

Automotive AI: From Situational Awareness to Automation and Optimization

AI has become a cornerstone of innovation across the automotive ecosystem — from vehicle design and manufacturing to operation, update, and end-of-life management. This talk explores how AI technologies are redefining the way vehicles perceive, decide, act, and learn. It highlights three fundamental patterns of AI application: situational awareness, automation, and optimization. The discussion covers how AI enhances situational awareness through intelligent sensing and perception, enables automation across both physical and digital processes, and tackles complex optimization problems in mobility, logistics, and infrastructure. The talk concludes by reflecting on the technical, ethical, and operational challenges that must be addressed to fully unlock AI's potential as a transformative enabler of next-generation mobility systems.



November
3, 2025



2:30-3:45 PM



22-127



Dr. Alaa Khamis

Dr. Alaa Khamis is an Associate Professor in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering and Director of the AI for Smart Mobility Lab at the Interdisciplinary Research Center for Smart Mobility and Logistics at KFUPM. Before joining KFUPM, he was the AI and Smart Mobility Technical Leader at General Motors. He also serves as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Toronto and Ontario Tech University. Dr. Khamis has authored three books and over 190 scientific papers in refereed journals and conferences, and holds 72 U.S. patents, trade secrets, and defensive publications. He is the author of *Smart Mobility: Exploring Foundational Technologies and Wider Impacts* and *Optimization Algorithms: AI Techniques for Design, Planning, and Control Problems*. His research focuses on the intersection of AI and mobility systems, services, and business models, addressing challenges such as seamless integrated mobility, contextual observability in software-defined vehicles (SDVs), and optimization in mobility, logistics, and infrastructure. He is the recipient of the 2018 IEEE Member and Geographic Activities (MGA) Achievement Award, the Best Paper Award at the 2023 IEEE International Conference on Smart Mobility, the 2022–2024 GM Critical Talent Award, and first place in the 2025 Sustainable Solutions for Pilgrims Challenge.



Automotive AI

Alaa Khamis, Ph.D.

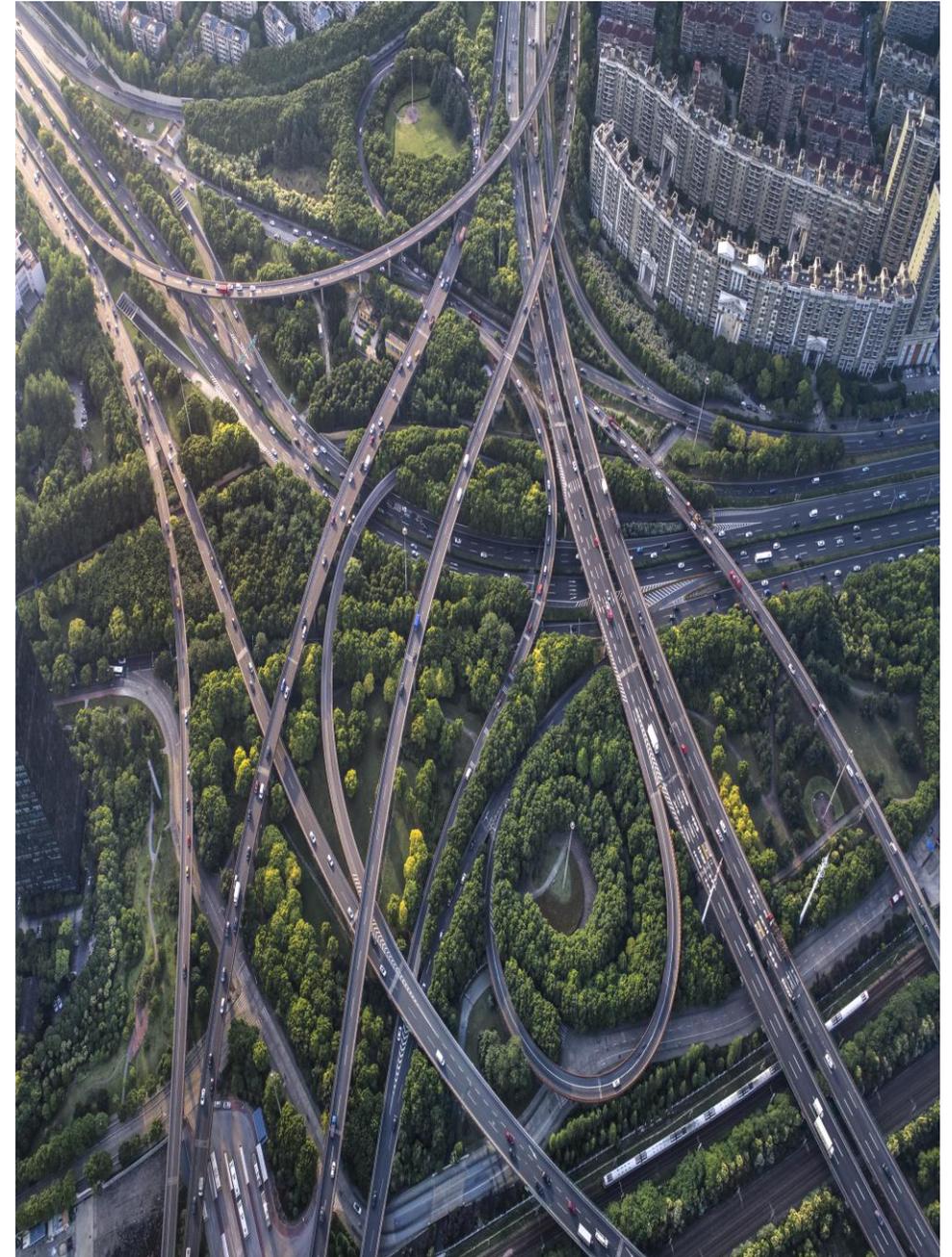
Associate Professor in ISE Department

Director of AI for Smart Mobility Lab at IRC SML



Outline

- » About AI for Smart Mobility Lab
- » Automotive AI
- » Situational Awareness
- » Automation
- » Optimization
- » Potential Barriers



AI for Smart Mobility Lab at KFUPM



Mission

- » Our mission is to advance **smart mobility** as a transformative enabler of **sustainable development**.
- » Our research focuses on the **intersection of AI and mobility systems, services and business models**.



Smart Mobility



Existing and emerging smart mobility business models



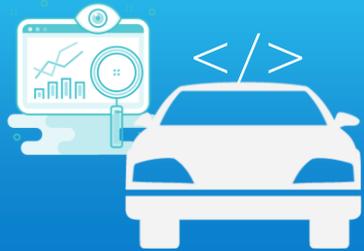
Existing and emerging smart mobility services



Existing and emerging smart mobility systems

Ongoing Projects

SDV CONTEXTUAL OBSERVABILITY



- **Title:** Contextual Observability of Software-Defined Vehicles
- **Objective:** Develop a testbed for software-defined vehicle (SDV) contextual observability.
- **Collaboration:** IRC SML and auto OEMs, NGOs and Suppliers

SEAMLESS INTEGRATED MOBILITY



- **Title:** Agentic AI-based Framework for SIM
- **Objective:** Develop as a unified platform that integrates multimodal transportation options.
- **Collaboration:** RCRC, MIT, VTTI

LAST MILE DELIVERY



- **Title:** SmartDispatch: AI-driven Optimization for Eco-Efficient Last-Mile Delivery
- **Objective:** Develop an AI-driven routing model for eco-efficient last-mile delivery.
- **Collaboration:** IRC SML KFUPM



- **Title:** Enabling Cybersecurity Adaptation in Software Architecture
- **Objective:** Develop as a unified platform that integrates multimodal transportation options.
- **Collaboration:** UAB, Chile

