobs

For my job I commute 40 minutes between two midsize cities one to three days per week. With the car, the same trip would take me over an hour and parking is extremely limited at the office. During my commute I am able to take back the time and use it for reading, personal projects, and general relaxation. **Without the railway connection I would not have been able to take this job.**

But why serve small towns when most people live in big cities? **One of the biggest factors in determining if someone stays in a small town is access to work.** Here, transportation plays a major role. If someone wants to stay in the small town where they grew up, but there aren't enough jobs, they'll likely leave. This fact is aggravated when no alternatives to driving exist causing traffic, increased travel times, higher costs, and wasted time. Having a railway connection ensures that **workers can travel without fear of traffic, often faster, without the increased wear/costs from their personal vehicle, and they can use the time onboard for relaxation or more work!**

And it isn't just commuting to larger job centers which the railway enables. In Germany, many smaller towns have industrial districts located nearby to the railway station or with their own smaller station. This has allowed new factories to be opened further away from major cities, because workers are still easily able to get there by train. That's one reason why smaller German cities have been able to stave off the complete loss of manufacturing jobs, in addition to creating new opportunities where none existed before. **It allows locals to stay and new workers to commute.**

It is also worth mentioning that labor costs from employees of any railway service are not simply sunk costs. They will be paid in Montana and keep their spending power in Montana.

Economy

Beyond jobs and employment, railway transportation has a further impact on the economy at large. In my region of Germany (near Heidelberg), many small towns located in the mountains and national parks have regular train service. **This allows local tourists to visit these towns'**

businesses, to hike, and to spend their money there all without overloading the towns roads/resources.

All of this **increases tax revenue without significant expenditures on infrastructure like road widenings and parking.** One estimate from the State of Maine calculated that an **investment of 8-10 million usd per year for operating the Downeaster would generate 76 million usd** in increased tax revenue over a 10 year period. Almost **18,000 jobs would be created. Households would save $244 million every year** by using the benefits of transit oriented development (rather than purchasing multiple cars) and **visitors and residents would generate an additional $2.4 billion a year in purchasing power.** And this is just one small example from a state much smaller than Montana.

Rail service can increase exponentially with minimal changes to the existing infrastructure. This is because most increases in capacity result from In Germany, like in the US, we have a vast wealth of existing infrastructure from various periods within our history. This infrastructure is in varying states of usage and repair. How well it is maintained drives to what extent it is utilized which in turn determines how it benefits the economy as a whole. **Much of our railway infrastructure in the US is dormant but can be reactivated to drive economic growth without massive new spending projects.** This does of course have a cost but it is small compared to what the US currently spends on road infrastructure.

<u>Quality of Life</u>
This is a topic with which I have significant personal experience. The first time I visited Germany, I was shocked at the level and quality of the service to small towns and villages. In most of these places, everything within the town is a short walk from the main station. Hourly service at a minimum meant that I didn't need to consult a schedule every time I wanted to visit a neighboring town. Before long I was using the train for shopping trips, visiting new restaurants, and meeting up with friends! Growing up in the US, while I was fortunate to have access to regular train service to Boston, I still felt trapped in my small town if I wanted to go anywhere else. Until I got my driver's license, I was stuck at home unless my parents drove me. **Rail service allows everyone, even those who can't or don't drive to have the same quality of life as those who do. No one benefits more from public transit than the disabled!**

Along similar lines I am of the opinion that just because someone is too old to drive safely does not mean that they should be trapped in their house. **The elderly in Germany are often fully functioning members of society who can use railway transportation to continue traveling despite reduced physical faculties.** My wife's grandparents are over 90 and both travel on holiday and around the local area by train.

Another great advantage is that people can visit bars or pubs, drink an amount which is neither safe nor prudent, and return home without ever touching a car. Having a convenient rail service reduces drunk driving in Germany and increases the amount of different drinking establishments that one can visit.

Since I have lived here, rail access has also reduced my stress. **When I lived in the US, I would commute by car and my time was wasted. Now I read a book, listen to podcasts, or get extra work done all while on my way to work.**

Environment

While not as serious a concern in the US, the environment is still important. If the committee is not concerned with CO2 emissions, they should be concerned with exhaust particle emissions from cars which are known to cause cancer, asthma, and related heart/respiratory failure. More trains means reduced particle emissions (Tier 4 Emissions or Electrified), less CO2 emissions, and protection of the land. In Germany, trains coexist with the land. Oftentimes they can be routed closer to where people live as opposed to major roads which are much louder and polluting over a sustained period. They also do not need to be widened beyond two tracks in most situations and therefore take up less land. Increasing capacity only requires changes to the timetable and more rolling stock. **A major reason why the German government continues to invest in rail is that passenger numbers can increase or decrease on a route while keeping emissions steady.** This is in stark opposition to vehicle travel, where each additional car is an additional engine running.

A brief note about electrification: while not always possible, electrification holds a variety of benefits. Vehicles utilizing overhead catenary power tend to have greater start/stop capabilities, in addition to no local particle emissions. In the long run, they also tend to be lower cost to operate although a variety of factors exist here. **Montana was once a leader in railway electrification, with the Milwaukee road having electrified steep sections of their ROW through Montana and Idaho.** While battery and hydrogen electrification does exist, the technology is not quite ready for mainline operations. In the beginning, it is probably best to use whatever rolling stock is available.

Labor Costs

If the bus is considered as a serious competitor, then labor costs must also be taken into account. The average bus can fit between 30-60 passengers and requires one driver. If service is popular and needs to be expanded, that means purchasing a new vehicle and hiring new drivers for each expansion. With a train, each vehicle also has one driver, but **the addition of capacity is (in theory) often as simple as adding coaches or multiple unit trains together if the rolling stock is already on hand.** Not to mention that space on a single railcar is closer to 70-100 or more!

Infrastructure costs

Finally is a section where I am most familiar with. Infrastructure is what stops many rail projects from becoming a reality sooner. In Germany, as in the US, infrastructure is in varying states of repair. To start a new service requires all stakeholders to agree on: **who will pay, where exactly the service will run, construction of vehicle layover facilities, station and platform upgrades, signaling upgrades, railway crossing upgrades, signal boxes, and more.** This is one of the tasks that I assist with in my department. In Germany, most funding comes from the federal government, state governments, and regional administrations like counties. Towns often beautify station grounds and cover local transportation infrastructure, such as buses and bikes.

But I ask that when considering infrastructure costs that they not be taken as a loss. Considering everything that I have mentioned, investment in infrastructure is what allows others to profit. **The cost is paid with our taxes, sure, but the profit is in increased business activity statewide, increased employment and pay in rural communities, easier access to remote places, reduced road and vehicle infrastructure costs, and increased tax revenue for the state. This is why Germany invests so heavily in its railway system. It is not a socialist country, it is a capitalist one which sees a very real return on investment from having a strong railway network serving passengers and industry alike!** And if this is not enough to convince you, take a look at the state of Maine. Since launching the Downeaster service with Amtrak in 2001 **the state has seen increased tax revenue in the millions** (see previous section on economy). The service has been so popular that they keep expanding it and are looking to add new branch line routes to feed it.

The state of Montana is beautiful and I absolutely understand why anyone would want to keep it this way. And yes, people are moving to the state for exactly this reason. But my question to you is how do you want Montana to grow? Should it grow like California has grown? Ignoring the benefits of rail service to small towns and building massive freeways to connect everything? Or should it grow in a more sustainable way which also benefits current residents? **Keep Montana beautiful and expand transportation options to rural communities in the same way which we have done in Germany!**

If any member of the board wished to follow-up directly, please contact me via the email below!

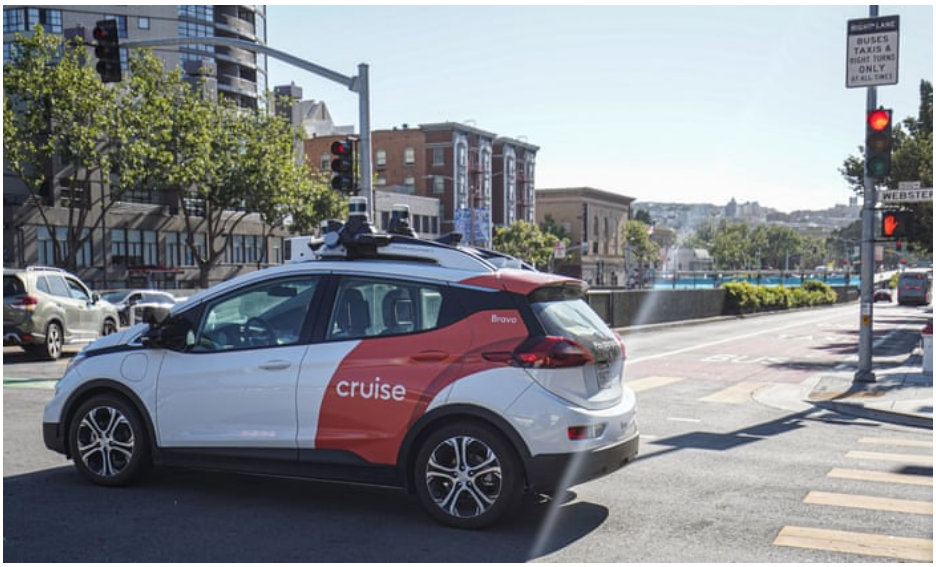
Respectfully,

Nicholas Lauer
Heidelberg, Germany
NLNICK36@GMAIL.COM

Robotaxi breakdowns cause mayhem in San Francisco days after expansion vote

theguardian.com/us-news/2023/aug/14/san-francisco-robotaxi-waymo-cruise-breakdown

Kari Paul August 14, 2023



This article is more than **2 months old**

After months of debate, the California Public Utilities Commission voted on Thursday to approve an expansion that allows vehicles on the streets at all hours of the day. This weekend, as videos of robotaxi malfunctions began appearing on social media, opponents say they are seeing their fears realized.

On Friday, amid increased traffic from the Outside Lands music festival, a number of self-driving cars seemed to glitch. One TikTok user recorded a Cruise vehicle causing "mayhem" outside of the festival where it was stuck at an angle in the middle of the street. "They're causing mad confusion over here," the user said. A Twitter user shared a video of a Cruise vehicle nearly running over a family on a crosswalk over the weekend. In San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood, as many as 10 Cruise cars blocked a main thoroughfare, stoking anger from locals.

Aaron Peskin, who represents the neighborhood on the San Francisco board of supervisors said he received a number of complaints from his constituents that night. He said on Twitter that the snafu underscored the concerns he and others raised ahead of the CPUC vote.

"Why do state commissioners think it's OK to put people in danger + create traffic chaos on our neighborhoods streets?" he wrote. "We warned them + they refused to listen."

In a tweet, Cruise said that the music festival caused issues with the cellphone networks the vehicles rely on for connectivity, and that it is “actively investigating and working on solutions to prevent this from happening again”. Critics pointed out that the 10-car traffic jam occurred several miles from the concert.

While the companies got the green light on Thursday to expand operations, it is unclear if they have already deployed more cars on the roads. Previously, cars were limited to driving at night and, under beta testing programs, were not charging passengers for rides.

Cruise did not respond to a request for comment on whether it has increased its ridership since Thursday. A spokesperson from Waymo, the Google-owned firm that has also been testing self-drivng vehicles in San Francisco, said the company is taking an “incremental approach” to expanding its fleet in the city, but did not clarify whether it has already added more cars to the road following the vote.

A representative from Safe Street Rebel, the anti-car activist group that has been disabling autonomous vehicles with traffic cones, said incidents like this are poised to increase. The group has started collecting reports of malfunctioning, crashing, or dangerous self-driving cars on its website.

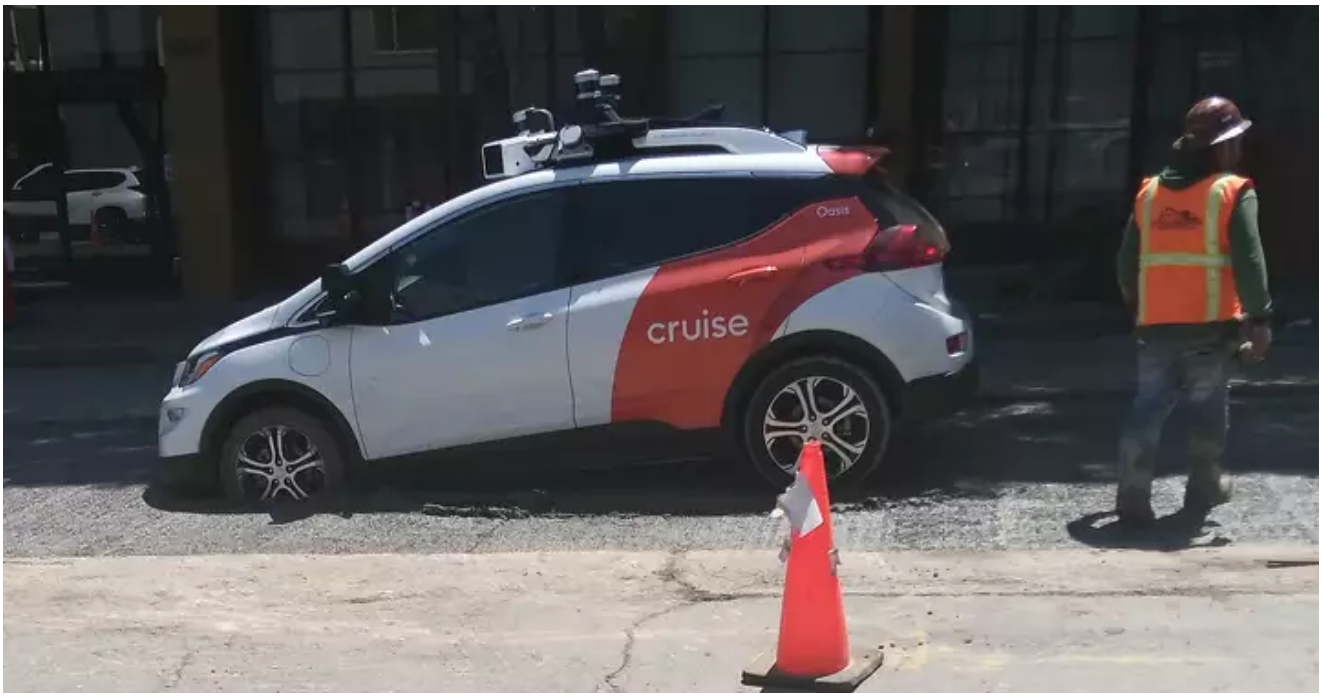
“Given the amount of problems on the street already caused by robot cars, we have a hunch things will not go as smoothly as GM and Google hope,” they said. “The only path forward to healthier, safer, more sustainable cities is taking cars off the street, not adding new ones. And of course, more cones.”

