



Pod with eyes | Photo source Jaguar Land Rover

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## RESEARCH ATTEMPTS TO MAKE SELF-DRIVING SAFER FOR PEDESTRIANS

 MOBILITY & TRANSPORT

**New research is being conducted in an attempt to understand how to improve communication between pedestrians and autonomous vehicles.**

As self-driving vehicles become closer to an everyday reality, manufacturers are becoming concerned with building trust in autonomous vehicles. For example, human drivers and pedestrians currently interact through eye contact. There is a fear that this important element will be lost in autonomous vehicles. Research studies suggest that as many as 63 percent of pedestrians and cyclists worry about how safe it will be to cross the road in the future. **Jaguar Land Rover** is conducting studies to work out how much information self-driving cars could share with pedestrians in the future.

Jaguar's trial is taking place on a specially-constructed street in Coventry, in the UK. Jaguar is using AI-powered 'pods' in their experiment. The pods are equipped with large virtual 'eyes'. The eyes seek out pedestrians, appearing to look directly at them. This helps signal to pedestrians that the vehicle has 'seen' them and will take action to avoid them. Engineers and cognitive psychiatrists record the levels of trust in the pedestrians before and after the pod makes 'eye contact'. They then gauge whether the eyes generate greater confidence that the vehicle will stop.

According to Pete Bennett, Future Mobility Research Manager at Jaguar Land Rover, "It's second-nature to glance at the driver of the approaching vehicle before stepping into the road ... We want to know if it is beneficial to provide humans with information about a vehicle's intentions or whether simply letting a pedestrian know it has been recognised is enough to improve confidence."

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## **Takeaway:**

There have been a large number of innovations in the field of autonomous driving. At Springwise, we have recently covered software that could help cars **understand people** and a car that can **read minds**. The research by Jaguar Land Rover, in contrast, is an attempt to approach autonomous driving from the point of view of the pedestrian. Will research like this help make autonomous driving safer?