Collaboration & Facilities



Massachusetts
Institute of
Technology



VIRGINIA TECH
TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE



For More information



<https://www.ai4sm.org/>



<https://github.com/ai4smlab>

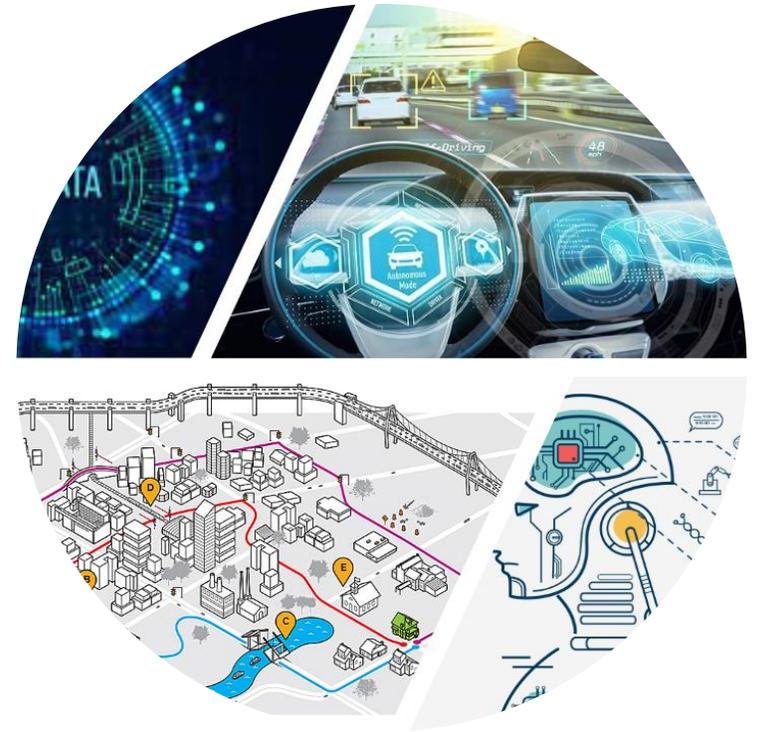


https://www.youtube.com/@AI4SM_lab

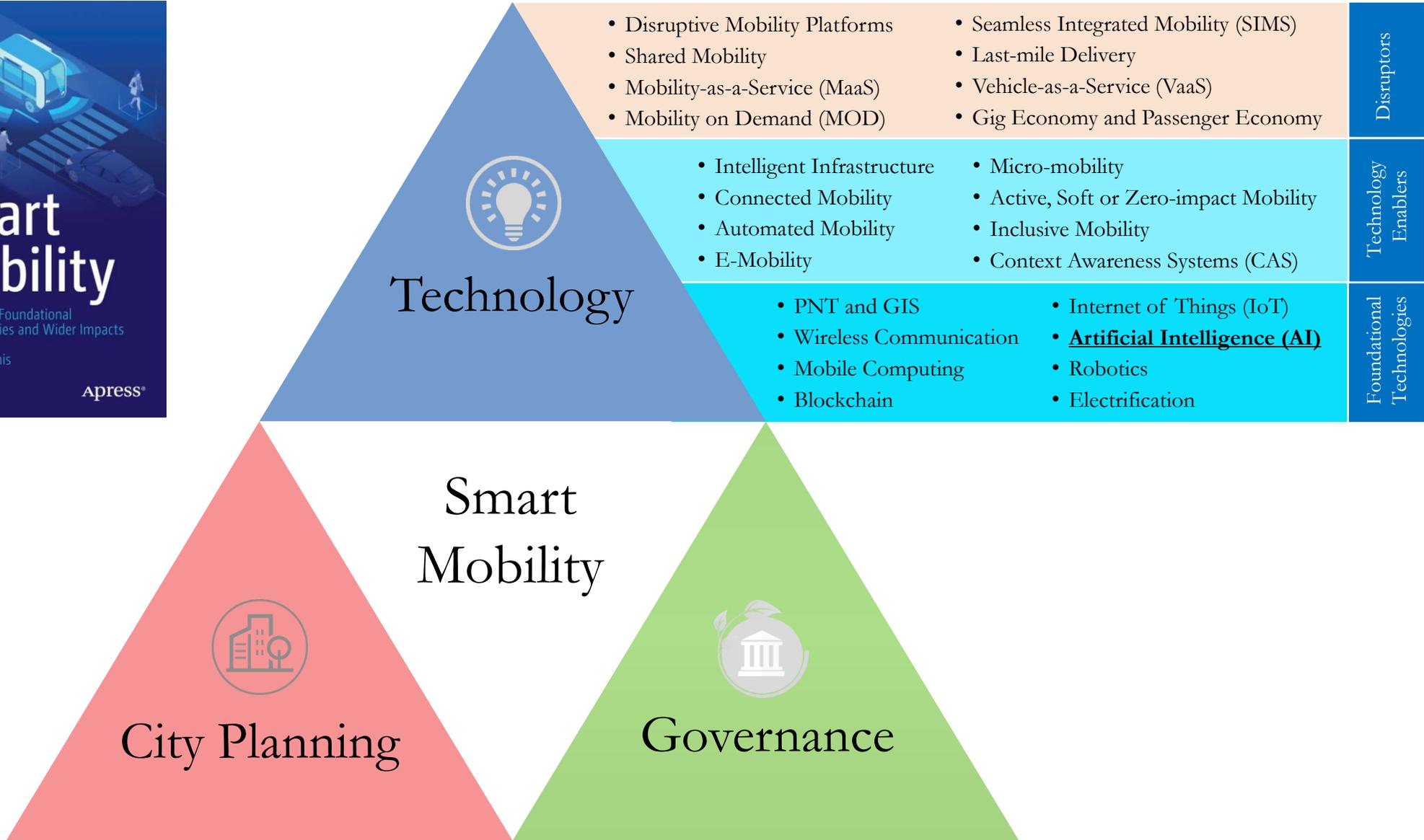
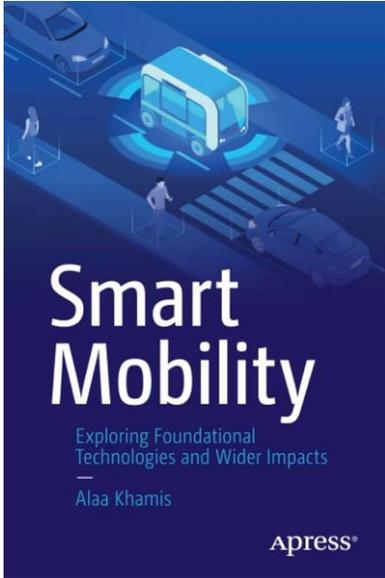


<https://medium.com/ai4sm>

Automotive AI



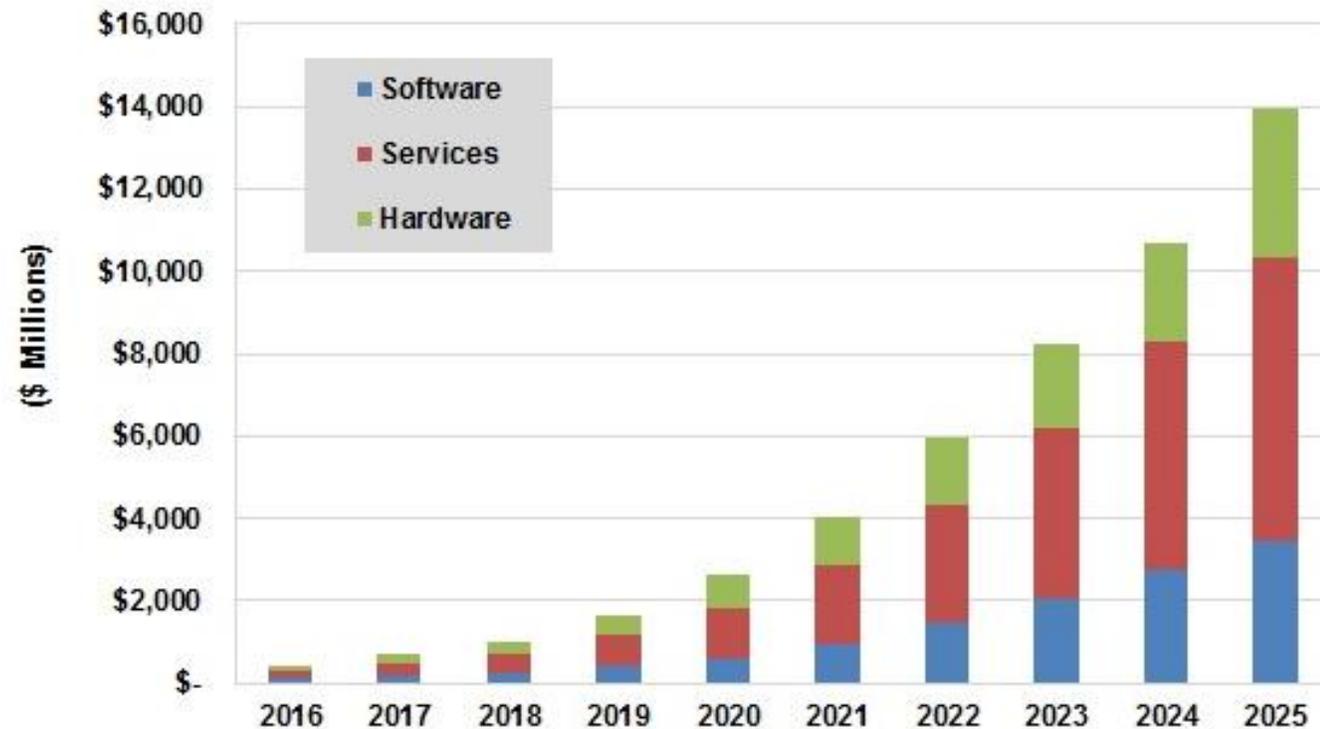
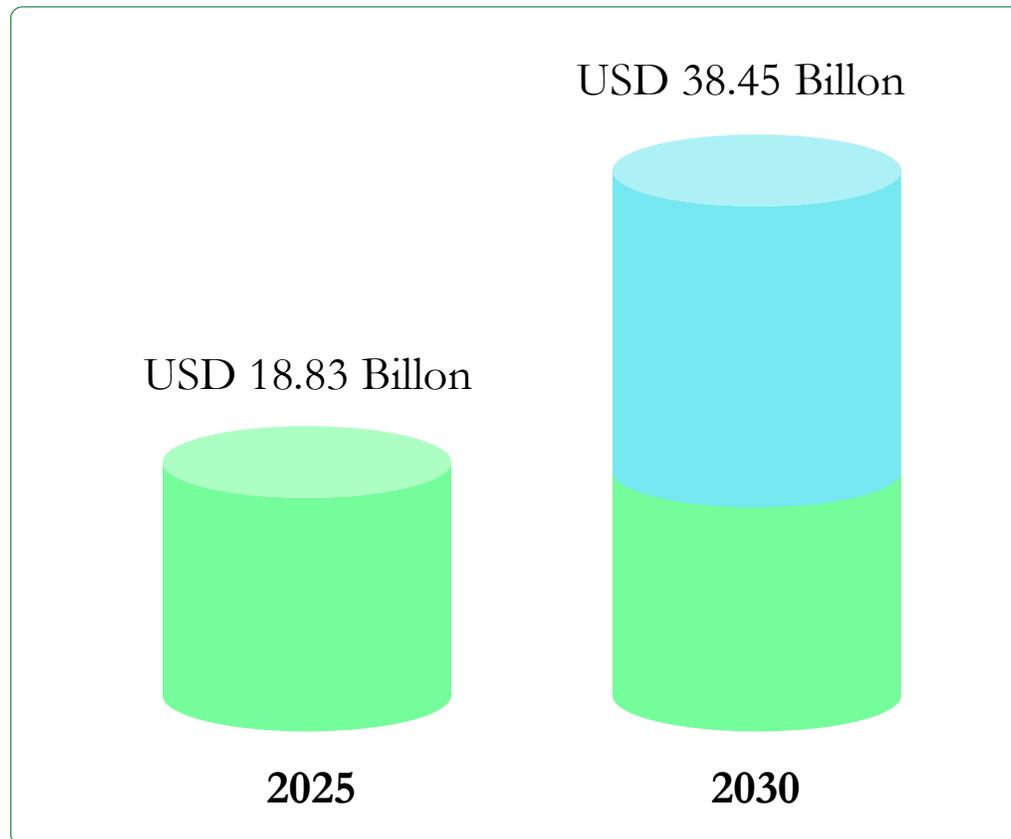
Automotive AI



Automotive AI

» Market Size

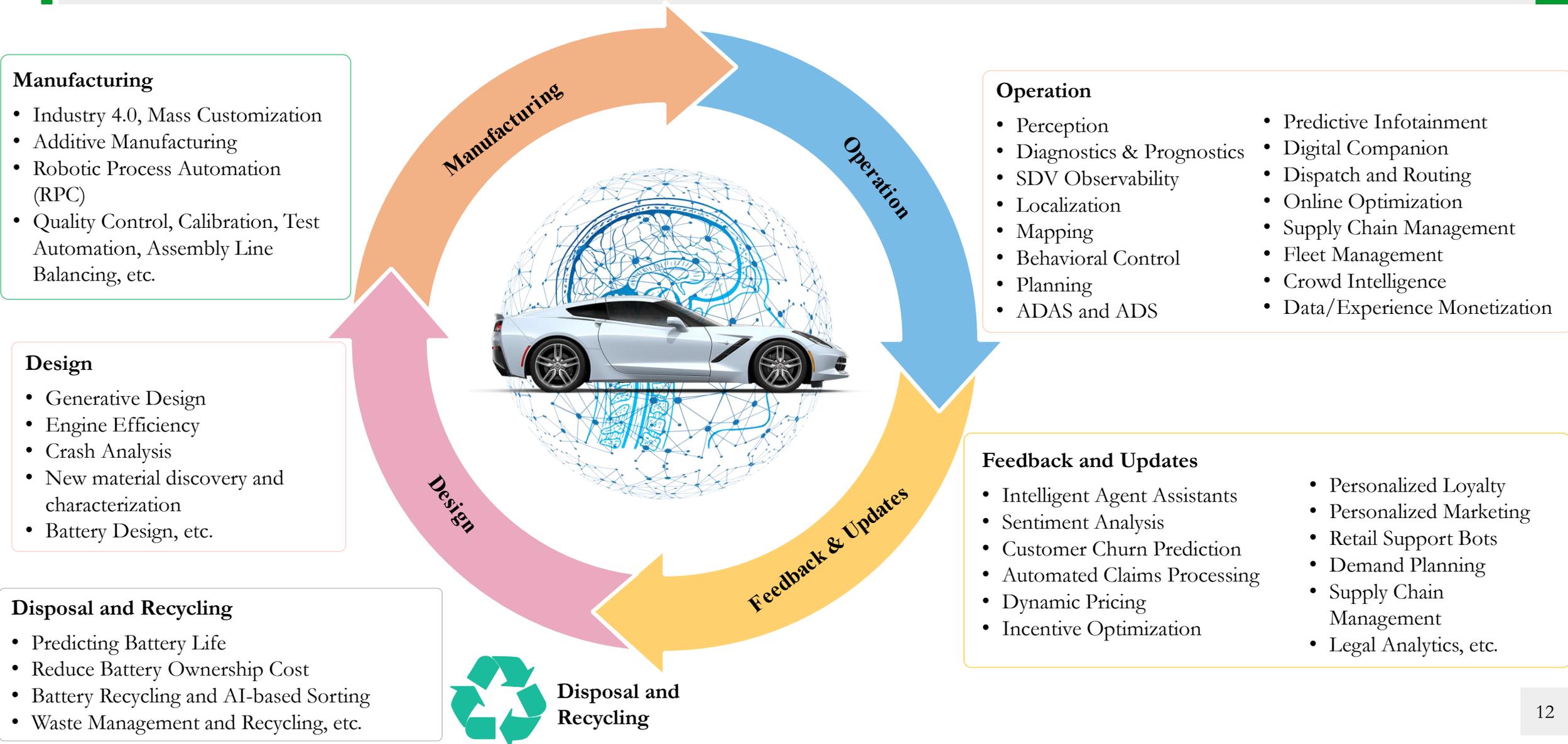
Market Forecast to grow at a CAGR of 15.3%