Explore more on these topics

Cruise gets stuck in wet concrete driving in San Francisco

SFG sfgate.com/tech/article/cruise-stuck-wet-concrete-sf-18297946.php

Joshua Bote August 16, 2023



A Cruise got stuck in wet concrete on Golden Gate Avenue Tuesday, Aug. 15, 2023.
Courtesy of Paul Harvey

A Cruise vehicle got stuck in wet concrete driving around San Francisco's Western Addition Tuesday afternoon.

Paul Harvey, a San Francisco resident who lives in the area, told SFGATE in an interview that he saw the car stuck at a construction site on Golden Gate Avenue between Fillmore and Steiner Streets. The car had no passengers inside.

"I can see five different scenarios where bad things happen and this is one of them," Harvey told SFGATE. "It thinks it's a road and it ain't because it ain't got a brain and it can't tell that it's freshly poured concrete."

He later saw people pulling the vehicle out and onto the road. A Cruise spokesperson confirmed to SFGATE that Cruise workers removed the vehicle from the concrete, and the vehicle has since been recovered by the company.

Though he's a skeptic of driverless cars, Harvey acknowledged one of the key marketing points brought up by Cruise and Waymo in the days leading up to the vote: Human drivers are prone to making errors.

“When a light turns green at a traffic light, I just don’t jump on the accelerator,” he said. “I look left and right for some idiot who’s gonna run the light. It does happen.”

But he’s still skeptical of the autonomous vehicles, which he described as “creepy.”

The company’s vehicles were hit hard by an onslaught of Outside Lands attendees last weekend; in North Beach, a slew of vehicles were unable to be re-routed because of “wireless connectivity issues,” while a viral TikTok clip showed a Cruise vehicle stuck on a key intersection just outside of Golden Gate Park.

Last Thursday, the California Public Utilities Commission voted 3-1 to expand Cruise and Waymo’s services in San Francisco. A spokesperson for Waymo told SFGATE that it has 100,000 people on its waitlist for San Francisco service and will let them access the service in coming weeks.

Aug 15, 2023

By Joshua Bote

Joshua Bote is the tech editor at SFGATE. He grew up in the Los Angeles area, went to UC Berkeley and has previously worked as a news reporter at USA Today and SFGATE and as a music writer at NPR. **Email: joshua.bote@sfgate.com** and **Signal: 707-742-3756**

2 robotaxi crashes in San Francisco put focus on autonomous vehicle safety

cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/robotaxi-crashes-san-francisco-focus-autonomous-vehicle-safety

Da Lin

San Francisco & Peninsula News

SAN FRANCISCO -- Calls to slow the expansion of robotaxi service grew louder following two overnight crashes in San Francisco. Both involved Cruise driverless cars and one of them collided with a fire engine responding to an emergency.

San Francisco police said that crash happened at around 10:20 pm Thursday night at the intersection of Polk and Turk Streets in the Tenderloin District. Officers said a San Francisco fire truck responding to an emergency collided with the Cruise autonomous cab. There were no injuries to the firefighters but paramedics transported a passenger in the cab to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. Investigators said that, even though the driverless taxi had the green light, it was supposed to yield to an emergency vehicle.

A Cruise driverless taxi collided with a San Francisco Fire Department engine. KPIX

"The fire engine was operating in Code 3 emergency mode, with lights and sirens. It's really a reminder to everyone you are required to yield whether it's a vehicle driven by a human operator or an autonomous vehicle," said SFPD spokesperson Sgt. Kathryn Winters.

It was unclear why the self-driving car did not yield. Cruise said in a statement it's investigating to better understand the problem.

About two hours later, another Cruise driverless car was struck by Dodge Charger in the Mission District.

Surveillance video obtained by KPIX shows the crash happened at 12:19 a.m. Friday at the intersection of Mission and 26th streets.

San Francisco police said the robotaxi entered the intersection on a green light when the Charger plowed into it.

A Cruise spokesperson said the driverless car detected the Charger before the impact and braked in the intersection.

The crash was so loud Harry Porras heard it from his apartment a block away.

"The Dodge was completely totaled. I mean it was just wiped. There was fluid leaking everywhere. Airbags were all deployed. It seems scary. Fortunately, the (driver) was OK and no injuries," Porras said.

San Franisco police do not believe drugs or alcohol played a role.

"The human-operated vehicle had likely run a red light, resulting in the collision. So, in this case, the autonomous vehicle did not appear to be at fault for the collision," Sgt. Winters said.

The collisions came a day after San Francisco leaders asked state regulators to halt the expansion of robotaxi service in the city.

They said self-driving cars still have a lot of technical bugs and are not ready for primetime.

"I'm against it. I feel like it's just not ready," Porras said. "I don't agree with them. I don't think they're safe and, even if they do promise all of these things, at the end of the day, they're just robots and they're eventually going to mess up, too."

Da Lin

Da Lin is an award-winning journalist at KPIX 5 News. He joined KPIX 5 in 2012, but has been reporting the news in the Bay Area since 2007. Da grew up in Oakland, and before his return to the Bay Area, he spent five years covering the news at three other television stations in Texas, Southern and Central California. He also spent five years reporting at KRON 4.

Explore: See the 55 reports — so far — of robot cars interfering with SF fire dept.

missionlocal.org/2023/08/cruise-waymo-autonomous-vehicle-robot-taxi-driverless-car-reports-san-francisco

August 9, 2023

On the eve of the vote to allow unfettered access to San Francisco for driverless car companies, the San Francisco Fire Department has generated some 55 “Unusual Occurrence” reports documenting times when autonomous vehicles meandered into fire and emergency scenes. The vast majority of these reports were written since May, as these companies began ramping up activity; it is debatable just how unusual of an occurrence these Unusual Occurrence reports were documenting.

In fact, as of June 2023, the fire department simply gave up and renamed the reports “Autonomous Vehicle Incident.”

On Thursday, the California Public Utilities Commission will vote on whether to allow Cruise and Waymo to charge passengers to ride throughout San Francisco, and operate at all hours of the day (the service is presently only allowed for an elite cadre of riders). Police and fire personnel on Monday appeared before the commission to argue against enabling this now.

“I will reiterate,” said San Francisco Fire Chief Jeanine Nicholson on Monday, “it is not our job to babysit their vehicles.”

In a July 25 earnings call, Cruise CEO Kyle Vogt said San Francisco has the capacity to handle “several thousand” of his company’s driverless vehicles — perhaps 10 times the present number.

You can read the 55 fire department reports here, or on the map below. These include more than a dozen reports Mission Local originally published May 1.

The day with the most reports — four on March 21 — was also the day a record number of trees fell in San Francisco during vicious windstorms. Cruise and Waymo vehicles apparently struggled the most at a time when the city’s emergency services were already stretched thin.

Map by Will Jarrett. Data from the San Francisco Fire Department.

Among the standout reports:

> **On Jan. 22**, “an electric car with no driver” would not stop while advancing toward fire personnel and hoses fighting a blaze in the 1300 block of Hayes St. A firefighter eventually smashed the Cruise vehicle’s window to make it stop after they “yelled at it twice to stop, banging my fist on the hood.”

On Jan. 24 at Laguna and Hayes streets, a Cruise autonomous vehicle “rapidly approached” firefighters extinguishing an outdoor fire. It came to a stop between them and their engine — and atop their hose. Firefighters were unable to move the car; after several minutes, an operator was contacted via the car’s intercom, and it was moved after several more minutes.

On March 21, a fire rig was traveling on Palou Street, with lights and sirens on, to an incident. A Waymo car traveling the opposite direction turned directly in front of it onto Newhall Street and then abruptly stopped, blocking the fire rig. It did not move until approximately a minute later.

On March 21, a fire truck with its lights and siren running passed a driverless Waymo while heading south on Dolores Street. While the driverless vehicle initially edged to the right far enough that the fire truck could pass, it then “appeared to turn sharply” and accelerated toward the rear of the fire truck. “I accelerated to avoid being hit by the driverless vehicle,” wrote the firefighter. The driverless car proceeded to chase him or her off: “The vehicle continued to come all the way over into my lane, and appeared to accelerate towards my rear bumper. I then further accelerated to get away from the vehicle as quickly as possible.”

Also on March 21, two Cruise vehicles drove up Clay Street, going through caution tape strung across Hyde Street. Downed Muni wires caught in their rooftop apparatuses, but they kept driving. “As they continued up the street, the rise in elevation increased the tension in the wire on the roof, and the two vehicles finally came to a stop in the intersection of Clay and Leavenworth streets. … If this wire had still been ‘hot,’ this would have been much more hazardous.”

On May 4, firefighters at Station 36 on the 1100 block of Mission St. were unable to respond to a call, as they were blockaded within by a driverless vehicle. Firefighters poured out of the fire rig to attempt to move the autonomous vehicle. While the dumpster fire — yes, a literal dumpster fire — incident was called off, the firefighters still were unable to move the autonomous vehicle. As they began backing their fire truck back into the station, the driverless car rolled off.

On May 9, a fire truck with flashing lights began backing into its station on Webster Street. A Waymo vehicle stopped behind it, blocking it. A firefighter pounded on its window, which lowered. The firefighter leaned in and called the Waymo attendant. The attendant said there was no way the firefighter could move the vehicle. The attendant couldn’t move it, either. Then the window rolled up on the firefighter in the midst of the conversation with the attendant. The fire truck eventually “drove around the block, so the Waymo car could move out from in front of the Fire Station.”

On May 9, a Cruise autonomous vehicle ran over “several lengths of hose that were laid out in the street” in front of Station 2 on the 1300 block of Powell St. The police were called. In the notes on this report, a fire department official notes that “several thousands dollars of damage” was inflicted on the equipment.

On June 5, a Waymo blocked Engine 2 in its station on the 1300 block of Powell. The engine could not pull out, despite a serious “Code 3” call. “The employee from Waymo was flustered and trying to override the car and have it moved,” writes a firefighter. “It took over 2 minutes for the car to finally move.”

On June 7, a driverless car once again blocked Engine 2 in the station. “Connected with Waymo employee remotely,” reads the report. “Took over 8 minutes to have car put in manual mode to move.”

‘No! You stay!’ a San Francisco police officer bellows at a misbehaving Waymo vehicle. The car nearly rolled over the fire hose being used to douse an explosion and fire in the Sunset District on Feb. 9.

On June 12, a fire engine was backing up on Lincoln Avenue near 25th Avenue. While human drivers stopped for the truck, “a Cruise self-driving car failed to yield, and was heading directly toward the officer.” A firefighter giving directions to the fire truck as it backed up was forced to move to “avoid being struck” by the driverless car. “Without the direction of that backer, Engine 18 struck a non-occupied parked car, parked on Lincoln Way.”

On July 14, a Cruise blocked a fire truck at Post and Larkin streets, approaching a burning, “fully occupied apartment building.” The Cruise “was blocking either of the two possible aerial ladder placements available to Truck 5. Truck 5 stopped and waited for 30 seconds but the Cruise vehicle did not move.”

On July 26, a firefighter working a blaze at 18th Avenue and Balboa Street reported a Cruise vehicle stopping “right next to” their engine and staying there for “approximately 30 minutes.”

On July 28, firefighters at Station 5 at Webster and Turk streets were unnerved by a Cruise vehicle that drove dangerously close to their fire truck. “In the name of safety … a cone was placed on the hood of the Cruise vehicle,” reads the report. While the Cruise representative told firefighters to remove the cone so the autonomous vehicle could be moved remotely, the firefighter chose not to. “I opted to leave the cone on the hood of the Cruise vehicle until a live person was present to move the vehicle.”

On Aug. 5 at the Legion of Honor, a Waymo parked itself between a fire truck and a burning car. “This action impacted our suppression efforts negatively, due to members having to walk around the Waymo with a charged hose line and fight active fire,” reads the report. “The car was positioned between the car on fire and the fire engine.”

