From: ████████████████████████████
Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2024 1:49 PM
To: BPAC Communication <bpac@mountainview.gov>
Subject: public comment on agenda item 6.1 PDDs, Jan 31st, 2024 BPAC meeting

I was told that some of the new bike-lane-using robots would be the size of an airline beverage cart. So let's make an analogy.

Let's say, hypothetically, that an airline has a new PDD pilot program to have robot snack and beverage carts go up and down the aisles delivering items that passengers have ordered via their devices. This is framed as "economic development vs. passenger safety". If passengers have an issue with the carts, there is a phone number on the cart that they can call to learn more about the cart. The metrics that will be collected: how many trips do the carts make, what is the CO2 impact, any passenger injuries due to the carts.

Metrics that will **not** be collected: what was the passenger experience of trying to use the aisles while the bots were deployed? Did they delay going to the bathroom? Did they opt to not get up to stretch their legs on a long flight? Did they have to wait to get back to their seat until the robot was done making the delivery?

At the end of the pilot, the program is declared a success! The number of items sold was counted, and there was only a single injury due to a passenger backing into a cart. Few passengers remembered to write down the phone number and call once they landed, very few concerns were registered via customer complaint forms, so clearly there were no issues.

This does not seem that different from the way the city has been framing and operating the PDD pilot.

Does this seem OK? To me it does not. Maybe, who knows, these airline bots would be great. But I don't think the way the hypothetical airline evaluated the pilot was adequate to make that determination.

I think the pilot program must include surveying users who experience having to share the facilities with the bots. If people don't like walking and biking as much when robots are in the way, then we need to know this and make it part of the evaluation for whether to continue the program.

I think the program should be suspended until such a survey plan is put in place, preferably by consulting relevant community groups, e.g. SVBC in the case of bots that will use bike lanes.

I also think that framing the benefit as "economic development" vs. the cost as "pedestrian safety" sets the evaluation up to favor PDDs in all cases unless they cause actual physical harm. We might imagine that the PDDs will benefit local businesses, but they might decrease foot and bike traffic to retail areas by incentivizing staying at home (which was their selling point during the covid lockdowns). The bike-lane PDDs also have a bigger delivery radius, meaning that they could load up goods at ghost kitchens or grocery warehousing facilities, which could be cheaper than what local markets or restaurants could offer, thus taking away the business of the latter. Given the uncertainty of positive effect, "economic impact" may be more accurate than "economic development".

On the "pedestrian safety" end of things, I think it needs to more broadly include the city's active transportation goals in the balance.

Concerns about bots behaving "too well": Many bikes do not stop completely at stop signs in order to not lose all momentum (e.g. the bicycle safety stop, which has been shown to be safe). However, this is not yet legal in California. Meaning that the bots will stop, forcing the bikes behind them to fully stop as well, adding time and effort to bicycle commutes.

I can see why companies are pushing for being able to deploy these bots, and it may end up making sense in cost, environmental impact, and convenience. But since one could also expect the PDDs to affect the utility of our active transportation infrastructure for everyone, which also affects cost, environmental impact, and convenience, the benefits and costs should be accurately measured. I don't see the program doing this in its current form.

Thanks for reading!