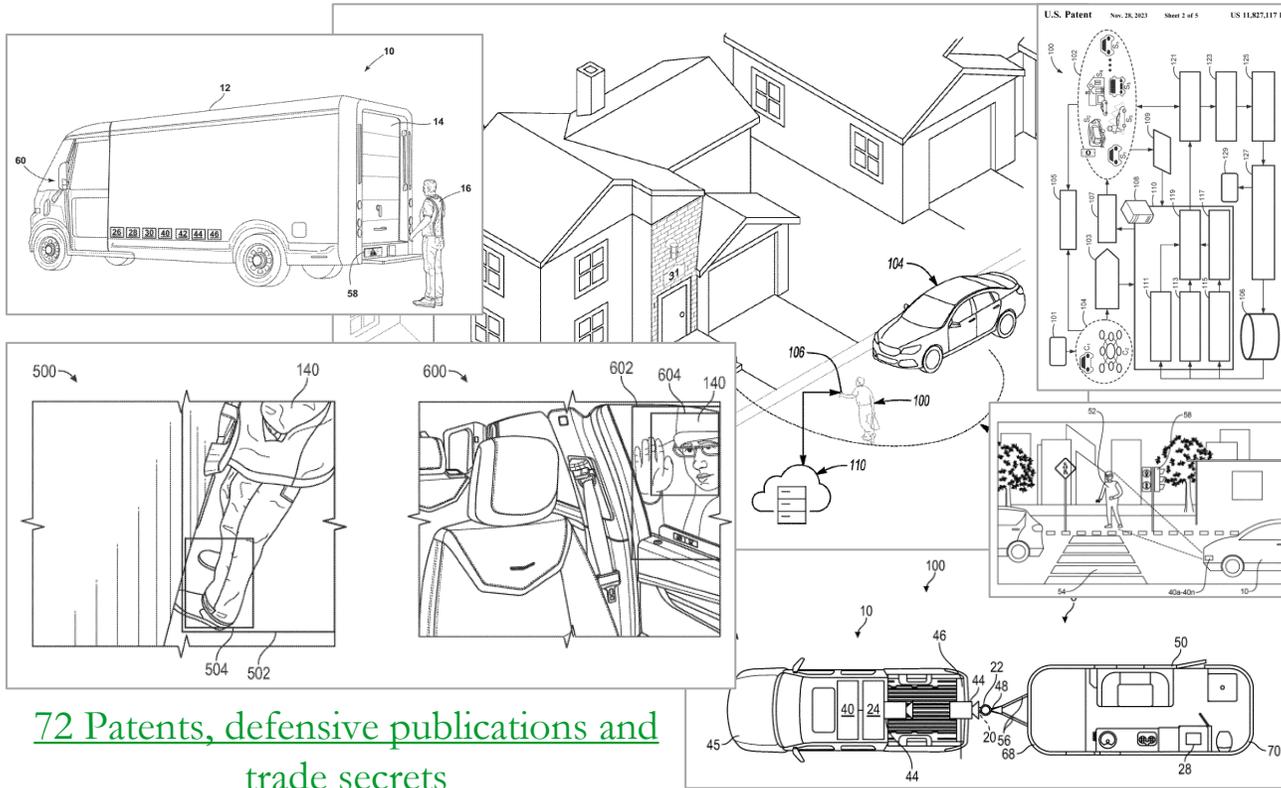
Automotive AI Total Revenue by Segment, World Markets: 2016-2025 [Tractica]

Source: [Research and Markets](#)

Automotive AI



Automotive AI



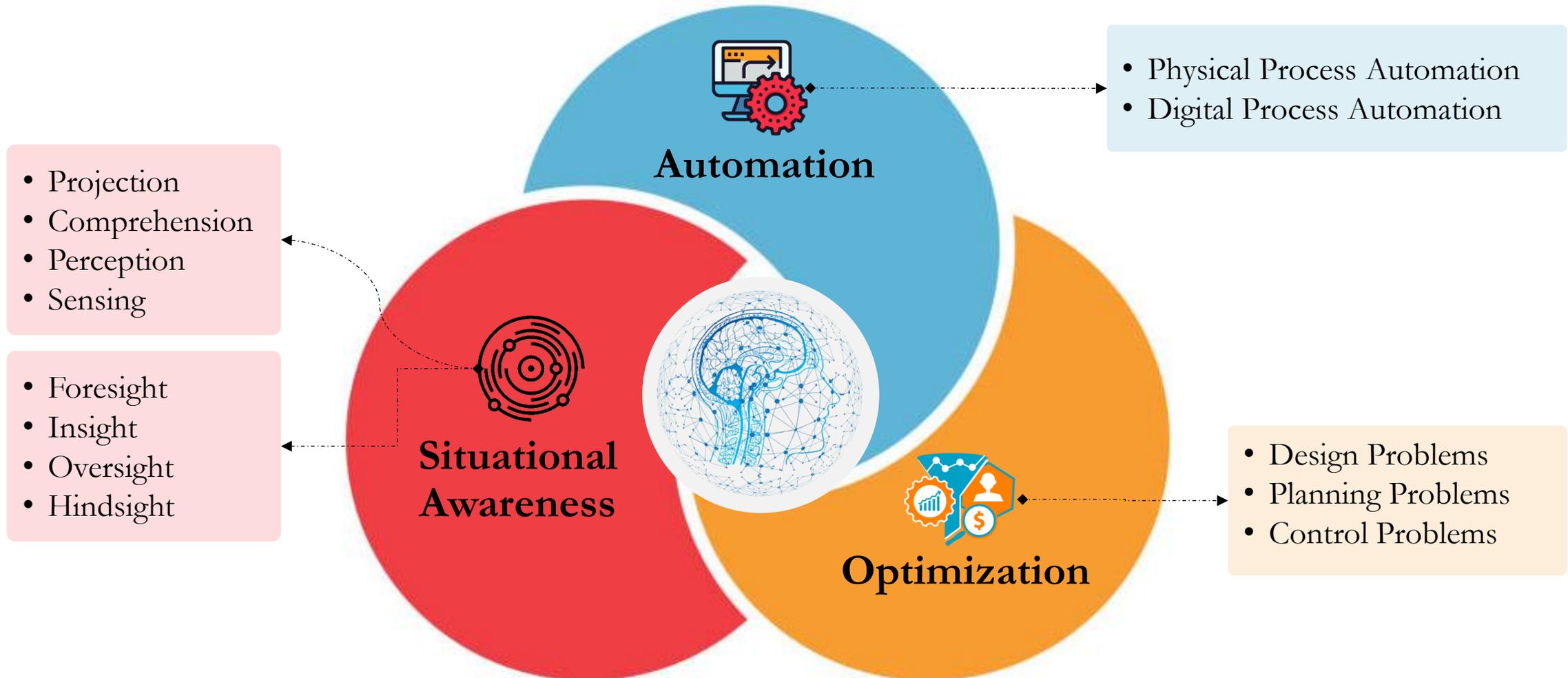
72 Patents, defensive publications and trade secrets

- Edge AI
- Connected Mobility and HMI
- Active Safety
- Assisted and Automated Driving
- Software-defined Vehicles



Automotive AI

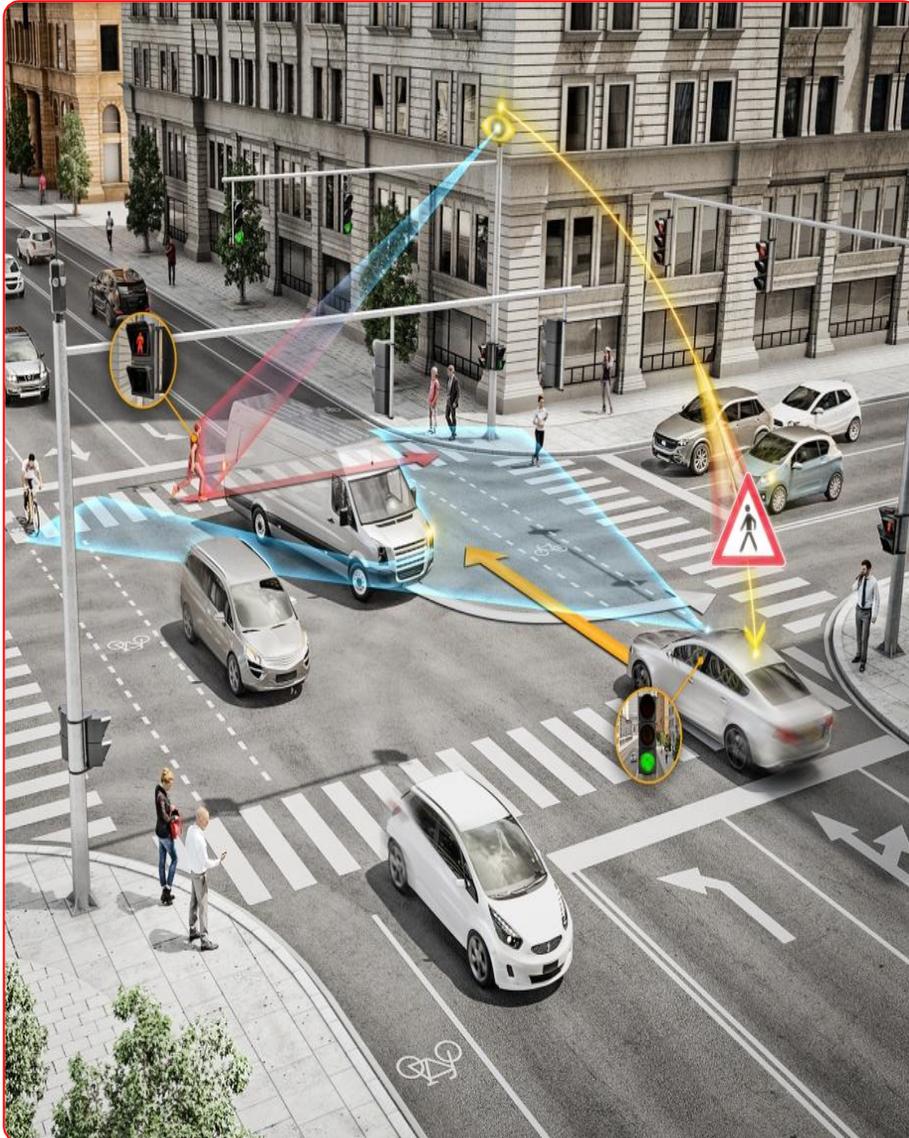
» The Three Patterns of AI



Situational Awareness



Situational Awareness: SA Levels



Situational Awareness

L3: Projection
Status of entities in the near future and possible consequences

- VRU intent (crossing intent, adversarial intent recognition, bullying behavior)
- Near-misses detection
- Predict risk of collision with VRU
- Predict traffic flow