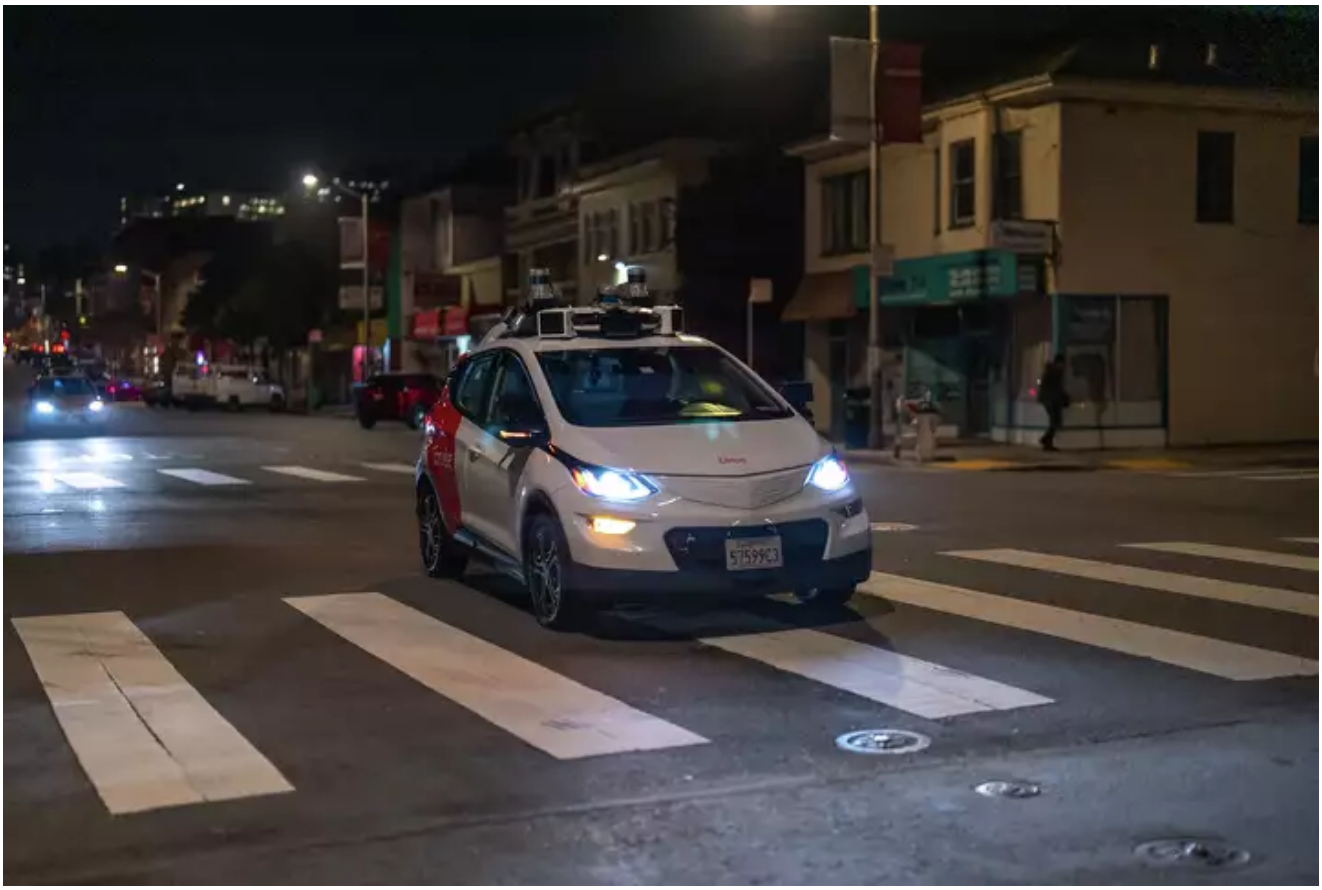
> Unbelievable, another Cruise impeding emergency responders at a fire in the inner sunset! Did anyone ask the residents if we wanted them to beta test in our city? pic.twitter.com/CrkkgiFDgo
> — cade (@stanleycandles) August 9, 2023

This Aug. 8 situation will likely soon be added to the 55 “Autonomous Vehicle incident” reports.

Robot cars are causing safety concerns in Central Texas

mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/texas-self-driving-cars-18405971.php

Chris O'Connell October 4, 2023



A Cruise autonomous vehicle is stopped at a traffic light.
Courtesy of Cruise

With 125 autonomous vehicles zipping around Austin, from companies like Waymo, Cruise, and Volkswagen ADMT, there have been some complaints about the robot cars in recent months. A report from Axios Austin shows that the road might get even bumpier.

There have been 40 complaints logged with Austin's Transportation Public Works Department since July, including close calls with residents and first responders. Additionally, in the last few weeks autonomous vehicles have encroached on fire trucks in Austin and turned against a red light, almost hitting pedestrians as an APD officer worked a fundraising walk in downtown Austin, per the report.

It's an issue because, per state law, local municipalities cannot regulate autonomous vehicles.

"A political subdivision of this state or a state agency may not impose a franchise or other regulation related to the operation of an automated motor vehicle or automated driving system," the law reads.

More For You

Instead, cities like Austin can only work with the autonomous vehicle companies, and hope that the companies respond in goodwill. That's just what Austin did, forming the City AV Safety Task Force, a collaboration between Austin Police Department, Austin Fire, and Austin Travis County Emergency Medical Services to monitor how autonomous vehicles are being used in the city.

The relationship got off to a rocky start.

"Trying to communicate with you is … problematic and frankly you don't respond in a timely manner," wrote Matthew McElearney, AFD special operations training captain, to an investigations manager at Cruise in late August.

Possibly as a response to the complaint, Cruise approached the fire, police, and emergency medical training departments in late September, in an effort to help the departments familiarize themselves with the autonomous vehicles, per Axios.

A spokesperson with Cruise says that the AVs will be re-routed away from one fire station in the city, and that they are not meant to block access to or from fire or police stations, per the report.

Whether or not the fixes work is yet to be seen, as this is likely just the infancy stage of autonomous vehicles in Central Texas.

Oct 4, 2023
By Chris O'Connell
Chris O'Connell covers all things Austin. He can be found @theechrisoc.

STATEMENT FROM CALIFORNIA DMV ON CRUISE AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

bloomberg.com/press-releases/2023-08-19/statement-from-california-dmv-on-cruise-autonomous-vehicles

Business

August 18, 2023 at 9:05 PM EDT

(The following press release from California DMV was received by e-mail. The sender verified the statement.)

The following is a statement from the Department of Motor Vehicles regarding recent events in San Francisco involving Cruise autonomous vehicles:

Safety of the traveling public is the California DMV’s top priority. The primary focus of the DMV’s regulations is the safe operation of autonomous vehicles and safety of the public who share the road with these vehicles.

The DMV is investigating recent concerning incidents involving Cruise vehicles in San Francisco. The DMV is in contact with Cruise and law enforcement officials to determine the facts and requested Cruise to immediately reduce its active fleet of operating vehicles by 50% until the investigation is complete and Cruise takes appropriate corrective actions to improve road safety. Cruise has agreed to a 50% reduction and will have no more than 50 driverless vehicles in operation during the day and 150 driverless vehicles in operation at night.

The DMV reserves the right, following investigation of the facts, to suspend or revoke testing and/or deployment permits if there is determined to be an unreasonable risk to public safety.

California governor vetoes bill banning robotrucks without safety drivers

reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/california-governor-vetoes-bill-banning-robotrucks-without-safety-drivers-2023-09-23

Abhirup Roy

[1/2]A Peterbilt 579 truck equipped with Aurora's self-driving system is seen at the company's terminal in Palmer, south of Dallas, Texas, U.S. September 23, 2021. REUTERS/Tina Bellon/File Photo Acquire Licensing Rights

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept 23 (Reuters) - California Governor Gavin Newsom late on Friday vetoed a bill to prevent heavy-duty driverless trucks from operating in the state, in a relief for companies developing autonomous technology to haul goods across the U.S.

The labor-backed Assembly Bill 316, which requires a trained human driver to be present in autonomous vehicles weighing over 10,001 pounds, was passed by a heavy majority in both houses of the state legislature.

"Considering... the existing regulatory framework that presently and sufficiently governs this particular technology, this bill is not needed at this time," Newsom said in a veto message on Friday.

A veto by the governor can still be overturned if the legislature chooses to vote in favor of the bill with a two-thirds majority in each house. This, however, is rare and has not happened in California since 1979.

While many states, including Texas and Arkansas, have allowed the testing and operation of self-driving trucks, California - home to Alphabet (GOOGL.O), Apple (AAPL.O) and some of the most cutting-edge tech startups - bars autonomous trucks weighing more than 10,001 pounds.

But the department of motor vehicles has been working towards developing a regulatory framework to lift that restriction, prompting the suggested bill, industry sources told Reuters.

Developing autonomous technology has proved harder and more expensive than expected, leading to job cuts and even companies shutting shop. Some that are still testing and deploying driverless trucking operations include Aurora (AUR.O), Daimler Truck (DTGGe.DE), Kodiak Robotics and Gatik.

Supporters of the technology say the bill would hamper chances of achieving autonomous hauling of goods, for example, from the bustling seaports in Southern California to locations across the state, and cause future investments in autonomous infrastructure to flow to other states.

But labor unions led by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters have been calling for Governor Newsom to sign the bill, saying autonomous trucks - some of which weigh over 80,000 pounds - were unsafe and would lead to job losses.

Governor Newsom in his veto message said any regulations framed by the department of motor vehicles would be transparent, with inputs from stakeholders and experts to ensure safety.

He directed the labor and workforce development agency to develop recommendations to mitigate any potential impact on jobs from the deployment of such vehicles.

Reporting by Abhirup Roy in San Francisco; Editing by Jan Harvey

Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.

Woman injured in SF after driver throws her in path of Cruise car

sfgate.com/bayarea/article/woman-injured-under-self-driving-car-sf-18402768.php

Amy Graff October 3, 2023

A pedestrian was injured after being hit by a driver in a car, then run over by a Cruise driverless vehicle in San Francisco on Oct. 2, 2023, officials said.
Courtesy of San Francisco Fire Department

A female pedestrian was severely injured after being struck by an alleged hit-and-run driver and then thrown into the path of a Cruise driverless vehicle that ran over her in downtown San Francisco on Monday night, officials and the autonomous car company said. The woman was pinned under the Cruise vehicle when firefighters and police arrived on scene, according to the San Francisco Fire Department.

The woman was walking near Fifth and Market streets at about 9:30 p.m. when she was first struck by a car that was “traveling in the lane immediately to the left” of the Cruise vehicle, Cruise said on social media.

Surveillance video taken by multiple cameras in the autonomous vehicle was reviewed by SFGATE. Upon impact with the first car, the woman could be seen landing on the roof of that car and then falling into the path of the Cruise vehicle that ran over her. The company said that the autonomous vehicle “braked aggressively” to minimize impact.

San Francisco Police Department spokesperson Officer Robert Rueca said in an emailed statement that the preliminary investigation suggests “another vehicle that was not an autonomous vehicle may have been initially involved in the collision, but the vehicle or driver were not present at the scene during our investigation.”

The Cruise vehicle stayed at the scene and was operating in autonomous mode without a human driver when it ran over the woman, police said.

The fire department responded to the collision at approximately 9:35 p.m. and found the woman pinned underneath the car, according to Capt. Justin Schorr, a spokesperson with the San Francisco Fire Department. Rescuers found the woman beneath the left rear axle of the vehicle, according to Schorr. The controllers of the Cruise AV were contacted and disabled the car remotely, he said.

“The focus was rescuing her and lifting the vehicle off of her,” Schorr told SFGATE. “Members of our heavy rescue squad used hand tools and hydraulic spreaders to lift the vehicle and pull her out. Those hydraulic spreaders are commonly referred to as the jaws of life.”

A pedestrian was injured after being hit by a driver in a car, then run over by a Cruise driverless vehicle in San Francisco on Oct. 2, 2023, officials said.
Courtesy of San Francisco Fire Department

The woman was rushed to San Francisco General Hospital with “multiple life-threatening traumatic injuries,” Schorr said.

Cruise officials appeared at the scene shortly after the collision.

“They were working closely with police,” Schorr said. “I turned around and they were there.”

He added, “Most of the time when we respond to a collision, there’s a driver to tell us how long the person has been under the car. There was no driver, no witnesses. But due to the Cruise technology, the police have more information than they do for most collisions.”

The police department said the condition of the woman was unknown on Tuesday morning.

This breaking news story has been updated.

SFGATE homepage editor David Curran and Bay City News contributed to this report.

Oct 3, 2023|Updated Oct 3, 2023 10:49 a.m.

By Amy Graff

Amy Graff is the news editor for SFGATE. She was born and raised in the Bay Area and got her start in news at the Daily Californian newspaper at UC Berkeley where she majored in English literature. She has been with SFGATE for more than 10 years. You can email her at agraff@sfgate.com.

Feds Now Investigating Cruise Self-Driving Robotaxis Over Their Behavior Around Pedestrians

sfist.com/2023/10/17/feds-now-investigating-cruise-self-driving-robotaxis-over-their-behavior-around-pedestrians

Joe Kukura October 17, 2023

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has opened a probe into an unknown number of incidents where Cruise robotaxis allegedly encroached on pedestrians, in the wake of one SF Cruise car running over a hit-and-run victim.

There appears to be more fallout over the October 2 incident where a Cruise self-driving robotaxi ran over and stopped on top of a pedestrian at Fifth and Market streets. The Associated Press reported Tuesday morning that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has opened an investigation into Cruise robotaxi incidents involving pedestrians, now bringing federal regulators into the mix of government agencies putting more scrutiny on the performance of these self-driving cars.

There's not much publicly known about this probe — the only information we have is a brief two-page investigation report from the NHTSA Office of Defects Investigation. That document says the Cruise vehicles "may not have exercised appropriate caution around pedestrians in the roadway," and "These reports involve (Automated Driving System) equipped vehicles encroaching on pedestrians present in or entering roadways, including pedestrian crosswalks, in the proximity of the intended travel path of the vehicles."

CNBC confirms that one of the incidents being investigated is indeed that October 2 pedestrian incident on Fifth Street, and another is some sort of pedestrian collision on August 26. Both incidents happened in San Francisco.

“Currently, the total number of relevant pedestrian incidents is unknown,” the report says. But it also notes there are “additional relevant incidents with videos posted to public websites.”

Cruise acknowledged the investigation in a statement that reiterates that they think their cars are still safer than human-driven cars.

"Cruise's safety record over five million miles continues to outperform comparable human drivers at a time when pedestrian injuries and deaths are at an all-time high," Cruise spokesperson Hannah Lindow said in a statement to the AP. "Cruise communicates regularly with NHTSA and has consistently cooperated with each of NHTSA's requests for information — whether associated with an investigation or not — and we plan to continue doing so."

We may have seen a turning point since Cruise (and rival Waymo) got that big early August approval for unlimited SF expansion from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). Barely a week after that approval, the state DMV ordered Cruise to cut their SF fleet in half. Cruise also made a big deal about their recent software upgrades to improve handling around emergency vehicles, likely in response to recent bad press. And now there's this new federal investigation that could mean another round of bad press for the robotaxis.

