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### It's Time to Drive the Point Home to Mr. Peduto

It's time for us to stand up and say, "Mayor Peduto, what's up with hating on Uber Self Driving Cars?" On March 4th the mayor signed an executive order limiting self driving technology in our city - drastically limiting the way this technology can advance (O'Toole). Why is our mayor limiting this awesome technology that is literally designed around eliminating the human element in traffic accidents - an issue that leads to thousands of deaths nationwide annually ("Traffic Safety Facts" 29)? It's time for our city to stand up and tell our Mayor we want this technology and we want it developed in Pittsburgh.

Who reading hasn't had a moment of heart-pounding fear as a reckless driver nearly clips past you as they walk through a crosswalk or drives dangerously around you while you're driving? We've all seen reckless drivers in action. Just last May a reckless driver going almost twice the speed limit on the narrow 10th Street Bypass lost control of her vehicle and killed another driver (Bradbury). Let's face reality - there is almost no way for anyone to protect against the dangers of others on the road. Speeding alone killed almost ten thousand people on US roads in 2016 - almost a third of total traffic fatalities ("Traffic Safety Facts" 29). Mark Rosekind of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration noted in a recent interview that these accidents are on the rise despite new technology to help improve driver awareness, breaking, and car safety ("Human Errors"). We've upgraded and replaced every part of a car that can protect its passengers except the most important part - the driver behind the wheel.

Speeding isn't the only human element that kills on our roads. We've all faced the choice of getting in a car (as a driver or passenger) after a few drinks. According to *USA Today*, "Drunk Driving remains the leading cause of death on our roads" ("It remains" para 1). In a world of self driving cars, drunk drivers will no longer exist, as the computers controlling the car can't drink. While the cars can't drink, many wonder if perhaps the mayor had been drinking when he lashed out at Uber on Twitter and via press release following their announcement that they were returning to testing in Pittsburgh (Lee para. 3). According to the *Ars Technica* article "Uber wants to test driverless cars in Pittsburgh again—the mayor is pissed", the mayor's press release claiming Uber had never contacted them regarding their return to the road was misplaced - Uber had reached out prior to their social media announcement and Peduto seems to have conveniently ignored this fact (Lee).

So what can help? How do we take the dangerous human element out from behind the wheel? Well, despite what Mr. Peduto clearly thinks, automated vehicles are the only long-term method we have to reduce traffic deaths. Let's talk about safety. Many of us might immediately think of the lethal accident that occurred in Arizona in March of 2018 - in which an Uber Advanced Technologies Group (ATG) autonomous vehicle struck and killed a pedestrian. However, this accident was not the fault of the autonomous vehicle as many initially assumed - it turns out the driver of the vehicle was at fault (Sheperdson para. 6). Tech writer David Sheperdson's article "Uber Not Criminally Liable in Fatal 2018 Arizona Self-Driving Crash" specifically discusses that the human back-up driver has been found to be at fault for the accident. It details the ways in which the human driver failed the pedestrian that night on the road - driving distracted, while watching *The View* on her phone, and not following the guidelines expected of her as an employee and back-up driver for the company (para. 7).

Though the accident appeared on the surface to be the first fully automated vehicular death, it is just another example of human error leading to loss of life on our roads.

So let's all ask "where's the hate for companies like Uber coming from, Mayor Peduto?" As discussed in the aforementioned *Ars Technica* article, Mayor Peduto has grown increasingly more hostile toward Uber and other self driving car companies in Pittsburgh, putting demands on their testing that frankly are designed to make it impossible for companies to test their cars here (Lee). All this over an accident that has been shown to be the fault of a human, not the machine (Sheperdson). Why has Mr. Peduto become so hostile? You might think he is concerned for the safety of our city, but an article in *The New York Times* hits the nail on the head when they suggest that the real issue is that Uber hasn't provided financially to the city in ways Peduto assumed they would (Kang). However, as noted by Linda Bailey, the executive director of the National Association of City Transportation officials "[uber] is a business, and they want to make money [...] [w]ith Pittsburgh, we learned we need to present the city's needs upfront" (qtd. Kang para. 8) Mayor Peduto made assumptions that Uber would provide support for a transportation grant and would hire from struggling neighborhoods, and without that support in writing the business did only what was needed to make their business successful (Kang). Pittsburgh isn't reluctant to have self driving technology; Mayor Peduto is just realizing he didn't do his job in securing concrete promises from Uber and is throwing a temper tantrum instead of supporting great technology in our city.

"At Uber, we believe self-driving technology has the potential to change how the world works", said Eric Meyhofer, the head of the Uber Advanced Technologies group in Pittsburgh (qtd. O'Toole Para.10). It's time to tell Mayor Peduto that we don't want his temper tantrum getting in the way of technology. Let's change how the world works. Pick up your phone and send Mayor Peduto a tweet (@billpeduto) telling him it's time for him to stop throwing a fit and

start supporting self driving technology in our city and on our roads. Uber is here to stay and we want them to put their money and their cars in our city.

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