L2: Comprehension
Relate Situation Entities

- VRU crossing recognition
- Other vehicles maneuvers recognition
- Signal phase and timing and pedestrian flashing sign status

L1: Perception
Identify Situation Entities

- VRU (vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, jaywalker, wheelchair, kids)
- Traffic signs and pedestrian signs
- Lane markings, lane layout, crosswalks

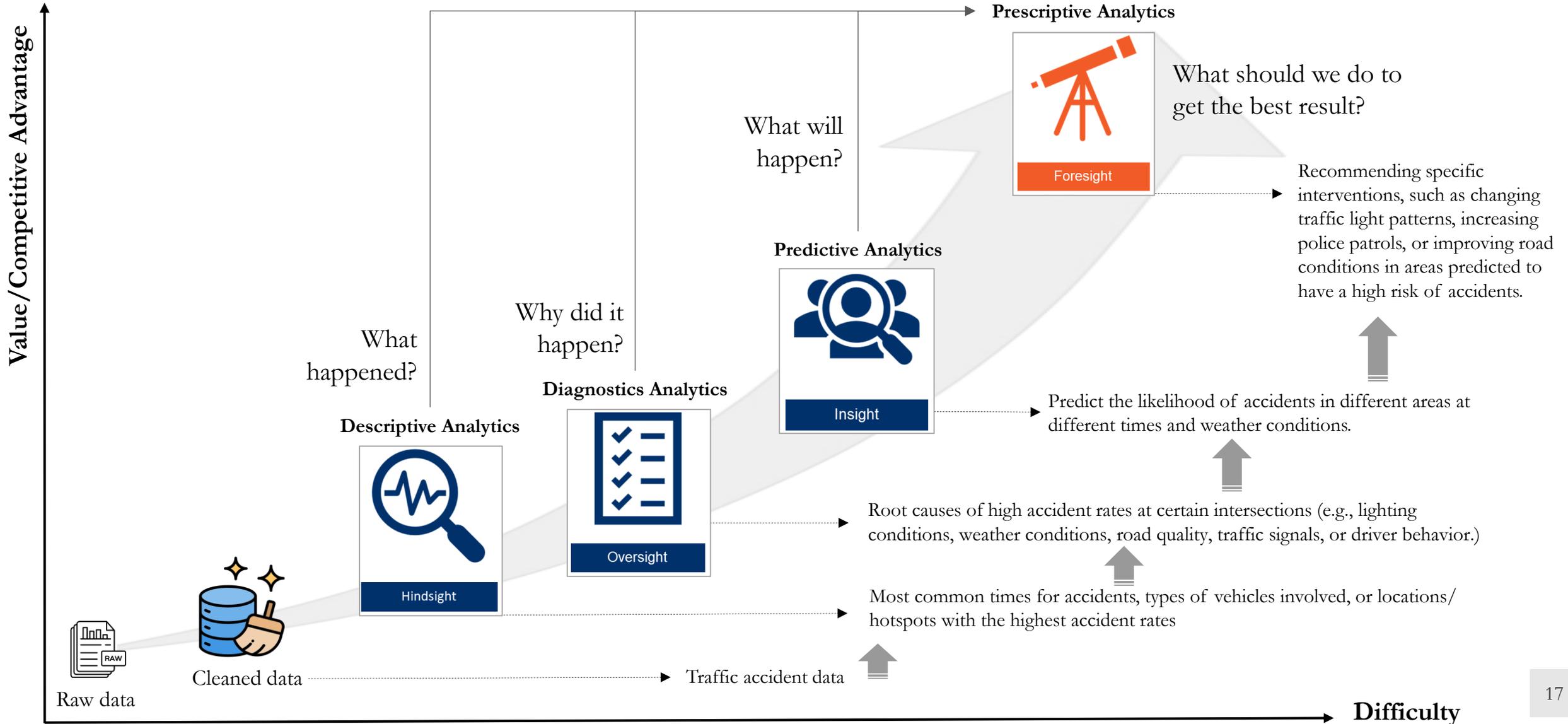
L0: Sensing
Collect Relevant Data

- Vehicle onboard sensors (Cameras, LiDAR, etc.)
- Infrastructure (Camera, LiDAR, smart traffic lights, HD map)

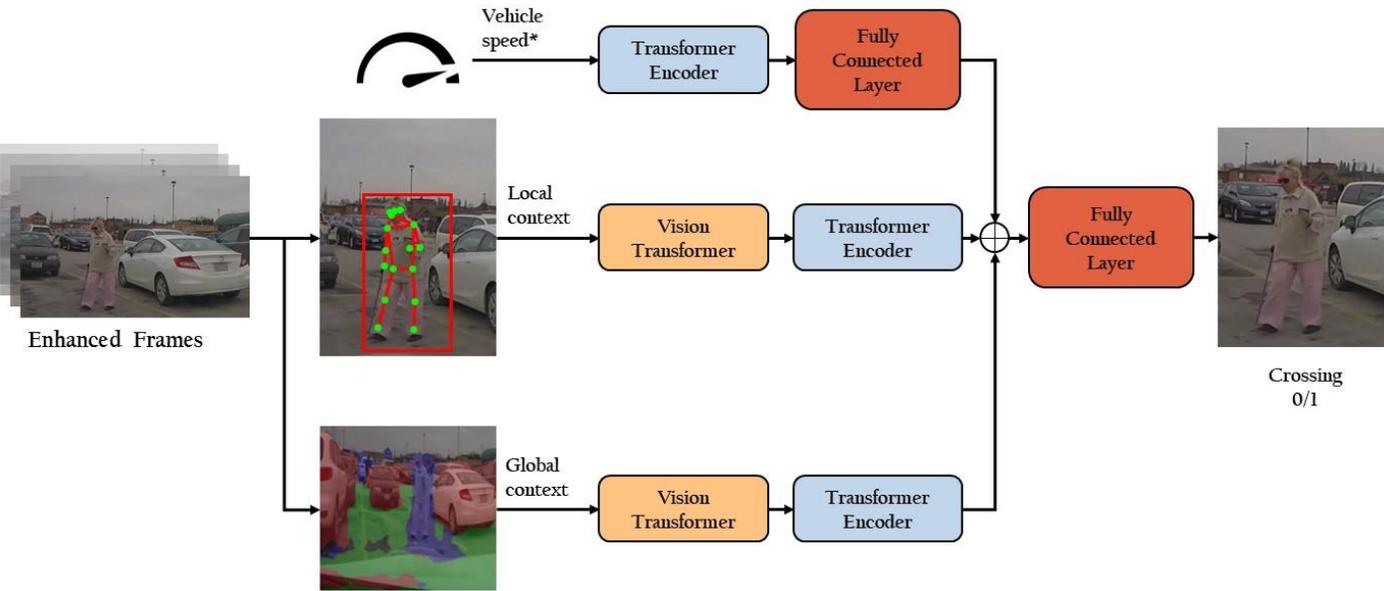
Decision Making/Support

- Activate warning signs or lights for pedestrians and cyclists if a jaywalker is detected.
- Pre-crash warning
- Across traffic turn collision risk warning
- Rear-end crash prevention
- Recommends actions to the driver, such as braking or adjusting course to avoid a collision.
- Apply AEB

Situational Awareness: The 4 Lines of Sight



Situational Awareness: VRU Intent Prediction



Pedestrian Crossing Intent Prediction using Vision Transformers



Inclement Weather Perception

- Ahmed Elgazwy, Khalid Elgazzar, Alaa Khamis. Predicting Pedestrian Crossing Intentions in Adverse Weather with Self-Attention Models. IEEE Transactions on Intelligent Transportation Systems (T-ITS), 2025.
- Ahmed A Elgazwy, Hossameldin Ouda, Ammar Elmoghazy, Ghadeer Abdelkader, Austin Page, Alaa Khamis and Khalid Elgazzar, "Image Enhancement for Better VRU Detection in Challenging Weather Conditions," ICCSPA'24.