Related: Driver Strikes Pedestrian Near Fifth and Market; Cruise Car Subsequently Runs Her Over and Stops On Top Of Her [SFist]

Image: @TaylorOgan via Twitter

Cruise autonomous vehicles' permits suspended by California DMV

usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2023/10/24/gm-cruise-driverless-cars-suspended-dmv/71304346007

TECH NEWS

Cars

Why Cruise's driverless car permits were just suspended by the California DMV

Bailey Schulz

USA TODAY

General Motors' self-driving taxi company Cruise has halted operations in San Francisco after its deployment and testing permits were suspended by the California Department of Motor Vehicles, effective immediately.

The decision comes after one of Cruise's autonomous vehicles was involved in a hit-and-run earlier this month. The California DMV said its vehicles "are not safe for the public's operation" and has accused the company of putting the safety of the public at risk by withholding certain information about the incident, which the company denies.

The decision comes after a contentious vote by the California Public Utilities Commission in August named Cruise as one of two self-driving taxi companies approved to offer paid rides 24/7 in San Francisco.

Cruise involved in hit-and-run

According to statements from Cruise and the DMV, the hit-and-run took place on Oct. 2 in San Francisco.

Cruise said a Nissan Sentra in a lane next to one of its vehicles struck a pedestrian who entered a crosswalk against a red light. The pedestrian was launched into the path of the Cruise vehicle while it was operating in driverless autonomous mode. The DMV said the Cruise vehicle came to a complete stop but ran over the pedestrian during its hard-braking maneuver. It then attempted to pull over, dragging forward the pedestrian underneath the vehicle approximately 20 feet. Cruise said the driver of the Nissan fled the scene and is still at large.

The DMV says Cruise representatives initially did not disclose or show footage of the vehicle's pullover maneuver after its initial stop, which "increased the risk of and may have caused, further injury to the pedestrian."

The DMV said it learned about the car's subsequent movement from another government agency and received additional footage from Cruise on Oct. 13 only after it requested a copy of the full video. The DMV said the omission "puts the safety of the public at risk."

"The behavior of the vehicle raises concerns that vehicles operated under Cruise's driverless testing permit also lack the ability to respond in a safe and appropriate manner during incidents involving a pedestrian," the DMV's suspension order reads. "Until the department can make a determination regarding the safe operating of the vehicles, the continued operating of Cruises' driverless test vehicles on public roads poses an unreasonable risk to the public."

Cruise denies that it omitted any information from regulators and said it shared information with various agencies shortly after the incident, "including the full video."

Spokesperson Navideh Forghani said Cruise representatives met with the DMV on Oct. 3, "in which we showed them the complete video multiple times. They later requested a copy of the complete video, which we provided to them."

'Serious concerns' about driverless cars

San Francisco in August became the first city in the world to let two self-driving taxi companies – Cruise and Waymo – offer paid rides 24 hours a day.

But self-driving cars have been reported pulling annoying, if not dangerous, stunts. In January, San Francisco firefighters battling a two-alarm apartment fire had to smash in the front window of one of Cruise's driverless cars after it entered the firefighting scene and nearly ran over their hoses, according to the San Francisco Chronicle**.** In March, two of Cruise's driverless cars drove through caution tape put up after wind storms knocked down trees and trolley wires.

"This incident raises many serious concerns about the safety of these Cruise driverless vehicles," reads a San Francisco Fire Department report on the March incident published by Mission Local, a San Francisco news site.

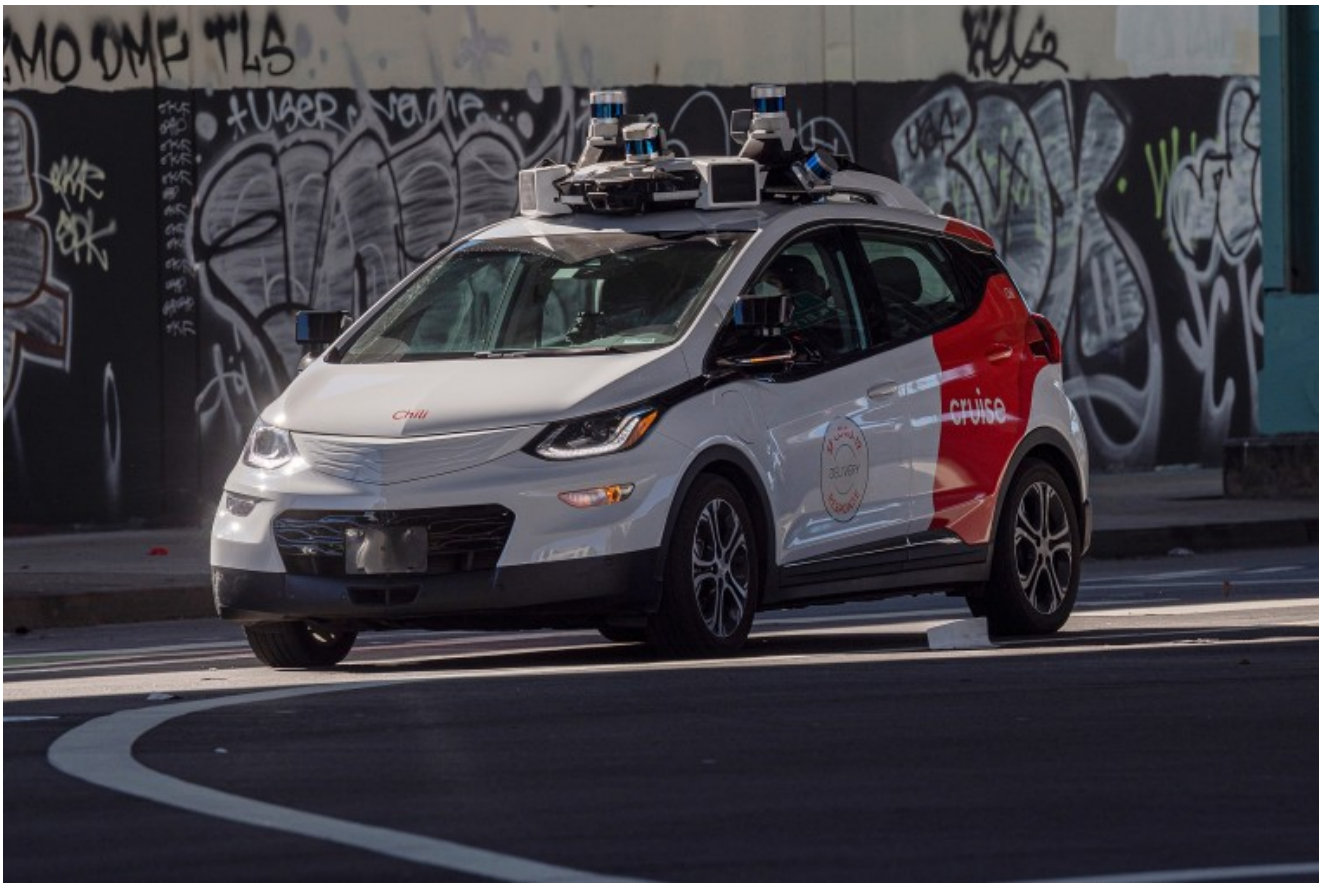
San Francisco officials led by City Attorney David Chiu have filed an administrative motion with theCalifornia Public Utilities Commission requesting it reconsider its resolutions granting Cruise and Waymo the ability to expand their commercial autonomous vehicle fleets.

Contributing: USA TODAY reporter Elizabeth Weise.

Self-driving taxi startup Cruise freezes all operations after California revokes permits

nbcnews.com/tech/cruise-self-driving-crash-freeze-pause-stop-call-rcna122462

David Ingram



The General Motors-owned tech startup Cruise said Thursday it was pausing all driverless operations across the U.S. The announcement came two days after the California DMV revoked Cruise's permits to operate its fleet of autonomous vehicles following a crash in San Francisco where one of its cars dragged a pedestrian for 20 feet while she was pinned underneath the vehicle.

Cruise said it was pausing nationwide to try to "rebuild public trust" after the California Department of Motor Vehicles also accused the company of failing to disclose the full details of the Oct. 2 collision.

"In that spirit, we have decided to proactively pause driverless operations across all of our fleets while we take time to examine our processes, systems, and tools and reflect on how we can better operate in a way that will earn public trust," Cruise said in a post on X.

In addition to California, Cruise operates in Arizona, Florida and Texas, according to a company spokesperson. Officials in those four states did not immediately respond to requests for comment Friday.

Arizona had previously said it was monitoring the developments in California. Texas has no permitting process for autonomous vehicles, allowing companies such as Cruise to operate under state law similar to human-operated vehicles, according to the Texas DMV. Florida also has no permitting process.

In the Oct. 2 crash, a human who was driving in a lane next to a Cruise car struck a pedestrian, tossing the pedestrian into the path of the driverless Cruise, according to San Francisco police. The Cruise vehicle used its brakes but didn't have enough time to avoid running over the pedestrian, the company said.

The Cruise vehicle stopped but then started again and drove 20 feet with the pedestrian under the car, according to a Cruise statement this week. Cruise said it shared the full video with state officials, but California DMV officials said they didn't learn about the pedestrian being pulled under the car until another unspecified government agency told them.

Cruise said its vehicles are programmed to pull over in risky situations to ensure safety in compliance with California regulations.

The human driver who initially struck the pedestrian fled the scene and has not been located, according to Cruise. The pedestrian was taken to a hospital afterward in critical condition.

The incident was a rare example of a self-driving car involved in a serious injury, providing ammunition to critics of the technology who say it's not safe. Supporters of driverless technology have argued that it has the potential to be much safer than human drivers, given that about 40,000 people die in the U.S. in traffic accidents each year.

Cruise, based in San Francisco, is one of two driverless car startups that has been operating a commercial ride-hailing service in the city — like the services of Lyft or Uber, but with no human drivers in the cars.

A Cruise spokesperson said Friday she had no other details to share, such as how long the voluntary freeze might last.

The other startup with a service in San Francisco, Google-affiliated Waymo, was unaffected by California's decision. Waymo has operations in other states, too. The company did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday on how the Cruise incident was affecting their thinking and their research.

Cruise said that the decision Thursday to halt all operations was not related to "any new on-road incidents" and that it would continue operating cars with safety drivers inside the cars.

“We think it’s the right thing to do during a period when we need to be extra vigilant when it comes to risk, relentlessly focused on safety, & taking steps to rebuild public trust,” the company said on X.

Cruise Robotaxi Dragged Woman 20 Feet In Recent Accident, Local Politician Says

forbes.com/sites/cyrusfarivar/2023/10/06/cruise-robotaxi-dragged-woman-20-feet-in-recent-accident-local-politician-says

Cyrus Farivar October 6, 2023

A Cruise, which is a driverless robot taxi, is seen during operation in San Francisco, California, USA on July 24, 2023.
Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

A San Francisco politician is now accusing autonomous vehicle company Cruise of “telling a half truth” with regard to its responsibility in the wake of a recent incident where a woman was struck by a human-driven car and then was immediately also hit by one of its robotaxis.

The company previously said in a statement sent to *Forbes* and other media that the woman was first hit Monday evening around 9:30 p.m. by a human-driven car while crossing a busy downtown street. Then, after being knocked into another lane of traffic, she was then struck by a Cruise autonomous vehicle (AV), which, according to the company, “braked aggressively to minimize the impact.”

However, in an interview with *Forbes*, San Francisco Supervisor Aaron Peskin now says that while the robotaxi may have attempted to avoid hitting her, the AV "dragged her underneath the car for approximately 20 feet, which was the source of her major injuries."

The woman, whose identity remains unknown, remains in critical condition, according to Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital.

When *Forbes* asked Cruise to specifically respond to Peskin's allegation that the AV "dragged" the woman, causing her to be injured further, the company said that it had nothing further to add.

"We have shared all pertinent information with regulators and investigators and are focused on assisting the police with identifying the person responsible, who left the scene," Hannah Lindow, a Cruise spokesperson, said in an email. "Our thoughts continue to be with the individual who was injured, hoping they make a rapid and full recovery."

Neither the San Francisco Police Department, which is leading an ongoing investigation into the incident, nor the San Francisco Fire Department, which also responded to the scene, provided comment on Peskin's account.

"We cannot confirm or deny what the Supervisor said," Sgt. Kathryn Winters, an SFPD spokesperson, emailed *Forbes*. "This is an open and active investigation, and investigators are reviewing all available evidence to determine the facts of the incident."

The SFPD declined to provide an estimate as to when its investigation would be complete.

SFFD Capt. Justin Schorr, a spokesperson, told *Forbes* that he happened to be blocks away when he received the call, and was the first firefighter to lay eyes on the victim. He described her injuries as "life-threatening," and "consistent with being struck or run over and being trapped under a vehicle."

Since the California Public Utilities Commission's August decision to allow Cruise and its primary rival, Waymo, to offer paid services 24 hours a day in San Francisco, Cruise cars in particular have been involved in a number of incidents. These include: seemingly not yielding to a fire truck en route to an emergency, getting stuck in wet concrete, causing a traffic jam at a local music festival and, according to the SFFD, even briefly preventing an ambulance from leaving the scene of a different crash where the victim ultimately died after being brought to a hospital. (To be clear, the SFFD said in a statement that the agency did not "[attribute] this pedestrian death to Cruise AVs.")

That's not to mention dozens of smaller disruptive episodes that the SFFD has documented, which include blocking fire stations, running over hoses and not yielding to sirens and blaring horns.

“All a car has to do is stop somewhere and we’re screwed,” SFFD Chief Jeanine Nicholson told *Forbes* previously. “Seconds matter, when it comes to an emergency. A fire can double in size in a minute, or in a medical call, an extra minute literally means more of your heart will die.”

Cruise, which is a subsidiary of General Motors, has ambitious plans to make its billions of dollars of investment turn into a profitable business model. According to research from McKinsey published earlier this year, there is potential to generate hundreds of billions in revenue across the entire AV industry before 2030.

For now, Cruise only operates in San Francisco, Austin, and Phoenix, but is currently testing in at least 10 other U.S. cities, including San Diego and Nashville.

