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HOW DESIGN AND AI CAN HELP KEEP SHARED AUTOMATED VEHICLES SAFE AND RESPECTFUL

Who sets the rules when the driver disappears?

NOVEMBER 11, 2026

TU/e researcher Pavlo Bazilinskyy studies how design and AI can support safe and respectful behavior in shared automated vehicles.

Image by Alexandros Rouchitsas

A driverless taxi may feel private, but it remains a shared transport space. What happens when passengers use such a vehicle for intimate activity? And what does that mean for other passengers, operators and the people responsible for keeping the vehicle clean and safe?

Private or public?

These questions were at the heart of the workshop Love In Traffic: Physical and Digital Design Against Consensual Sexual Activity Inside Public and Shared Automated Vehicles. The workshop took place during AutoUI 2026 in Gothenburg, Sweden. It used consensual sexual activity as a challenging case for thinking about the design of future shared vehicles.

Pavlo Bazilinskyy [/en/research/researchers/pavlo-bazilinskyy], assistant professor at the **TU/e Department of Industrial Design** [/en/our-university/departments/industrial-design], was one of the initiators and organizers. His research focuses on interaction between automated vehicles, their passengers and other road users, and on the role AI can play in this interaction.

Missing driver

A driver does more than operate a vehicle. Their presence also influences how passengers behave. When the driver disappears, people may feel less accountable, even when cameras or other sensors are present.

This creates difficult design questions. How should a vehicle respond when passengers cross a boundary? How can it safeguard people without monitoring them continuously? And how can designers communicate expectations without making the interior uncomfortable or unwelcoming?

These questions are becoming more urgent as automated taxis, shuttles and buses enter public spaces. Possible challenges extend beyond sexual activity. They include intoxication, aggression, vandalism, hygiene problems and situations in which passengers need help. Privacy and cultural differences make suitable responses even harder to define.

Design matters

During the workshop, researchers explored how vehicle interiors and digital interfaces could influence passenger behavior. Possible approaches included different seating layouts, fewer concealed spaces, clearer information about expected behavior and simple ways for passengers to request assistance.

AI could help a vehicle identify situations that may require attention. The next step is deciding how it should respond. A spoken message, contact with a remote operator or stopping the vehicle can each have very different consequences. Any response must be proportionate and respect passengers' privacy.

Bazilinskyy contributes TU/e expertise in human centered AI and interaction design. His contribution focuses on how automated vehicles can communicate with passengers and respond to sensitive situations in ways that people understand and accept.

The aim is not to regulate intimacy. The researchers use this specific situation to reveal broader challenges before shared automated vehicles become commonplace. They want to identify research questions and design principles that can help make these vehicles comfortable, hygienic and respectful spaces for everyone.

Global attention

The Love In Traffic workshop received widespread international media attention. Pavlo Bazilinskyy was interviewed by the **BBC** [https://youtu.be/5rRGBNXo3Ac?t=797]. Also **WIRED** [https://www.wired.com/story/meet-the-academics-trying-to-stop-you-from-having-sex-in-robotaxis/], **The Times** [https://www.thetimes.com/uk/transport/article/waymo-driverless-taxis-passengers-sex-ban-p99jj82gg] and **Ars Technica** [https://arstechnica.com/cars/2026/10/can-good-design-stop-content-creators-from-having-sex-in-robotaxis/] explored how researchers want to address consensual sexual activity in shared automated

vehicles.

Swedish and Portuguese media also covered the initiative. Their interest shows that the subject raises questions that resonate internationally: how should the interior, technology and rules of a driverless vehicle respond when passengers use a shared space for intimate activity?

The researchers are not seeking to regulate intimacy. They use this specific situation to investigate how automated vehicles can remain comfortable, hygienic and respectful spaces for everyone.

Shared challenge

The workshop brought together Alexandros Rouchitsas of KTG Research & Innovation, Ignacio Alvarez of Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt, Soyeon Kim of the University of Warwick, Chen Peng of Loughborough University and Pavlo Bazilinskyy of Eindhoven University of Technology. Their combined expertise covers human behavior, intelligent systems, interaction design and future mobility.

The questions they raised cannot be answered by AI alone. They require careful choices about vehicle interiors, passenger communication, privacy, human support and acceptable forms of intervention.

By addressing these choices early, researchers can help make automated public transport not only technically capable, but also socially workable.

Media contact:

Marc Rosmalen

m.rosmalen@tue.nl

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