



# Pittsburghers for Public Transit

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## Knight Foundation Testimony 5/28/19

My name is Laura Wiens, and I am the Director of Pittsburghers for Public Transit.

2 weeks ago, Ziggy and I stood before you. We raised the concern that the Knight Foundation grant, premised on the idea of “educating” residents about why autonomous vehicles were the solution to their needs, was PR and not in fact meaningful community engagement. To our surprise and your credit, you heard us, and Councilwoman Kail-Smith made the motion, which was passed, to delay the vote on the grant disbursement to DOMI. We thank you for being both open-minded to our concerns and appropriately cautious in advancing this process. We have spoken with DOMI Director Karina Ricks in the interim, as was suggested.

We see this grant as the catalyst for a long-overdue conversation about this technology. But we need to do it right. We are here today to ask you –our city councilmembers-- to establish guidelines to ensure that these resources will be used to discuss ALL of the known or anticipated impacts that AVs will have—to good middle class jobs and the economy, to the environment, pedestrian safety, data privacy, and to public transit and mobility, particularly for the underserved. ***None of these impacts will happen in isolation, so residents must be given the ability to weigh them as a whole.*** Our city leaders have made the decision to subsidize the development of this technology, through the use of our roadways as a test track, through the blushing pride with which our city advertises itself as a tech hub without any regulatory framework, through the \$23 million new road we’re rolling out in the Mon-Oakland corridor, and all the city staff time that went into Pgh’s Smart Cities application. Actual deployment of autonomous vehicles will require more costly public investment into infrastructure, and taxpayers will foot the bill. **So we are also calling on you to ensure that this grant allows residents to evaluate these material costs against the potential pitfalls and benefit of AVs, to decide whether AVs should in fact be prioritized over other known safety and mobility solutions.**

Here is an opportunity to finally ask the questions: *new technology, for whose benefit? At whose expense?* This isn’t just a conversation about AVs, but about our values as well. A recent report divulged that AVs discriminate when it comes to pedestrian safety--they are more likely to hit a black pedestrian than a white person. For some riders with disabilities, paratransit operators are key—they provide door to door service, and without them folks lose access to mobility altogether. Underlying every assertion that AVs will expand public transportation options is the fact that a driver will lose their job to save the labor cost, with no just transition plan. For an undocumented immigrant, the visual and movement tracking data that the companies are collecting and selling is alarming.

Perhaps these trade-offs will be worth it in the end. Perhaps the worst possible outcomes of AVs can be mitigated by a robust framework of regulations and incentives. But the AV companies won’t institute this framework on their own. They aren’t guided by values around



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equity, or mobility justice, or environmental justice. Only we can be...and should be. At the end of the day, if Pittsburghers – and not merely our elected officials—should decide to support AVs and design them to work for us, it will only be because we fully appreciate what we stand to lose.