“San Francisco for us is just the beginning,” Davide Bacchet, then the company’s distinguished engineer in robotics, said in a November 2021 marketing video. “And we are prepared to expand to other cities and other countries. The size of our fleet is going to grow exponentially.”

However, for Sup. Peskin, this level of confidence gives him pause. He wants Cruise and similar AV companies to be held to the “highest safety standards.”

“San Francisco is in the unique position of being the guinea pig and the first testing ground for the deployment of AVs and soon they will be everywhere,” he said. “This won’t be just San Francisco’s issue. This is really yet another example of what state and federal regulators and policymakers need to address before these things are deployed in cities everywhere.”

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Cyrus Farivar
I'm always interested in tips re fraud, waste, abuse, shenanigans, & sketchiness ongoing in the tech world.

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Two state agencies ground Cruise driverless cars for public safety

calmatters.org/economy/2023/10/driverless-cars-cruise-dmv

October 24, 2023

In summary

A recent incident in San Francisco spurred the Department of Motor Vehicles and the California Public Utilities Commission to suspend the licenses for Cruise's driverless cars.

10/30: This article has been updated to reflect new information.

Citing public safety concerns, two state agencies on Tuesday suspended driverless car company Cruise's licenses to test and deploy its vehicles, and its ability to carry passengers, immediately grounding its fleet of about 150 robotaxis in San Francisco.

The Department of Motor Vehicles was the first to say it had immediately suspended the General Motors-owned company's licenses to test and deploy its fully autonomous vehicles. In response to CalMatters' request for comment on the DMV's move, the California Public Utilities Commission said it has also suspended Cruise's ability to carry passengers in driverless vehicles.

Cruise, founded in San Francisco in 2013, conducted its first driverless ride in the city in 2020. It opened a fully driverless taxi service to the public in San Francisco in early 2022, in which riders can summon vehicles like they would on a ride-hailing app. That service was only available at night until this August, when the public utilities commission approved 24/7 operations.

The DMV's suspension notices, seen by CalMatters, show that the agency based its suspensions on an Oct. 2 incident in San Francisco in which a Cruise autonomous vehicle dragged a pedestrian who had been hit by a different vehicle right beforehand. The vehicle that first hit the woman was driven by a human who fled the scene and has not been arrested, according to various media reports.

In its notices to Cruise, the DMV notes that the next day, the company showed representatives of the DMV and the California Highway Patrol video from the vehicle's cameras that ended with the autonomous vehicle stopping after it braked when the pedestrian fell into its path after being hit by another vehicle. But the DMV also said it was not made aware that the Cruise vehicle then tried to pull over while the pedestrian was underneath it.

"The department only learned of the AV's subsequent movement via discussion with another government agency," the suspension notice says. DMV spokesperson Anita Gore told CalMatters that agency was the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which last week opened its own investigation into Cruise over four safety incidents, including the Oct. 2 incident.

The DMV said in its notices that the agency then requested the additional footage from Cruise, and received it Oct. 13.

"When there is an unreasonable risk to public safety, the DMV can immediately suspend or revoke permits," the DMV said in a news release, which also said Cruise's suspension is partly based on a state regulation related to the following: "The manufacturer has misrepresented any information related to safety of the autonomous technology of its vehicles."

Cruise spokesperson Hannah Lindow said Tuesday the company disputes the DMV's contention that it did not initially show DMV representatives the full video.

"We had a meeting with the DMV on 10/3, in which we showed them the complete video multiple times," Lindow said in an email. "They later requested a copy of the video shown on 10/3, which we provided to them."

The DMV said in an email that it "stands by the facts contained in the order of suspension."

Friday, the California Highway Patrol said it backed the DMV's contention that Cruise did not initially show authorities the full video.

"The California Highway Patrol agrees with the facts in the DMV's orders of suspension," Jaime Coffee, director of communications for the CHP, said in an email to CalMatters.

In response to the California Highway Patrol's comment, Lindow said the company's statement still stands.

Cruise also released a statement on its website in which it said it shared the full video with the officials. It also provided a description of the incident, which reads in part: "The AV detected a collision, bringing the vehicle to a stop; then attempted to pull over to avoid causing further road safety issues, pulling the individual forward approximately 20 feet."

The company said in that statement that it plans to include the incident in future simulation tests "to allow the vehicle to better determine if it should pull over safely or stay in place."

Cruise now has five days to request a hearing about the DMV's suspension of its deployment license, and 60 days to request a hearing about the suspension of its driverless-testing permit.

The public utilities commission, which has also now suspended Cruise's ability to carry passengers in the agency's autonomous vehicle deployment and driverless pilot programs, is carrying out its own investigations into Cruise, spokesperson Terrie Prosper said.

Though the DMV and the commission coordinate on regulation of autonomous vehicles and will continue to do so, the suspension decisions were made separately, Prosper said.

The suspensions do not affect Cruise's ability to test its vehicles with safety drivers, according to the DMV. The public utilities commission suspension, however, *does* affect the company's ability to carry passengers even with a safety driver.

The commission's suspension comes after it voted in early August to allow Cruise and another autonomous vehicle company, Waymo, to expand their ability to charge for robotaxi service in San Francisco at all hours. A week after that approved expansion, the DMV ordered Cruise to cut its 300-vehicle fleet in half as the agency investigated incidents involving the company's autonomous vehicles, including a crash involving a fire truck.

In mid-August, San Francisco City Attorney David Chiu filed motions to stay the public utilities commission's decision, citing "poor AV performance creating safety hazards and interfering with first responder operations, public transit, street construction workers, and the flow of traffic," and said his office would also seek a rehearing. The application for the rehearing is pending, Prosper said.

Also Tuesday, labor leaders and others gathered in Los Angeles to protest Alphabet-owned Waymo's unveiling of a test of its so-far free robotaxi service in Santa Monica and Venice last week, and a planned expansion by the company elsewhere in the area next month. They expressed concerns about safety, with some of them citing collisions involving self-driving vehicles in San Francisco, and the possible elimination of jobs.

In addition, Los Angeles City Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martinez plans to introduce a motion Wednesday, calling for the L.A. city attorney to join San Francisco in urging the public utilities commission to adopt more "common-sense regulations" on self-driving cars, said Nick Barnes-Baptista, a spokesperson for the councilmember.

"We should not be putting lives at risk by allowing our city to be a test subject for the tech industry," Soto-Martinez said in an emailed statement.

Waymo spokesperson Sandy Karp said the company encourages people "to learn more about the positive impacts Waymo's autonomous ride hailing is having on safety, accessibility and sustainability."

Regulation of driverless vehicles has been a hot topic in California. Earlier this year, Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a bill that would have regulated self-driving trucks, saying in his veto message that it was "unnecessary for the regulation and oversight of heavy-duty autonomous vehicle technology in California, as existing law provides sufficient authority to create the appropriate regulatory framework.

GM’s Cruise Halts All US Robotaxi Service After Suspension for Pedestrian Who Was Dragged

wired.com/story/gms-cruise-halts-self-driving-operations-regulator-safety-fears

Aarian Marshall October 27, 2023

Cruise, the self-driving arm of General Motors, said late today it had halted its robotaxi service across the US and would no longer operate its vehicles without safety drivers behind the wheel. That decision to hit the brakes comes two days after California regulators suspended the driverless-car company’s permit in San Francisco, alleging that Cruise had failed to disclose details of an early October collision that sent a woman to the hospital with serious injuries.

Cruise’s decision shuts down its driverless taxi services offered in Austin and Phoenix, which had continued to operate even after the California suspension. Its fleets in Dallas, Houston, and Miami, where Cruise has been preparing for commercial launches, will no longer hit the road without humans in the driver’s seat. The company says its orange and white Chevrolet Bolts will still be steered by software, but safety drivers will always be behind the wheel to take over if the technology goes wrong.

Cruise said curtailing its operations will provide “time to examine our processes, systems, and tools and reflect on how we can better operate in a way that will earn public trust,” in a statement on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Cruise has become one of the two most prominent US self-driving projects in recent years, alongside Alphabet’s Waymo. Both companies have continued to spend big on the driverless dream, even as rivals such as Uber and Lyft abandoned self-driving development. General Motors reported earlier this week that it had lost more than $1.9 billion on its Cruise division so far this year.

California’s regulators shut down Cruise’s robotaxi service in San Francisco earlier this week following an October 2 incident in which a human-driven vehicle collided with a pedestrian, throwing her into the path of Cruise’s driverless vehicle. According to Cruise, citing data from cameras and sensors mounted on its vehicle, the robot car swerved and braked, but still hit the woman.

Cruise says the vehicle stopped, but then pulled over to move out of traffic, dragging the woman an additional 20 feet. The San Francisco Fire Department said it had to use rescue equipment to remove the woman from beneath the vehicle.

In a filing this week—more than three weeks after the crash—the California Department of Motor Vehicles said Cruise had not disclosed the “pull over” move that had dragged the victim. The regulator, which oversees driverless vehicle operations in the state, says it only learned of the maneuver when it was alerted by another, unspecified agency.

The DMV wrote in a statement that it had suspended Cruise’s permits to operate driverless vehicles in San Francisco on the grounds that the company had “misrepresented” the safety of its autonomous vehicle technology, and that its “vehicles are not safe for the public's operation.”

On the day of that suspension, Cruise spokesperson Navideh Forghani disputed that Cruise had misrepresented its technology, saying regulators had been shown video of the entire incident, including the pull-over maneuver, the day after the crash. San Francisco outlet Mission Local reported yesterday that the pedestrian remains in the hospital in serious condition. The driver who initially hit the pedestrian has not been caught.

Earlier this year, Cruise announced plans to expand its driverless taxi service to cover 14 US cities. Its primary competitor, Waymo, is still operating its paid driverless taxi services in San Francisco and Phoenix, and it launched limited public access to its service in Los Angeles this month. Amazon-owned Zoox is testing ahead of a commercial launch of driverless taxis in Las Vegas.

Cruise pauses self-driving car operations in Austin, Texas

statesman.com/story/business/technology/2023/10/27/cruise-pauses-self-driving-cars-driverless-operations-austin-texas-general-motors/71339386007

TECHNOLOGY

Cruise halts driverless car operations in Austin as company aims to 'rebuild public trust'

Kara Carlson
Austin American-Statesman

Self-driving car company Cruise has halted driverless car operations nationwide, including in Austin, in an effort to rebuild public trust around the technology.

The California-based company, which is a subsidiary of General Motors, announced the change Thursday evening in a post on X, formerly Twitter. The announcement came just two days after the company paused services in California after the California Department of

Motor Vehicles suspended the company's testing and deployment permits.

The suspended permits followed a high-profile incident and spat between the California department and the self-driving company after the DMV accused the company of withholding information about a hit-and-run incident earlier this month, an accusation the company denied, according to a report from USAToday. The permit suspension only impacted the company's ability to operate fully autonomously. Cruise can still test with a human safety driver.

On Thursday evening, the company said it was proactively pausing driverless operations across its other locations. Cruise, which has been offering driverless rideshare in Austin since last year, also offers rideshare services in Houston and Phoenix, and previously San Francisco.

"The most important thing for us right now is to take steps to rebuild public trust. Part of this involves taking a hard look inwards and at how we do work at Cruise, even if it means doing things that are uncomfortable or difficult," the company posted. "In that spirit, we have decided to proactively pause driverless operations across all of our fleets while we take time to examine our processes, systems, and tools and reflect on how we can better operate in a way that will earn public trust."

The company also clarified in the same post thread that the decision was not related to any new on-road incidents and that supervised autonomous vehicle operations will continue.

""We think it's the right thing to do during a period when we need to be extra vigilant when it comes to risk, relentlessly focused on safety, & taking steps to rebuild public trust," the company said.

Friday morning, a Cruise spokesperson confirmed rideshare was paused in Austin. The Cruise app also read "We've temporarily paused our service," with an option to be notified once it restarted.

Cruise's operations in Austin

Cruise first announced it would expand to Austin in September 2022 and began offering fully autonomous rideshare services in December. Its rideshare service operates similarly to other rideshare services such as Uber or Lyft where users are able to request a ride in Cruise's app and then be picked up and dropped off at specific locations. In Austin, Cruise has been operating in select areas of downtown, Central and East Austin between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. with plans to expand over time.

But the company has also been subject of an increasing number of viral videos in Austin in recent months showing the vehicles in traffic jams and stopped in intersections, leading people, including City Council member Zohaib "Zo" Qadri, to raise concerns about the

company’s operations in Austin.

During a City of Austin Mobility Committee meeting on Friday, Qadri said he was pleased to hear that Cruise decided to suspend their operations.

“I've said from the beginning that I don't think this technology is ready for primetime,” he said.

He pointed to Cruise's tendency to avoid larger streets, special events, higher volume traffic and inclement weather.

“That tells us the company didn't have enough faith in their own technology to operate in the basic urban driving conditions humans deal with every single day,” Qadri said.

Qadri, along with Council Members Paige Ellis and Vanessa Fuentes, received a briefing on self-driving vehicle activity Friday afternoon during the committee meeting.

All three council members expressed concerns related to public safety, complaints from the community and the city’s inability to regulate the vehicles.

“It’s important for autonomous vehicle companies to realize that these driverless cars can be dangerous and that our public roads should not be a test playground," Ellis said. "We should not be treated like guinea pigs."

What incident occurred in California?

The California DMV announced in a Tuesday statement that it was suspending the permitting for an indefinite amount of time, saying it has the ability to pull permits when there is “an unreasonable risk to public safety.”

The DMV’s dispute with the company relates to an Oct. 2 hit and run incident, after which the DMV accused Cruise of withholding information about.

In a statement Tuesday, Cruise said the hit-and-run incident occurred when a human driver of a Nissan Sentra collided with a pedestrian who was crossing the street against a red light. The pedestrian was then launched in front of a Cruise autonomous vehicle, which braked but “still made contact with the pedestrian” and pulled over after stopping, “pulling the individual forward approximately 20 feet.” The unknown driver of the Nissan fled the scene.

