Jason Coambes - Comments

To whom it may concern:

Utilizing fully autonomous vehicles is a tremendous risk to the motoring public, causes potentially significant damage to the livelihoods/careers/life style of millions of blue collar workers, sets a dangerous precedent regarding use of robotic devices vs human, and (in the extreme) could cause the national economy to tumble into severe and significant crisis.

Tremendous risk - While moving at speeds of up to 75 mph, lag in processing from the cpu, a video buffering moment, or one of the multitude of other bugs that happen regularly with computing equipment, there is the danger of causing the deaths of multiple people quickly. Granted, this could happen with a distracted driver as well but we train to eliminate this from happening. Technology is not to the point yet that it can stop it from happening. I have a very high power computer system, with overkill on RAM, hard drive, and two video cards to prevent having problems. And I still do have them. A truck moving at 75 mph, weighing 80,000 can inflict serious damage very very quickly. The difference is that we have an expectation of human drivers to never let this happen vs with an autonomous vehicle, it will be 'expected' to happen.

Damaging the livelihoods, careers, and life style of millions should be enough to make one stop and think. As a ball park number, $150 billion in income will be eliminated. That is just the drivers. Plus dispatchers, plus repair facilities, plus management, all will be eliminated. Not overnight, of course, but this is the path that we would be set upon. Hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars will be pulled from the middle class. From solid families with children, from millenials, from senior citizens. Some say that is the cost of innovation. I don't believe that hogwash for a second. Would you want to be the one to face those effected and let them know you are destroying their way of life and they should "learn to code?"

As goes trucking, so will go warehouse workers (already started), so goes small business that can't afford to innovate as the larger companies do, so goes fast food workers (already started), so goes cashiers (already started), so goes (in some form or fashion) virtually all middle class jobs. Just a philosophical discussion regarding this point but what will happen when 10's or even a hundred million people are unemployed or are forced to do their job for less due to automation? It will be a sad state for our country to be in.

My last point combines national security, cyber security, and the potential crisis that could occur. I don't wear a tinfoil hat but instead deal in realism. Just recently a hacker in Seattle stole a 100 million peoples account info. A single person. Now lets say that autonomous trucking is limited to ports, as is already happening. Suddenly, upon a cyber attack, nothing can be brought into the country through ports. The economy would be ravaged within days. I am sure you can see the damage that could be done very easily so I won't belabor the point. It is a REAL danger with devastating consequences.

These are the reasons that planes, for example, have pilots still onboard. The take off, the flight, and the landing can and often are done by computer. But the damage that could be done should there not be a pilot onboard would be catastrophic. The same applies with trucking. Taking a driver out of the truck might very well save a lot of money. But the risk should be considered to be too great. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jason Coambes