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Mexico City & The L'Auto Company Team To Launch The "Auto" Auto — Ready To Ride The Streets With An Auto Pilot At The Controls?

By TOM BROWN

The L'Auto Company and Mexico City announced jointly today that, by the end of this year, one neighborhood in Mexico City will be converted to cars which people cannot drive. Doesn't make sense? Then you're not up on the "Auto Pilot" system which the futuristic car company has been developing in concert with major metropolitan areas.

Cars with the new "Auto Pilot" system may soon prevail on all streets and highways. Although 65% of all cars in Mexico have been propelled for some years via low-pollution, battery-powered engines, this has not solved the immense problems of traffic congestion, road rage, and lack of driver training. "One doesn't drive around Mexico City," said one

motorist recently. “One navigates from one hopeless gridlock to another!”

“Auto Pilot solves all that,” said L’Auto spokesperson Roberta Frost. “A car with Auto Pilot is controlled in all major ways via the GPS3 system. Its speed, route, and interface with other vehicles are master-controlled via a Traffic Router, who works for the police department.”

Frost said that in small-scale experiments in Mexico City so far, Traffic Routers were situated in the same buildings as police authorities. On “roads” constructed only for use by cars with the “Auto Pilot” system, anyone wanting to travel simply had to punch in a desired destination on the computer screen which replaces the normal steering wheel and speedometer.

Telemetry conveys the travel request to the Travel Router, who in turn flashes back an EDT, estimated departure time. When the doors to the “automatic auto” are confirmed closed, and when the pilot (not driver!) confirms his car is RTR (ready to roll), the Travel Router assumes control of the vehicle, regulating speed and direction in concert with other vehicles on his Transport Screen.

Computerization prevents any kind of traffic collision; and, should a car stop running, for whatever reason, the human pilots have an emergency “wheel” located beneath the front grille which can turn the tires enough that the car can move to the curbside.

Frost said that tests indicate that significant Auto Pilot traffic involving 100 cars have been successful, with roadway speeds averaging 60 kilometers per hour.

Will citizens accustomed to steering their own cars (and doing so whenever they want!) buy into this new Auto Pilot system? L’Auto spokesperson Frost said that may not be a relevant question in the future.

“Look, governments have been coming to us for years asking if the same system we now use in amusement parks and on golf courses could be adapted to a much-larger scale,” Frost said. “These experiments in Mexico City were designed to take the chaos out of the traffic patterns there. Don’t think that governments everywhere aren’t ready to simply mandate this.

“Sure, there’s some loss of personal freedom here — but the boost in safety and an effective traffic system will far outweigh the loss of individual liberty. We’re excited about the potential for this. And so are the authorities in Mexico City!”

When fully installed, the end-of-year Auto Pilot system will be deployed in a 100-square block sector of Mexico City where residences are now being built. Only people willing to try Auto Pilot will be allowed to move into the neighborhood.

To start, because of the small size of the neighborhood, only a limited number of destinations will be offered. Residents may, upon arrival at an Auto Pilot terminus, have to switch to more conventional transport.

However, with GPS3 able to track all traffic arteries everywhere, Frost said she can see the day when all of Mexico City will be powered by Auto Pilot cars. “Having millions of cars guided by Auto Pilot is not a problem,” Frost said. “Our systems can handle it.” |<

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