The California DMV accused Cruise of not disclosing or showing full footage of the incident, including its pullover maneuver, according to the USAToday report. Cruise denied that it omitted information, the report said.

Cruise is also the subject of a new federal probe from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that aims to determine if the self-driving vehicles are using appropriate precautions around pedestrians after the Oct. 2 incident and another unrelated incident.

What other companies are testing self-driving technology in Austin?

Cruise is far from the only autonomous car company testing in Austin. The region, which has been a testbed of self-driving technology, is currently being used by Waymo and Volkswagen to test its vehicles.

The city was also previously being used by Ford and Argo AI to test self-driving technology including rideshare and delivery services, before Argo AI shut down last year.

Under a state law that passed in 2017, autonomous vehicles can operate in Texas without a driver inside and can be used on highways as long as they can follow traffic laws. The cars also are required to have insurance like other cars and be equipped with video recording equipment. Manufacturers are considered responsible for any broken laws or collisions.

Under a separate state law, passed in 2021, political subdivisions of the state, such as cities, are also forbidden from regulating automated driving systems or automated motor systems.

USA Today reporter Bailey Schulz contributed to this report.

Cruise Knew Its Self-Driving Cars Had Problems Recognizing Children — and Kept Them on the Streets

theintercept.com/2023/11/06/cruise-self-driving-cars-children

November 6, 2023

In Phoenix, Austin, Houston, Dallas, Miami, and San Francisco, hundreds of so-called autonomous vehicles, or AVs, operated by General Motors' self-driving car division, Cruise, have for years ferried passengers to their destinations on busy city roads. Cruise's app-hailed robot rides create a detailed picture of their surroundings through a combination of sophisticated sensors, and navigate through roadways and around obstacles with machine learning software intended to detect and avoid hazards.

AV companies hope these driverless vehicles will replace not just Uber, but also human driving as we know it. The underlying technology, however, is still half-baked and error-prone, giving rise to widespread criticisms that companies like Cruise are essentially running beta tests on public streets.

Despite the popular skepticism, Cruise insists its robots are profoundly safer than what they're aiming to replace: cars driven by people. In an interview last month, Cruise CEO Kyle Vogt downplayed safety concerns: "Anything that we do differently than humans is being sensationalized."

The concerns over Cruise cars came to a head this month. On October 17, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced it was investigating Cruise's nearly 600-vehicle fleet because of risks posed to other cars and pedestrians. A week later, in San

Francisco, where driverless Cruise cars have shuttled passengers since 2021, the California Department of Motor Vehicles announced it was suspending the company's driverless operations. Following a string of highly public malfunctions and accidents, the immediate cause of the order, the DMV said, was that Cruise withheld footage from a recent incident in which one of its vehicles hit a pedestrian, dragging her 20 feet down the road.

In an internal address on Slack to his employees about the suspension, Vogt stuck to his message: "Safety is at the core of everything we do here at Cruise." Days later, the company said it would voluntarily pause fully driverless rides in Phoenix and Austin, meaning its fleet will be operating only with human supervision: a flesh-and-blood backup to the artificial intelligence.

Even before its public relations crisis of recent weeks, though, previously unreported internal materials such as chat logs show Cruise has known internally about two pressing safety issues: Driverless Cruise cars struggled to detect large holes in the road and have so much trouble recognizing children in certain scenarios that they risked hitting them. Yet, until it came under fire this month, Cruise kept its fleet of driverless taxis active, maintaining its regular reassurances of superhuman safety.

"This strikes me as deeply irresponsible at the management level to be authorizing and pursuing deployment or driverless testing, and to be publicly representing that the systems are reasonably safe," said Bryant Walker Smith, a University of South Carolina law professor and engineer who studies automated driving.

In a statement, a spokesperson for Cruise reiterated the company's position that a future of autonomous cars will reduce collisions and road deaths. "Our driverless operations have always performed higher than a human benchmark, and we constantly evaluate and mitigate new risks to continuously improve," said Erik Moser, Cruise's director of communications. "We have the lowest risk tolerance for contact with children and treat them with the highest safety priority. No vehicle — human operated or autonomous — will have zero risk of collision."

> "These are not self-driving cars. These are cars driven by their companies."

Though AV companies enjoy a reputation in Silicon Valley as bearers of a techno-optimist transit utopia — a world of intelligent cars that never drive drunk, tired, or distracted — the internal materials reviewed by The Intercept reveal an underlying tension between potentially life-and-death engineering problems and the effort to deliver the future as quickly as possible. With its parent company General Motors, which purchased Cruise in 2016 for $1.1 billion, hemorrhaging money on the venture, any setback for the company's robo-safety regimen could threaten its business.

Instead of seeing public accidents and internal concerns as yellow flags, Cruise sped ahead with its business plan. Before its permitting crisis in California, the company was, according to Bloomberg, exploring expansion to 11 new cities.

“These are not self-driving cars,” said Smith. “These are cars driven by their companies.”

Kyle Vogt — co-founder, president, chief executive officer, and chief technology officer of Cruise — holds an articulating radar as he speaks during a reveal event in San Francisco on Jan. 21, 2020.
Photo: David Paul Morris/Bloomberg via Getty Images

“May Not Exercise Additional Care Around Children”

Several months ago, Vogt became choked up when talking about a 4-year-old girl who had recently been killed in San Francisco. A 71-year-old woman had taken what local residents described as a low-visibility right turn, striking a stroller and killing the child. “It barely made the news,” Vogt told the New York Times. “Sorry. I get emotional.” Vogt offered that self-driving cars would make for safer streets.

Behind the scenes, meanwhile, Cruise was grappling with its own safety issues around hitting kids with cars. One of the problems addressed in the internal, previously unreported safety assessment materials is the failure of Cruise’s autonomous vehicles to, under certain conditions, effectively detect children so that they can exercise extra caution. “Cruise AVs

may not exercise additional care around children," reads one internal safety assessment. The company's robotic cars, it says, still "need the ability to distinguish children from adults so we can display additional caution around children."

In particular, the materials say, Cruise worried its vehicles might drive too fast at crosswalks or near a child who could move abruptly into the street. The materials also say Cruise lacks data around kid-centric scenarios, like children suddenly separating from their accompanying adult, falling down, riding bicycles, or wearing costumes.

The materials note results from simulated tests in which a Cruise vehicle is in the vicinity of a small child. "Based on the simulation results, we can't rule out that a fully autonomous vehicle might have struck the child," reads one assessment. In another test drive, a Cruise vehicle successfully detected a toddler-sized dummy but still struck it with its side mirror at 28 miles per hour.

The internal materials attribute the robot cars' inability to reliably recognize children under certain conditions to inadequate software and testing. "We have low exposure to small VRUs" — Vulnerable Road Users, a reference to children — "so very few events to estimate risk from," the materials say. Another section concedes Cruise vehicles' "lack of a high-precision Small VRU classifier," or machine learning software that would automatically detect child-shaped objects around the car and maneuver accordingly. The materials say Cruise, in an attempt to compensate for machine learning shortcomings, was relying on human workers behind the scenes to manually identify children encountered by AVs where its software couldn't do so automatically.

In its statement, Cruise said, "It is inaccurate to say that our AVs were not detecting or exercising appropriate caution around pedestrian children" — a claim undermined by internal Cruise materials reviewed by The Intercept and the company's statement itself. In its response to The Intercept's request for comment, Cruise went on to concede that, this past summer during simulation testing, it discovered that its vehicles sometimes temporarily lost track of children on the side of the road. The statement said the problem was fixed and only encountered during testing, not on public streets, but Cruise did not say how long the issue lasted. Cruise did not specify what changes it had implemented to mitigate the risks.

Despite Cruise's claim that its cars are designed to identify children to treat them as special hazards, spokesperson Navideh Forghani said that the company's driving software hadn't failed to detect children but merely failed to classify them as children.

Moser, the Cruise spokesperson, said the company's cars treat children as a special category of pedestrians because they can behave unpredictably. "Before we deployed any driverless vehicles on the road, we conducted rigorous testing in a simulated and closed-

course environment against available industry benchmarks," he said. "These tests showed our vehicles exceed the human benchmark with regard to the critical collision avoidance scenarios involving children."

"Based on our latest assessment this summer," Moser continued, "we determined from observed performance on-road, the risk of the potential collision with a child could occur once every 300 million miles at fleet driving, which we have since improved upon. There have been no on-road collisions with children."

Do you have a tip to share about safety issues at Cruise? The Intercept welcomes whistleblowers. Use a personal device to contact Sam Biddle on Signal at +1 (978) 261-7389, by email at sam.biddle@theintercept.com, or by SecureDrop.

Cruise has known its cars couldn't detect holes, including large construction pits with workers inside, for well over a year, according to the safety materials reviewed by The Intercept. Internal Cruise assessments claim this flaw constituted a major risk to the company's operations. Cruise determined that at its current, relatively miniscule fleet size, one of its AVs would drive into an unoccupied open pit roughly once a year, and a construction pit with people inside it about every four years. Without fixes to the problems, those rates would presumably increase as more AVs were put on the streets.

It appears this concern wasn't hypothetical: Video footage captured from a Cruise vehicle reviewed by The Intercept shows one self-driving car, operating in an unnamed city, driving directly up to a construction pit with multiple workers inside. Though the construction site was surrounded by orange cones, the Cruise vehicle drives directly toward it, coming to an abrupt halt. Though it can't be discerned from the footage whether the car entered the pit or stopped at its edge, the vehicle appears to be only inches away from several workers, one of whom attempted to stop the car by waving a "SLOW" sign across its driverless windshield.

"Enhancing our AV's ability to detect potential hazards around construction zones has been an area of focus, and over the last several years we have conducted extensive human-supervised testing and simulations resulting in continued improvements," Moser said. "These include enhanced cone detection, full avoidance of construction zones with digging or other complex operations, and immediate enablement of the AV's Remote Assistance support/supervision by human observers."

Known Hazards

Cruise's undisclosed struggles with perceiving and navigating the outside world illustrate the perils of leaning heavily on machine learning to safely transport humans. "At Cruise, you can't have a company without AI," the company's artificial intelligence chief told Insider in

2021. Cruise regularly touts its AI prowess in the tech media, describing it as central to preempting road hazards. “We take a machine-learning-first approach to prediction,” a Cruise engineer wrote in 2020.

The fact that Cruise is even cataloguing and assessing its safety risks is a positive sign, said Phil Koopman, an engineering professor at Carnegie Mellon, emphasizing that the safety issues that worried Cruise internally have been known to the field of autonomous robotics for decades. Koopman, who has a long career working on AV safety, faulted the data-driven culture of machine learning that leads tech companies to contemplate hazards only after they’ve encountered them, rather than before. The fact that robots have difficulty detecting “negative obstacles” — AV jargon for a hole — is nothing new.

> “Safety is about the bad day, not the good day, and it only takes one bad day.”

“They should have had that hazard on their hazard list from day one,” Koopman said. “If you were only training it how to handle things you’ve already seen, there’s an infinite supply of things that you won’t see until it happens to your car. And so machine learning is fundamentally poorly suited to safety for this reason.”

The safety materials from Cruise raise an uncomfortable question for the company about whether robot cars should be on the road if it’s known they might drive into a hole or a child.

“If you can’t see kids, it’s very hard for you to accept that not being high risk — no matter how infrequent you think it’s going to happen,” Koopman explained. “Because history shows us people almost always underestimate the risk of high severity because they’re too optimistic. Safety is about the bad day, not the good day, and it only takes one bad day.”

Koopman said the answer rests largely on what steps, if any, Cruise has taken to mitigate that risk. According to one safety memo, Cruise began operating fewer driverless cars during daytime hours to avoid encountering children, a move it deemed effective at mitigating the overall risk without fixing the underlying technical problem. In August, Cruise announced the cuts to daytime ride operations in San Francisco but made no mention of its attempt to lower risk to local children. (“Risk mitigation measures incorporate more than AV behavior, and include operational measures like alternative routing and avoidance areas, daytime or nighttime deployment and fleet reductions among other solutions,” said Moser. “Materials viewed by The Intercept may not reflect the full scope of our evaluation and mitigation measures for a specific situation.”)