Situational Awareness: SDV Observability

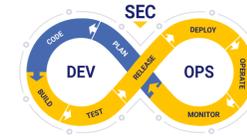


Backoffice Cloud Services

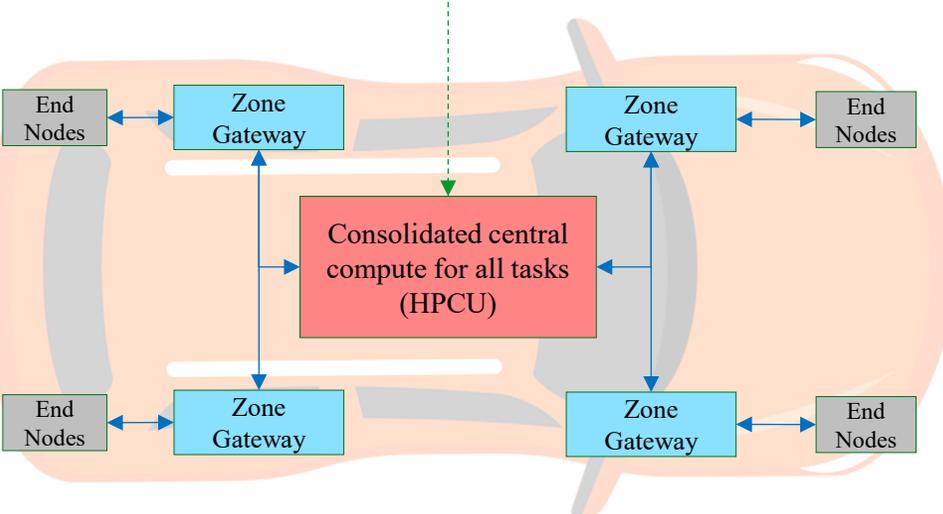
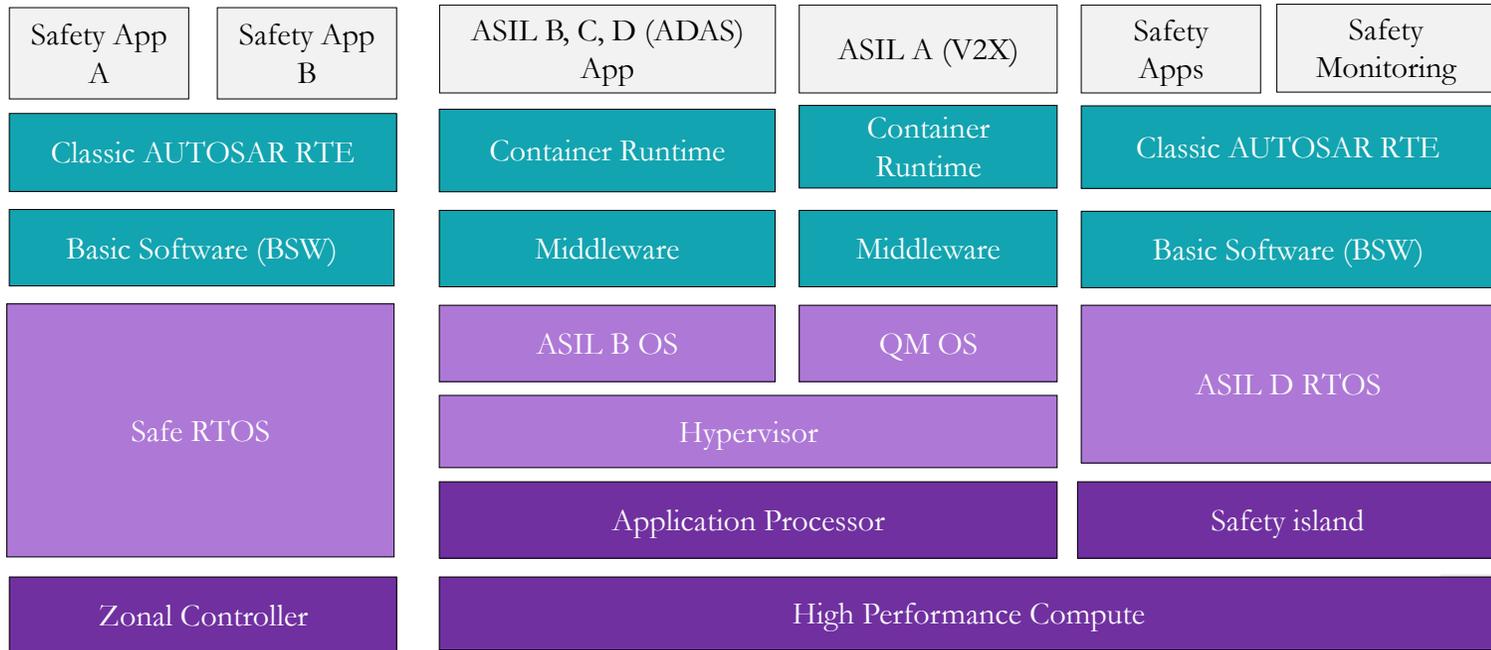
Shift Left

Cloud Native Development

Cloud-to-Vehicle



SOA SW Architecture (SOAFEE Compliant)



Situational Awareness: SDV Observability

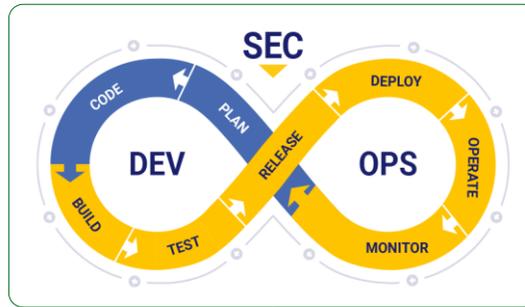
» SDV 3.0: Zonal Architecture – Software-Defined Vehicle: Promises

Faster Time to Market



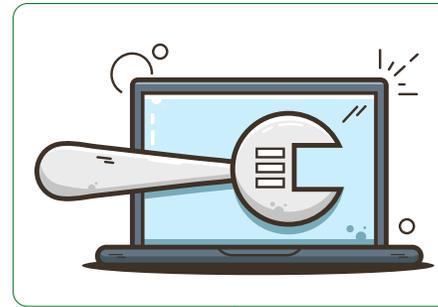
- Weeks to months instead of 3 years.
- Accelerating the R&D cycle through Virtual Models, enabling early-stage innovation and development (SHIFT LEFT).

Agile Approach



SDV supports an agile approach by enabling MVP development and continuous improvement, replacing the traditional First-Time-Right model.

Reduced Development Cost



SDV enables hardware and software platform reuse across vehicle model year upgrades and segments, reducing development effort and costs.

Increased Scalability



SDVs enable scalability by allowing the same code to be used across all car models, unlike traditional architectures that require separate code for each model.

Continuous Revenue Streams

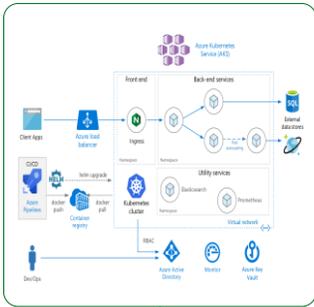


- Digital value stream
- Post-sales revenue from Feature subscription (Feature-as-a-Service FaaS)
- Customer data can be used to create personalized offers that increase customer loyalty.

Situational Awareness: SDV Observability

» SDV 3.0: Zonal Architecture – Software-Defined Vehicle: Challenges

Increased Complexity



Numerous heterogeneous distributed software components.

Safety and Reliability



With the integration of software into safety-critical systems, there's an inherent risk that software bugs or failures could lead to safety issues.

High Maintenance Efforts



The maintenance of SDVs involves not just the hardware but also continuous software updates, patches, and debugging. This requires specialized knowledge, potentially increasing operational costs and the need for skilled personnel.

Dependency on Connectivity



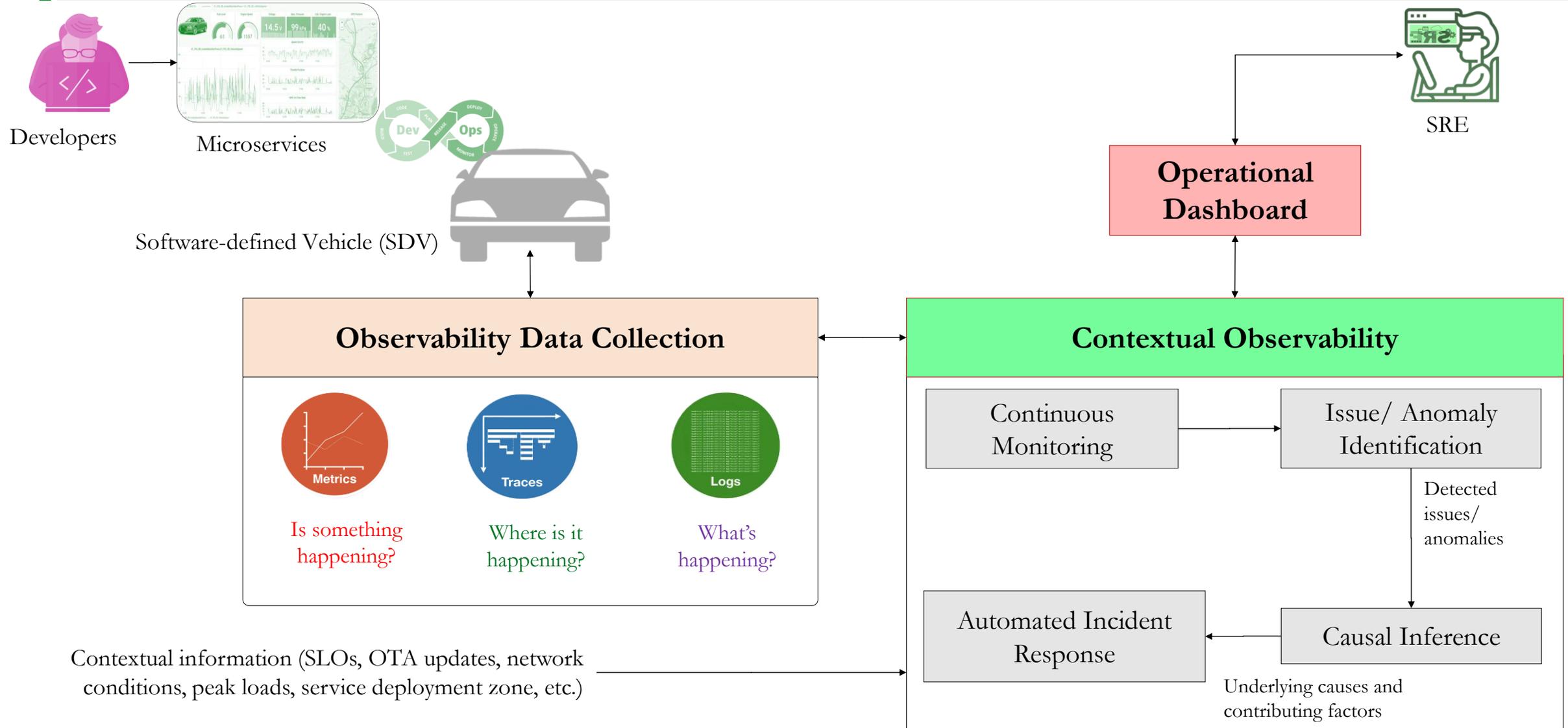
SDVs often rely on constant or periodic internet connectivity for updates, real-time data processing, and functionality like OTA (Over-The-Air) updates.

Cybersecurity Risks



- With more software comes greater exposure to cyber threats.
- Each component represents a potential entry point for hackers, which can lead to vulnerabilities in critical systems like braking, steering, or even data privacy breaches.

