

WHY UBER WONT KILL TRANSIT

TransitTools #1

A TROUBLING DISCOURSE:

Leon Drolet of the Michigan Taxpayers Alliance recently warned voters in Detroit that investing in buses and trains “makes no sense with driverless technology on the horizon.” An autonomous car booster recently told the Mayor of Nashville not to spend another dime on transit. Techno-darling Elon Musk eagerly anticipates the “abolition of fixed route transit” in his Master Plan, Part Deux.

The futurist refrain has reached fever pitch. It’s distorting needed conversations about transportation in American cities .

It also has the distinction of being dead wrong. Consider the entire ridership of the LA Metro bus system attempting to squeeze onto the 405 in Ubers, or the New York City Subway’s L train service primarily replaced with e-hail cars and vans on the Williamsburg Bridge.

In these “Ubergeddon” scenarios, the travel corridors and surrounding places would be completely gridlocked.

Uber itself acknowledges that its future is inextricably tied to public transportation improvement and expansion – the company recently endorsed successful transit ballot measures in Seattle as well as Atlanta.

The following are key arguments TransitCenter has compiled to help advocates answer or counter the idea that e-hail services, driverless or not, spell the end of public transit. We also include steps to pivot from this unproductive debate to emphasize **meaningful transit improvements** cities and transit agencies can deliver.

Many of these ideas have been explored at length on Jarrett Walker’s blog, Human Transit, which we invite you to visit at www.humantransit.org

THREE REASONS WHY UBER WON'T KILL TRANSIT



EVERYONE IN UBERS JUST WON'T FIT

Whether they're Lyft or Uber, electric or driverless, cars hog space.

Technology and venture capital can't change the geometric fact that 40 people in cars take up more space than 40 people on transit. It's an unassailable matter of geometry. Transit will always be the most space efficient way of moving people. Research in American cities found that while a 10 foot bus or rail dedicated transitway can move 10,000 - 25,000 persons per hour, private vehicles like Uber can only move 600-1,600 per hour in the same space. That's only 7% of what transit can do.

Instead of consigning city streets to nothing but space for cars, transit provides us with opportunities to create wider sidewalks, cafes, bike lanes and parklets--in short, the type of benefits that are compelling more and more Americans to seek to live in dense cities and towns.

TRANSIT ADVOCATES SHOULD:

- **Reject any official or expert claims that e-hail or robotic cars will somehow substitute for high capacity transit in cities.**
- **Call instead for fast, frequent, reliable and walkable transit networks in dense urban districts.**

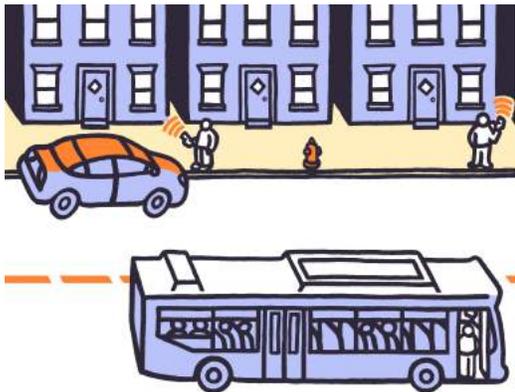
To make transit more useful to more people, advocates should encourage design of rail and bus networks for efficient service, with as many routes as possible offering 15-minute or better frequencies, with intersecting frequent routes to allow for fast trips and walkable stops.

- **Urge cities to lead in defining appropriate roles to various transportation services.**

If cities or transit authorities are operating marginal, very low ridership bus routes, it may be reasonable for the transit operator to subsidize e-hail service in those areas while redeploying the buses to add frequency in places with high ridership.

"BAD" TRANSIT IS BETTER AT MOVING PEOPLE THAN A BUSY UBER

Complaints about transit will usually include a riff on "empty" buses. A bus that carries ten riders per service hour is generally qualified as poor performing. But in comparison, standard Uber and Lyfts max out at six riders per hour. For an Uber or Lyft driver to serve ten people per hour, it would mean the driver is picking up a new passenger every six minutes, physically impossible in American cities.



UBER & TRANSIT BEST SERVE DIFFERENT AUDIENCES AT DIFFERENT TIMES

In major cities, e-hail companies are busiest at night when transit service runs less frequently. Transit is busiest and most effective at moving people during peak commute hours. Surveys of Lyft and Uber users find the most popular time to call a driver is at 2 am and that few use it for commuting.