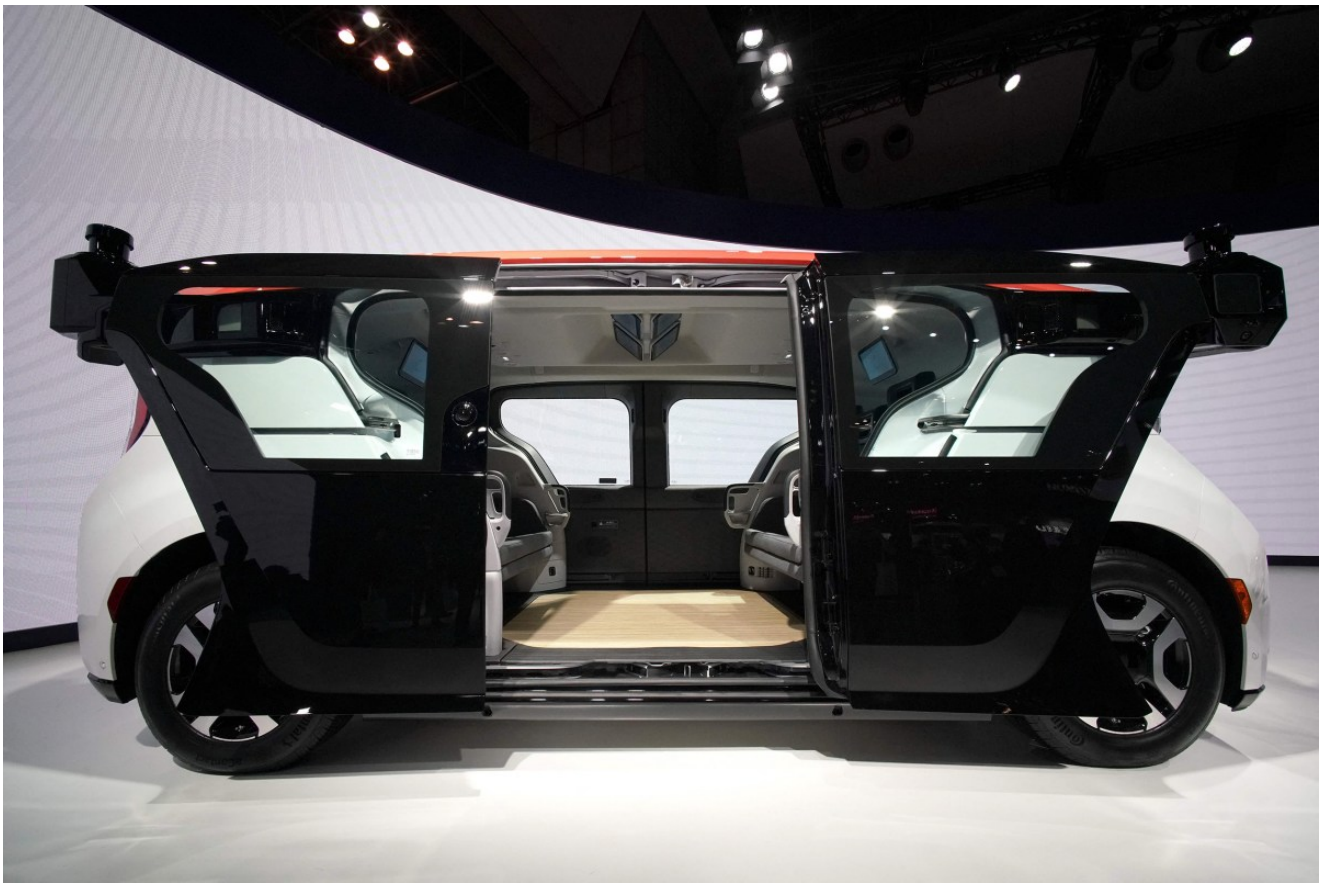
A quick fix like shifting hours of operation presents an engineering paradox: How can the company be so sure it’s avoiding a thing it concedes it can’t always see? “You kind of can’t,” said Koopman, “and that may be a Catch-22, but they’re the ones who decided to deploy in San Francisco.”

> “The reason you remove safety drivers is for publicity and optics and investor confidence.”

Precautions like reduced daytime operations will only lower the chance that a Cruise AV will have a dangerous encounter with a child, not eliminate that possibility. In a large American city, where it’s next to impossible to run a taxi business that will never need to drive anywhere a child might possibly appear, Koopman argues Cruise should have kept safety drivers in place while it knew this flaw persisted. “The reason you remove safety drivers is for publicity and optics and investor confidence,” he told The Intercept.

Koopman also noted that there’s not always linear progress in fixing safety issues. In the course of trying to fine-tune its navigation, Cruise’s simulated tests showed its AV software missed children at an increased rate, despite attempts to fix the issues, according to materials reviewed by The Intercept.

The two larger issues of kids and holes weren’t the only robot flaws potentially imperiling nearby humans. According to other internal materials, some vehicles in the company’s fleet suddenly began making unprotected left turns at intersections, something Cruise cars are supposed to be forbidden from attempting. The potentially dangerous maneuvers were chalked up to a botched software update.



The Cruise Origin, a self-driving vehicle with no steering wheel or pedals, is displayed at Honda's booth during the press day of the Japan Mobility Show in Tokyo on Oct. 25, 2023.
Photo: Kazuhiro Nog/AFP via Getty Images

The Future of Road Safety?

Part of the self-driving industry's techno-libertarian promise to society — and a large part of how it justifies beta-testing its robots on public roads — is the claim that someday, eventually, streets dominated by robot drivers will be safer than their flesh-based predecessors.

Cruise cited a RAND Corporation study to make its case. "It projected deploying AVs that are on average ten percent safer than the average human driver could prevent 600,000 fatalities in the United States over 35 years," wrote Vice President for Safety Louise Zhang in a company blog post. "Based on our first million driverless miles of operation, it appears we are on track to far exceed this projected safety benefit."

During General Motors' quarterly earnings call — the same day California suspended Cruise's operating permit — CEO Mary Barra told financial analysts that Cruise "is safer than a human driver and is constantly improving and getting better."

In the 2022 "Cruise Safety Report," the company outlines a deeply unflattering comparison of fallible human drivers to hyper-intelligent robot cars. The report pointed out that driver distraction was responsible for more than 3,000 traffic fatalities in 2020, whereas "Cruise AVs

cannot be distracted." Crucially, the report claims, a "Cruise AV only operates in conditions that it is designed to handle."

> "It's I think especially egregious to be making the argument that Cruise's safety record is better than a human driver."

When it comes to hitting kids, however, internal materials indicate the company's machines were struggling to match the safety performance of even an average human: Cruise's goal was, at the time, for its robots to merely drive as safely around children at the same rate as an average Uber driver — a goal the internal materials note it was failing to meet.

"It's I think especially egregious to be making the argument that Cruise's safety record is better than a human driver," said Smith, the University of South Carolina law professor. "It's pretty striking that there's a memo that says we could hit more kids than an average rideshare driver, and the apparent response of management is, keep going."

In a statement to The Intercept, Cruise confirmed its goal of performing better than ride-hail drivers. "Cruise always strives to go beyond existing safety benchmarks, continuing to raise our own internal standards while we collaborate with regulators to define industry standards," said Moser. "Our safety approach combines a focus on better-than-human behavior in collision imminent situations, and expands to predictions and behaviors to proactively avoid scenarios with risk of collision."

Cruise and its competitors have worked hard to keep going despite safety concerns, public and nonpublic. Before the California Public Utilities Commission voted to allow Cruise to offer driverless rides in San Francisco, where Cruise is headquartered, the city's public safety and traffic agencies lobbied for a slower, more cautious approach to AVs. The commission didn't agree with the agencies' worries. "While we do not yet have the data to judge AVs against the standard human drivers are setting, I do believe in the potential of this technology to increase safety on the roadway," said commissioner John Reynolds, who previously worked as a lawyer for Cruise.

Had there always been human safety drivers accompanying all robot rides — which California regulators let Cruise ditch in 2021 — Smith said there would be less cause for alarm. A human behind the wheel could, for example, intervene to quickly steer a Cruise AV out of the path of a child or construction crew that the robot failed to detect. Though the company has put them back in place for now, dispensing entirely with human backups is ultimately crucial to Cruise's long-term business, part of its pitch to the public that steering wheels will become a relic. With the wheel still there and a human behind it, Cruise would struggle to tout its technology as groundbreaking.

“We’re not in a world of testing with in-vehicle safety drivers, we’re in a world of testing through deployment without this level of backup and with a whole lot of public decisions and claims that are in pretty stark contrast to this,” Smith explained. “Any time that you’re faced with imposing a risk that is greater than would otherwise exist and you’re opting not to provide a human safety driver, that strikes me as pretty indefensible.”

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Join The Conversation

August 10, 2023 – the California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) votes to authorize 24-hour operation of autonomous passenger vehicles in San Francisco, against the will of the city council and public opinion. This decision is immediately met with AVs causing issues throughout the city, including:

- The day after the CPUC vote, at least 10 Cruise vehicles stop without reason on a public street, choking an entire neighborhood in traffic.
- On August 15, a Cruise vehicle drove through a public construction project and lodged itself in wet concrete.
- On August 17, an autonomous Cruise taxicab crashed into a fire truck that was responding to an incident; the firetruck had its emergency lights and sirens operating at the time of the crash. Throughout the summer, there were dozens of cases in which autonomous vehicles interfered with San Francisco Fire Department vehicles and personnel as they were responding to incidents. Similar problems have caused headaches for First Responders in Austin, TX.
- On August 18, the California DMV ordered Cruise to cut its vehicle fleet in half following numerous crashes and incidents with their vehicles.

With this dysfunction playing out on the streets of San Francisco as a backdrop, Republican and Democratic lawmakers worked throughout the summer on a reasonable and proper legislative response to the problem's being caused by autonomous vehicles in California. Seeing that small passenger cars were causing enormous problems, the California Senate and House of Representatives agreed that driverless vehicles over 10,000 lbs. have no business being on public streets. AB 316, which passed the State Assembly by a bipartisan vote of 69-4 and sailed through the State Senate with a bipartisan vote of 36-2, would have required that a human operator be physically present in any vehicle that weighs more than 10,000 lbs. This reasonable requirement was supported by public safety officials, worker advocacy groups, and the broader public in California.

On September 22, Governor Newsom sided with the big tech companies and his wealthy donors by vetoing AB 316. Since then, autonomous robotaxis have continued to operate with dangerous consequences for Californians.

- On October 2, it was first reported that there had been a serious accident between a pedestrian and an autonomous Cruise taxicab in downtown San Francisco. The woman, who had been struck by another vehicle, was pinned beneath a fully autonomous Cruise vehicle when first responders arrived on the scene.
- On October 17, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced that it would begin examining the risk that Cruise's autonomous vehicles pose to pedestrians. The NHTSA probe specifically sought to determine if Cruise vehicles exercise "appropriate caution around pedestrians in the roadway."
- On October 24, the California DMV suspended Cruise's autonomous vehicle deployment and driverless testing permits, effective immediately. This was in response to Cruise

misrepresenting the facts of the case surrounding the pedestrian accident that occurred on October 2. While Cruise stated that the vehicle immediately came to a stop, it was later revealed that the autonomous vehicle started driving again, and dragged the woman underneath of the vehicle for another 20 feet. When San Francisco Supervisor Aaron Peskin first stated that the vehicle dragging the woman for 20 feet "was the source of her major injuries" in an interview with *Forbes* on October 6, Cruise stated that they had no comment. When Cruise showed investigators with the DMV video of the incident, it omitted the fact that the vehicle continued for another 20 feet with the pedestrian underneath.

- On October 26, Cruise announced that it would be halting its autonomous vehicle operations nationwide. Cruise had also been operating autonomous vehicles in Texas, Arizona, and Florida when this pause in operations was announced. Cruise stated that it had made this decision to pause their operations in order to "rebuild public trust."

This string of high-profile incidents led many journalists to take a deeper dive into Cruise's internal documents. What they found was truly unsettling – documentation shows that Cruise continued to operate their vehicles on public roads despite knowing that they were a danger to the public. Among the issues recently revealed, Cruise's autonomous vehicles failed to consistently recognize children along the roadway and failed to use appropriate caution in their presence.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters will continue to monitor the operation of autonomous vehicles throughout the country and will be sure to share news with Locals and Joint Councils as it becomes available.

Comparing State Polling on AVs

Are you aware that elected officials are considering legislation that would allow driverless vehicles to operate on public roads without a human safety operator?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	-
• Texas (4/5)	53% no
• Nebraska (3/3)	68% no
• Missouri (1/30)	68% no
• Indiana (1/24)	68% no
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	62% no
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	64% no

Department of Political and Legislative Action

Comparing State Polling on AVs

When it comes to you and your family sharing the road with highly driverless vehicles, how comfortable are you?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	72% uncomfortable
• Texas (4/5)	60% very or somewhat uncomfortable
• Nebraska (3/3)	70% very or somewhat uncomfortable
• Missouri (1/30)	68% very or somewhat uncomfortable
• Indiana (1/24)	65% very or somewhat uncomfortable
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	70% very or somewhat uncomfortable
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	64% very or somewhat uncomfortable

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Comparing State Polling on AVs

Would you be comfortable sharing the road with driverless small compact cars?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	60% no
• Texas (4/5)	56% no
• Nebraska (3/3)	67% no
• Missouri (1/30)	70% no
• Indiana (1/24)	62% no
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	69% no
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	62% no

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Comparing State Polling on AVs

Would you be comfortable sharing the road with driverless delivery vans (UPS, FedEx, etc.)?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	77% no
• Texas (4/5)	64% no
• Nebraska (3/3)	76% no
• Missouri (1/30)	78% no
• Indiana (1/24)	75% no
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	76% no
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	75% no

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Comparing State Polling on AVs

Would you be comfortable sharing the road with driverless semi-trucks/tractor trailers?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	85% no
• Texas (4/5)	73% no
• Nebraska (3/3)	84% no
• Missouri (1/30)	84% no
• Indiana (1/24)	83% no
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	81% no
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	83% no

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Comparing State Polling on AVs

Would you be more comfortable sharing the road with a highly automated vehicle with a human safety operator physically present in the vehicle?

State/Date:	Result:
• California	69% comfortable
• Texas (4/5)	60% more comfortable
• Nebraska (3/3)	61% more comfortable
• Missouri (1/30)	62% more or same comfort level
• Indiana (1/24)	58% more comfortable
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	57% more comfortable
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	58% more comfortable

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Comparing State Polling on AVs

How concerned are you that driverless vehicles are a threat to public safety?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	-
• Texas (4/5)	82% very or somewhat concerned
• Nebraska (3/3)	83% very or somewhat concerned
• Missouri (1/30)	86% very or somewhat concerned
• Indiana (1/24)	82% very or somewhat concerned
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	85% very or somewhat concerned
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	84% very or somewhat concerned

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Comparing State Polling on AVs

How concerned are you that driverless vehicles are a threat to replacing workers' jobs?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	-
• Texas (4/5)	75% very or somewhat concerned
• Nebraska (3/3)	77% very or somewhat concerned
• Missouri (1/30)	78% very or somewhat concerned
• Indiana (1/24)	75% very or somewhat concerned
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	80% very or somewhat concerned
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	74% very or somewhat concerned

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Comparing State Polling on AVs

Would you be more or less likely to support a politician if you knew they supported a human safety operator requirement for all driverless vehicles?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	51% more likely (21% more likely)
• Texas (4/5)	60% much or somewhat more likely
• Nebraska (3/3)	63% much or somewhat more likely
• Missouri (1/30)	63% much or somewhat more likely
• Indiana (1/24)	51% much or somewhat more likely
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	64% much or somewhat more likely
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	60% much or somewhat more likely

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Comparing State Polling on AVs

Currently, there is a proposal in your state to require that a human safety operator be physically present in any autonomous vehicle. Is this a proposal that you would support?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	73% yes
• Texas (4/5)	80% yes
• Nebraska (3/3)	73% yes
• Missouri (1/30)	-
• Indiana (1/24)	-
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	-
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	-

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Comparing State Polling on AVs

In your mind, which political party is more likely to support technologies like driverless vehicles that do not require a human safety operator?