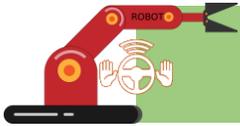
Situational Awareness: SDV Observability



Automation



Automation



Physical Process Automation

- Embodied/Physical AI
- Mobility platform manufacturing (robotic welding, assembly and painting, automated material handling, automated quality inspection)
- Automated public transport
- Automated people movers (APM)
- Smart parking systems
- Smart intersections
- Self-flying vehicles
- Self-driving vehicles

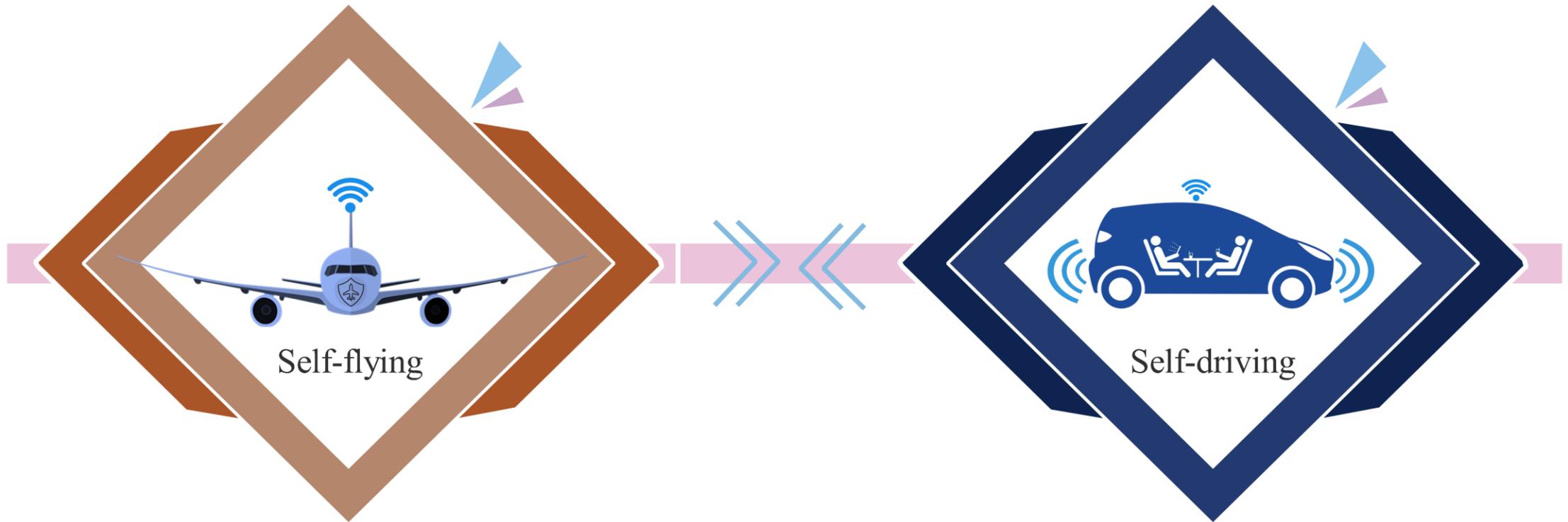


Digital Process Automation

- Agentic AI
- Robotic Process Automation (RPC)
- Streamline content creation
- Intelligent agent assistants/ Conversational agents (Chatbot such as Retail Support Bots)
- Q&A engines
- Recommendation engines to generate personalized recommendations.
- Digital Go-to-Market (online booking and online shopping, etc.)
- Digital twins

Automated Mobility

» Automated Mobility: A Comparison between Aviation and Automotive



Automation

» The Evolutionary Road To Full Automation



Automation

» The Evolutionary Road To Full Automation



DRIVER
No assistance



FEET-OFF
Assisted



HANDS-OFF
Partially Automated



EYES-OFF
Highly Automated



MIND-OFF
Fully Automated



PASSENGER
Autonomous

Least Complex

Most Complex

Today

Tomorrow

NEXT Decade?

Mining/Agriculture/Warehouse

First/Middle/Last Mile Delivery/Logistics

Robotaxi /People mover

Personally Owned AV & Tailored Spaces



Mining/Construction



Farming



Warehouse



Alaa Khamis and Partha Goswami, "Automated Mobility: A Comparison between Aviation and Automotive," The IEEE International Conference on Smart Mobility, 2023.



Automation

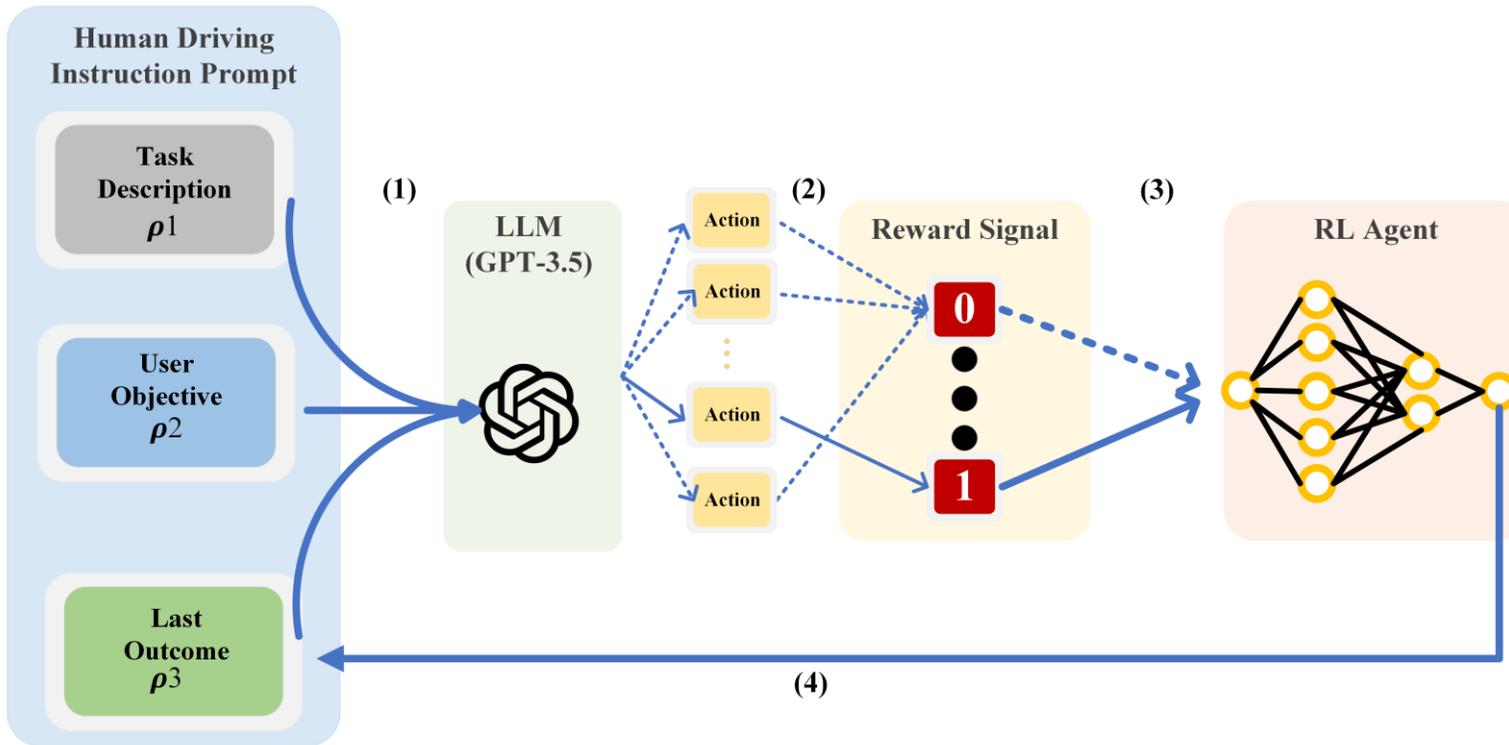
» Self-driving Platform at KFUPM



Self-driving and Tele-driving Technology Platform

Automation: Automated Driving

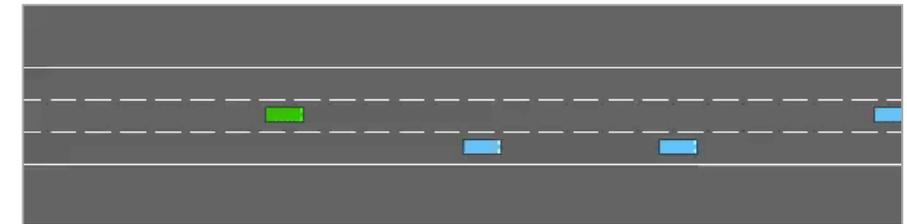
» In-context Learning for Automated Driving Scenarios