State/Date:	Result:
• California (8/25)	-
• Texas (4/5)	40% Dem/26% Republican
• Nebraska (3/3)	45% Dem/21% Republican
• Missouri (1/30)	-
• Indiana (1/24)	35% Dem/19% Republican
• Tennessee (10/22/22)	38% Dem/25% Republican
• Pennsylvania (9/6/22)	42% Dem/25% Republican

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The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

DOJ and SEC investigate GM-owned self-driving car company Cruise

Confirmation of the probe comes after an October incident where one of the cars dragged a pedestrian 20 feet

By Trisha Thadani

Updated January 25, 2024 at 9:54 p.m. EST | Published January 25, 2024 at 3:54 p.m. EST

SAN FRANCISCO — The Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission have opened an investigation into General Motors-owned autonomous car company Cruise, following an October incident here where one of its cars hit a jaywalking pedestrian and dragged her about 20 feet.

Confirmation of the federal probe comes months after the California Department of Motor Vehicles suspended the company's permits following the October crash. Cruise said in a Thursday blog post that it "failed to live up to the justifiable expectations of regulators and the communities we serve" and that it is "fully cooperating" with the state and federal investigators.

Cruise, which has since halted its driverless testing program around the country, was criticized by state regulators for appearing to initially misrepresent the series of events around the crash. The company released a more than 100-page report from law firm Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan regarding the Oct. 2 incident and Cruises' subsequent interactions with the government officials.

In the report, Quinn Emanuel said that Cruise executives were aware when they briefed officials the next day on the accident that its vehicle had dragged the woman 20 feet, but they didn't mention it. The report said Cruise's response reflects "deficient leadership at the highest levels of the company that led to a lack of coordination, mistakes of judgment, misapprehension of regulatory requirements and expectations, and inconsistent disclosures and discussions of material facts at critical meetings with regulators and other government officials. "

Cruise said it "accepts" the findings and that it is "profoundly remorseful both for the injuries to the pedestrian, as well as for breaching the trust of our regulators, the media, and the public."

"Cruise takes these findings seriously and is committed to increased transparency, enhanced safety, and collaborative engagement with our stakeholders," the company said.

The DOJ and the SEC both declined to comment.

The federal probe is the latest development in a tumultuous couple of months for the General Motors subsidiary, which achieved a major milestone this summer when it received permits to offer 24/7 robotaxi service in San

Francisco. That expansion — seen as a pivotal moment for the self-driving car industry — was short-lived, though, as California revoked the company's permits immediately after the October collision.

The Quinn Emanuel report dissected the Oct. 2 crash in great detail, reconstructing the moments in which a jaywalking pedestrian stepped into a busy San Francisco intersection and was hit by a human-driven car and then flung into the path of the autonomous vehicle. In footage initially shared by Cruise with The Washington Post, other media outlets and the California Department of Motor Vehicles, the car appeared to stop as soon as it made contact with the pedestrian.

It was later revealed a few weeks later through a California DMV report that the car failed to detect the woman beneath it and continued dragging her for about 20 feet at about seven miles per hour, worsening her injuries.

According to the report, a human driver would likely "not have been able to avoid the collision under similar circumstances." But, the report said, an "alert and attentive human driver would be aware that an impact of some sort had occurred and would not have continued driving without further investigating the situation."

The Oct. 2 crash was only one incident in a long list of woes that San Francisco has experienced with the self-driving cars that have become ubiquitous on its streets. City officials have spent months trying to reduce the number of autonomous vehicles on its streets by highlighting a slew of issues caused by the vehicles, including cars suddenly stopping short in traffic and disrupting emergency scenes.

On Tuesday, The Post first reported that the city filed a lawsuit against a state commission that allowed Google and General Motors' autonomous car companies to expand here this summer — despite a pattern of "serious problems" on the streets.

Eva Dou contributed to this report.

Autonomous Vehicle Public Safety Act Bill Text

An autonomous vehicle registered in this state must continue to meet federal standards and regulations for a motor vehicle. The vehicles shall not be engaged in the transport of interstate commerce or the transporting of passengers except for personal and non-revenue use or the transporting of goods unless a human safety operator is physically present in the autonomous vehicle such that he or she has the ability to monitor the vehicles performance and intervene if necessary, including operating or shutting off the vehicle. A human safety operator must continue to meet all federal and state qualifications for automated and non-automated vehicles.

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2024 7:09 AM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 8th May 2024 07:08

First Name:
Sheri

Last Name:
Dietsch

Email Address:
skdietsch@msn.com

Subject:
Bell Crossing Roundabout

Comment:
With everything I've seen, pertaining to the subject, once again our government doesn't seem to be exploring options that may be more sparing with our hard earned tax dollars and that would suit the need for traffic issues at this intersection of highway. We should not be treated in this valley as seemingly beta testers and have our opinions disregarded as our community is impacted in this manner! I know it's really easy to disregard waste when spending other peoples money as the government does but let's give it a shot why don't you say?!?! A large chunk of money would be better spent on adding Drivers Ed teachers for this area so our children can properly be trained from the start!?!? I believe at this time there is one to go around and I'm fairly certain that's a state education funding and department of transportation issue!! How about a speed reduction to start as the cheapest option that may be positively impactful or how about a motion detecting traffic light? Perhaps with most likely the majority of the accidents seeming to be due to driver ignorance, which no amount of money can fix, retraining may be in order. I am adamantly opposed to this roundabout and the excessive spending that is associated with it to meet a need that could be met with less expensive option and cost the taxpayers both state and federal less money. Please use wisdom in your spending considerations as people responsible for spending the taxpayer dollars!!

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 9:15 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 7th May 2024 21:15

First Name:
Terry

Last Name:
Minow

Email Address:
bullheadm@aol.com

Subject:
North Coast Hiawatha passenger railroad

Comment:
Madam Chair, members of the committee, My name is Terry Minow. I am the chairperson of Big Sky 55+, a Montana group representing older Montanans. On behalf of Big Sky 55+, I strongly support the North Coast Hiawatha passenger railroad. Older Montanans have identified reliable and affordable transportation as a necessity that is often lacking in our big state. As people age, it becomes more difficult to safely drive long distances, especially on Montana roads and in Montana weather. It is also difficult for older people to sit for long periods of time. Another advantage to traveling by train is being able to get up and move around. My parents, in their 90s, are a good example. They live in Miles City. They sometimes need to see medical specialists in Billings. That is a roundtrip drive of almost 300 miles. Thankfully there is a bus that goes to Billings weekly, which has been very helpful. But if a passenger train traveled across southern Montana, older people would have another transportation option for seeing medical providers and visiting family members who live across the state. I have great memories of traveling from Miles City to Missoula for college, and Missoula to Miles City for the Bucking Horse Sale. It is a relaxing, safe way to travel. People who travel for work, conferences, college, to campaign, and to visit family would be able to safely work on their phones and computers instead of spending many hours of windshield time. Big Sky 55+ and the older Montanans we represent would benefit greatly from a southern passenger rail route. Please support this important project. Thank you for your consideration. Terry Minow 502 Lower Valley Road Boulder, MT 59632 406-225-4397

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 5:04 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 7th May 2024 17:03

First Name:
Patricia

Last Name:
Hascall

Email Address:
nellfox@aol.com

Subject:
Bell Crossing 'experimental' roundabout.

Comment:
While some proponents say it's more effective and less money I have been unable to research any information affirming this. 93 is a one way in, one way out highway servicing the Bitterroot Valley. The speeds very in TOWN intersections. This highway also carries a heavy load of people pulling many varieties of trailers throughout the seasons. In particular those people who care about their livestock cannot easily 'merge' and in many cases will need to come to a complete stop waiting for the circle to almost completely clear because no knowledgable horse owner will floor the rigs into oncoming vehicles. They will SLOWLY enter so as not to throw their animals around in their trailers. One of the safety features I have always admired in MT is the flashing lights activated to warn the light will be changing. When hauling a load this should be mandatory nation wide. I do believe this is a much safer and more palatable answer. I can't imagine emergency vehicles trying to navigate one (or many if unelected officials decide to make 93 a series of these; I know the mayor of Hamilton is chomping at the bit to put one at Main Street if he could figure out how to steal property to do it.) or several up and down the valley. Please reconsider this poor decision at an intersection that is more or less in the middle of nowhere. Also consider that you will essentially shut down the road in the middle of tourist season.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 3:07 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 7th May 2024 15:07

First Name:
Jean

Last Name:
Belangie-Nye

Email Address:
jean@nyeimage.com

Subject:
List sent to Katy

Comment:
I have 4 different areas that need comments: Bell Crossing, Autonomous Vehicles and Big Sky Map for Bicycles, plus 2 unrelated general comments

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 2:24 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 7th May 2024 14:23

First Name:
Valeda

Last Name:
Siek

Email Address:
cbarv@msn.com

Subject:
Roundabout at Bell Crossing

Comment:
I object to putting on Highwsy 93 and Bell Crossing. It will be even more dangerous than the current very small flashing light!

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Tuesday, May 7, 2024 9:13 AM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 7th May 2024 09:12

First Name:
Jody

Last Name:
Magdos

Email Address:
MTmagdos@yahoo.com

Subject:
93 roundabout

Comment:
This round about is the most ridiculous thing ever. It is a Hwy. we do not need a round about in the middle of a four lane Hwy. I don't know how anyone could request this to happen. It's just wrong. There will be far more wrecks because of it.

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Friday, May 3, 2024 9:20 AM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 3rd May 2024 09:19

First Name:
Janet

Last Name:
Holt

Email Address:
janetiholt1950@gmail.com

Subject:
Highway 93/Bell Crossing Roundabout

Comment:
Good Morning Transportation Committee, I'm Janet Holt, 146 Totem View Drive, Victor, MT. Today I'm emailing you to ask that you stand against this roundabout that is planned for Highway 93 and Bell Crossing. I can assure you as one who has lived in this area for almost 25 years, that it will be a horribly priced disaster. We don't need to spend 20 million of our hard earned tax dollars on something that will create more confusion and accidents....and even if it wouldn't cause any problems, there are much better ways to use our tax dollars and still make a safe traffic area at Bell Crossing. We (my family and I) have used that intersection many thousands of times as we lived on Bell Crossing for 20 years. We've driven large horse trailers and all kinds of equipment and large trucks through there. We know what we are talking about regarding this traffic obstruction that is trying to be forced on us. Wise and thoughtful planning is required here. We who have used that intersection so much have always thought a simple traffic light would be sufficient...and it would, if you don't have to get on this crazy roundabout bandwagon. Possibly you are aware that in the UK they are "quietly" removing roundabouts and putting in traffic lights. A traffic light would be a much more cost effective and safe way to go. Bell Crossing is a rural area...not all of us drive tiny electric cars. Highway 93 is a thoroughfare used by all types of vehicles from the largest semi trucks (some hauling hazardous materials), all sizes of recreational vehicles, emergency vehicles, farm equipment, horse trailers, etc. Please go with a traffic light and save our county residents a huge amount of money, frustration and possible harm. One of my daughters frequently goes to the Wickenburg area in Arizona and has encountered first hand the highway failure caused by a roundabout placed in an area frequented by large numbers of semi trucks and large horse trailers. Roundabouts may work in some places, but this fad will pass. Please don't waste our money and put our lives in danger. Thank you, Janet Holt P.S. As a side note, one of my daughters had a bad accident at the 93/Bell Crossing intersection a few years ago. It would have been avoided completely with a traffic light..but not with a roundabout that would have allowed traffic to continue moving. A roundabout might have even caused the accident to be more disastrous. Thank you for taking time to read my email. Janet

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Tuesday, April 30, 2024 12:07 PM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 30th April 2024 12:07

First Name:
MOnica

Last Name:
J Scott

Email Address:
db_scott1@comcast.net

Subject:
Bell Crossing Round About

Comment:
NO NO NO traffic round abouts. Let's keep Montana the Last Best Place. Thank you

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/

From: donotreply@legmt.gov
Sent: Tuesday, April 30, 2024 8:20 AM
To: LEG Cmte-TRIC Comment
Subject: Public Comment for TIC

Public Comments for the Transportation Interim Committee

Date: 30th April 2024 08:20

First Name:
Carol

Last Name:
Northcott

Email Address:
c.northcott@yahoo.com

Subject:
Hwy 93/Bell Crossing Roundabout proposal

Comment:
30 April 2024 Transportation Hwy 93/Bell Crossing Roundabout Proposal I have been a resident of Hamilton, Montana for over 30 years and have seen many changes on Highway 93 during that time; some good and some not so good. A four-way traffic light with right and left turning lanes (which are probably not going to require buying any land) seems to me, to be the best and safest solution to the increased traffic in that area. It makes sense to have the speed limit between Bell Crossing and Victor, in both directions, 45 MPH. It is not that far from Victor (where the speed limit is 45 MPH) and I always wondered why it went up to 70 going north, before Bell Crossing anyway. Having a light at Bell Crossing would be consistent with Woodside and Blue Mountain traffic control in the 93 corridor between the Bitterroot and Missoula. Those both seem to work well when the flashing yellow warning light gives you enough time to slow down further, from the 45 MPH speed limit there, and stop. Both of those intersections have appropriate speed limit adjustments coming into and leaving the intersection. It works. Please consider putting in a traffic light and adjusting the speed limits appropriately at the intersection of Highway 93 and Bell Crossing. A traffic circle on Highway 93 just does not make sense and is not consistent with what is already present and working on the highway. Thank you, Carol Northcott Hamilton, MT

Sent via leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/tic/public-comments-tic/