An example of conservative model



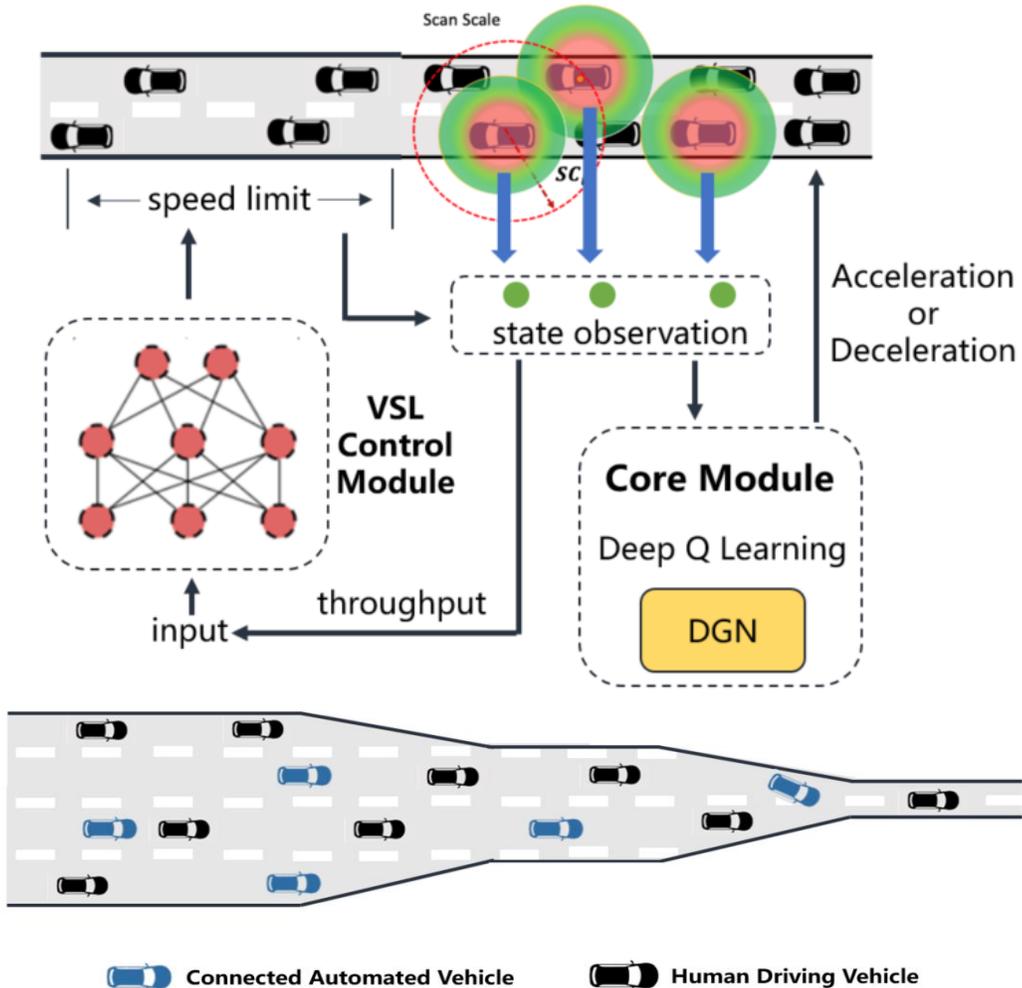
An example of aggressive model



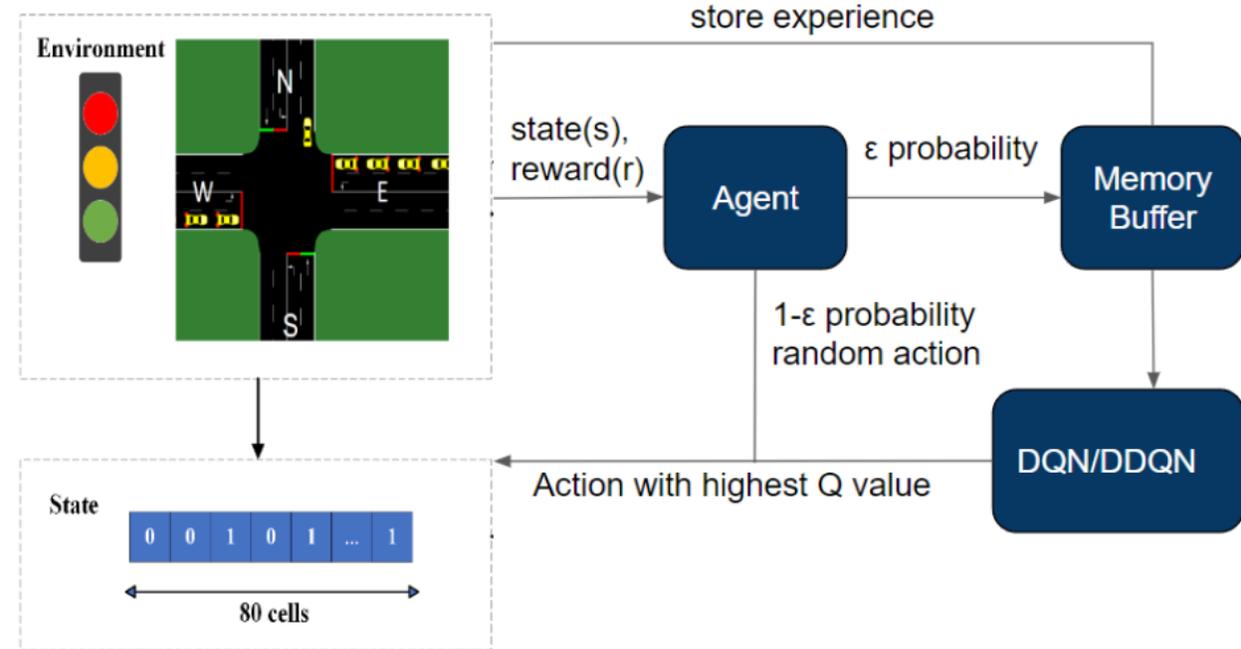
Index	Mean Reward	Lane Change	Speed Up
DQN baseline	0.82824	0.30681	0.42045
Aggressive	0.83888	0.02326	0.83721
Conservative	0.71391	0.01333	0.00666
Base	0.80140	0.10345	0.10345

Automation: Speed Control and Traffic Signal Control

» Cooperative Variable Speed Limit Control using MARL

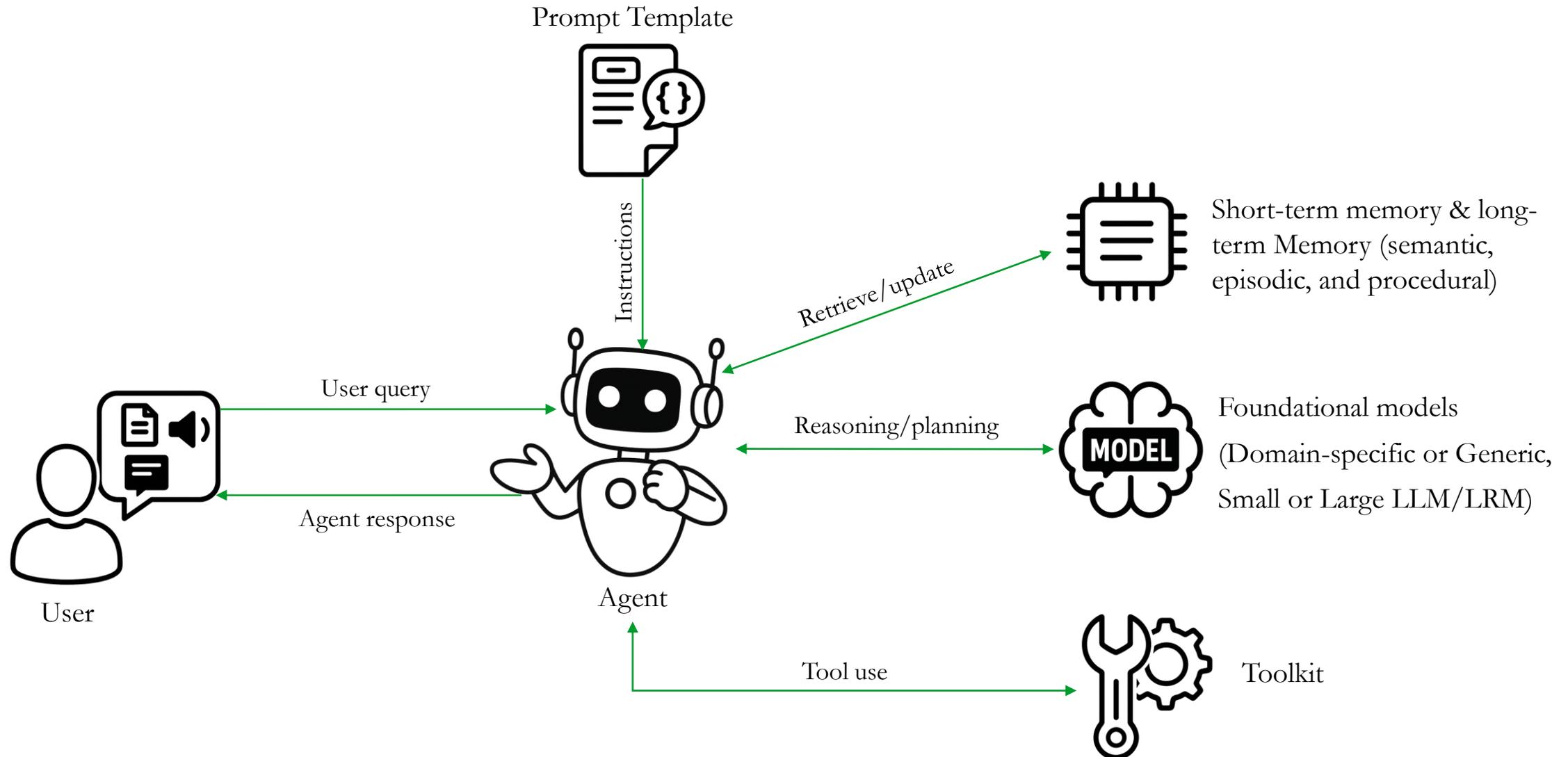


• DRL-based Traffic Signal Control



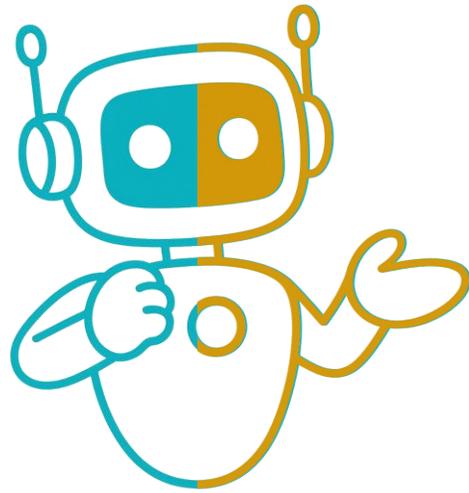
Automation: Agentic AI

» AI Agent Components

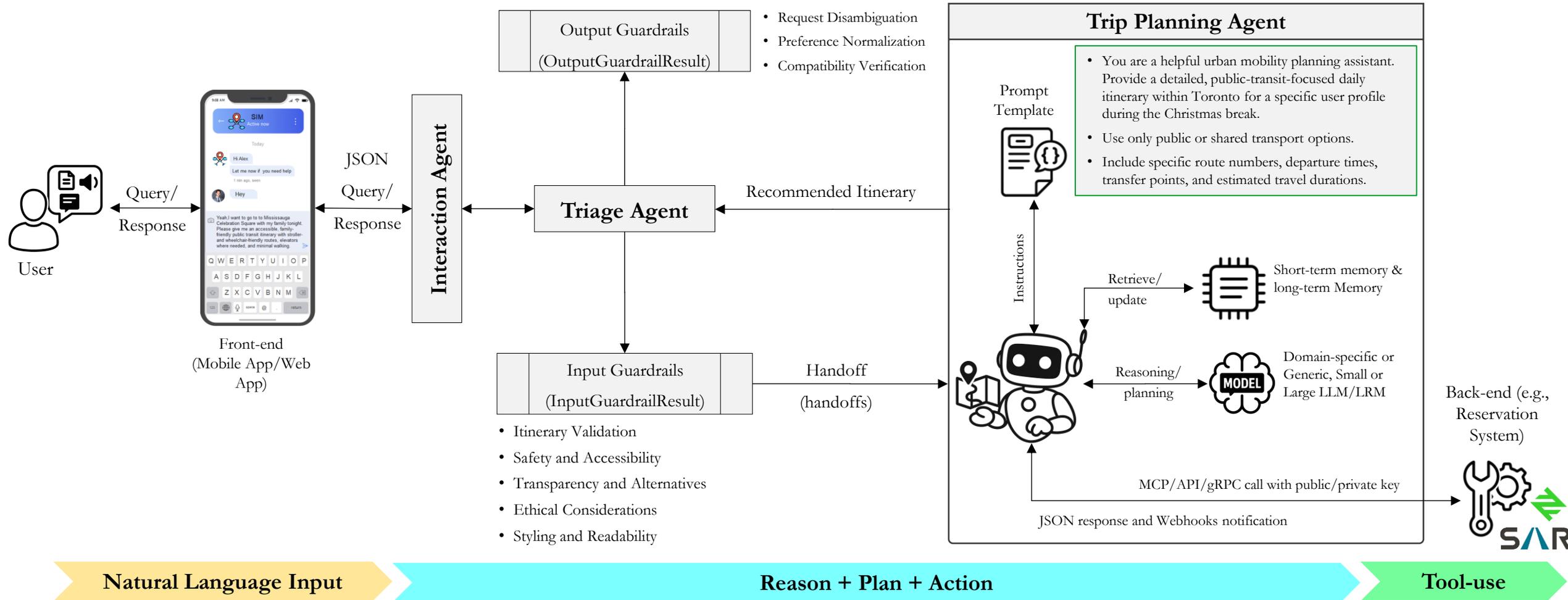


Automation: Agentic AI

» Use Cases



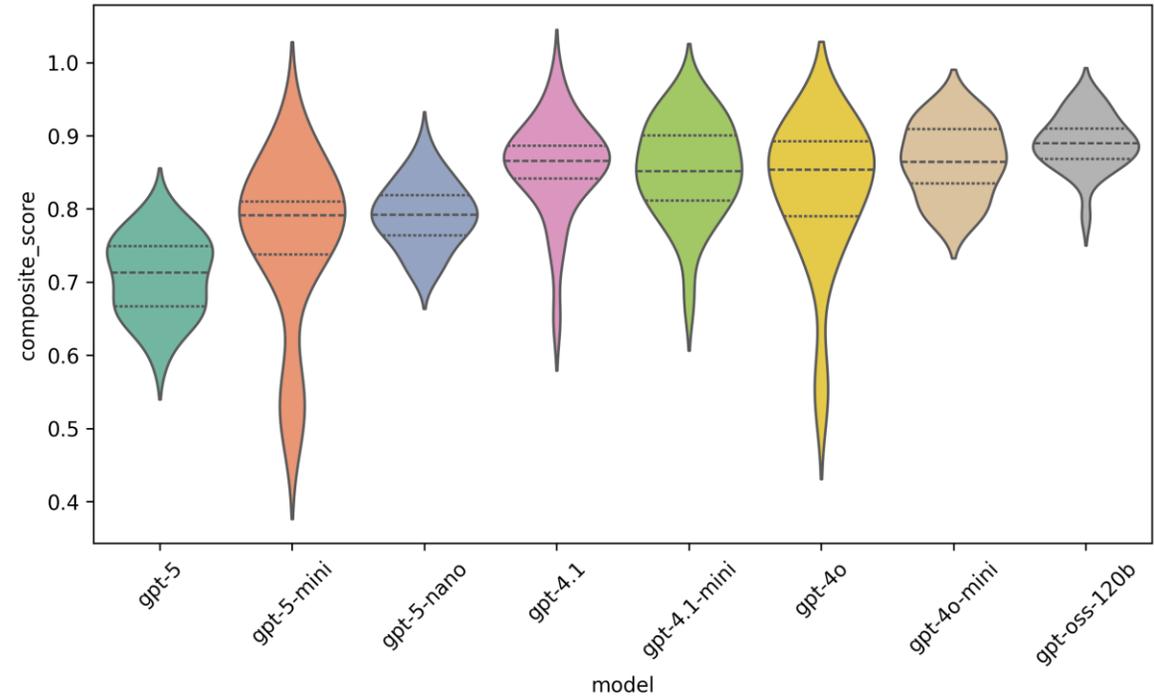
Automation: Personalized Trip Planning



Automation: Personalized Trip Planning

EVALUATION METRICS ACROSS MODELS (AVERAGES)

Model	Response Time (s)	Steps	Semantic Similarity	Composite Score
GPT-4.1	11.6	8.1	0.74	0.86
GPT-4.1-mini	13.2	7.6	0.75	0.85
GPT-4o	13.3	8.2	0.69	0.82
GPT-4o-mini	15.2	9.1	0.78	0.87
GPT-5	250.0	20.7	0.88	0.71
GPT-5-mini	67.7	9.9	0.67	0.76
GPT-5-nano	107.9	23.8	0.90	0.79
GPT-oss-120b	38.4	16.3	0.88	0.84



EVALUATION METRICS BY DISTANCE GROUP (AVERAGED ACROSS ALL MODELS AND PERSONAS).

Distance Group	Response Time (s)	Steps	Semantic Similarity	Composite Score
Far	65.8	14.5	0.82	0.81
Medium	64.9	13.3	0.80	0.80
Near	63.5	12.0	0.79	0.79

Automation: Personalized Trip Planning

User profiles

Business Executive: Senior professional living in Markham. Frequently travels across the GTA for meetings and networking events. Prefers fast, reliable public/shared transport (GO Transit, TTC subway/streetcar) with minimal transfers. Typically travels during peak hours in business attire. Prioritizes comfort and punctuality, and avoids crowded or delayed routes.

Budget Solo Traveler: Cost-conscious solo resident of Markham. Navigates the GTA for errands, shopping, and free events. Uses TTC, YRT, and GO buses extensively. Prefers lowest-cost routes, even if slower. Open to walking and occasional bike share. Avoids premium services unless absolutely necessary.

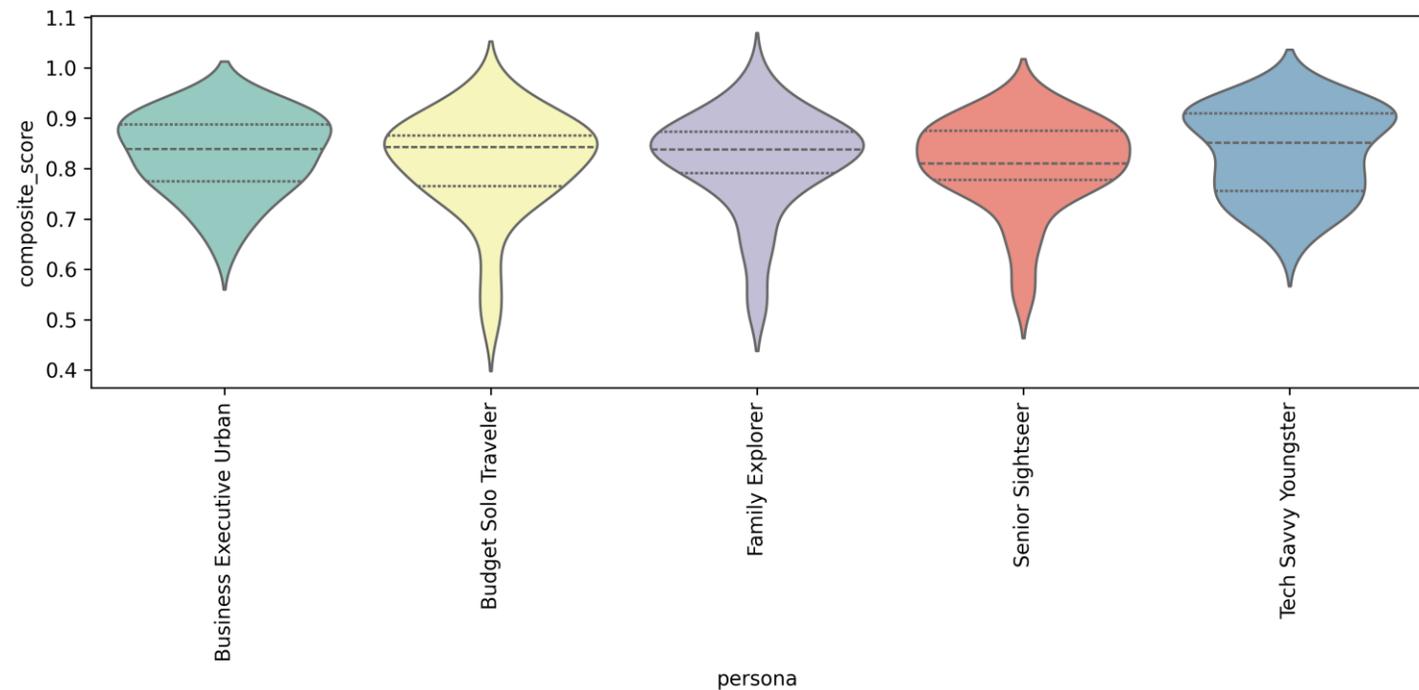
Family Explorer: Parent with young children living in Markham, planning outings (e.g., museums, parks). Needs stroller-friendly, safe routes with minimal walking and reliable arrival times. Prefers transit with elevators, space for kids, and proximity to family-friendly destinations.

Senior Sightseer: Elderly resident of Markham looking to visit cultural sites and family in the GTA. Uses accessible transit (e.g., GO buses, TTC) and avoids complex transfers. Prefers daytime travel. May benefit from services like Mobility On-Request or elevator-equipped stations.

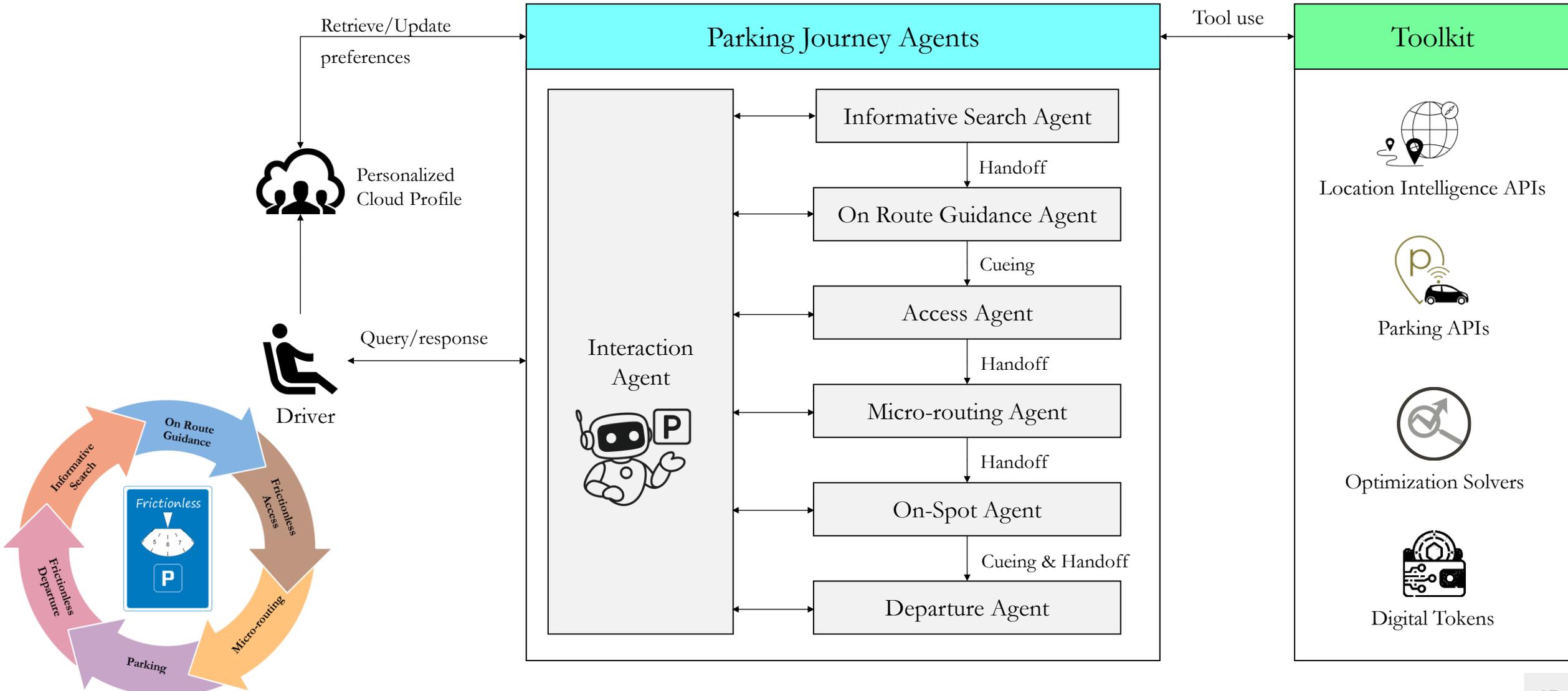
Tech savvy Youngster: University student living in Markham. Travels around the GTA for social outings, study sessions, and late-night events. Uses trip-planning apps (e.g., Transit, Rocketman) and a mix of TTC, GO Transit, and bike/scooter share. Cost-aware but convenience-driven.

EVALUATION METRICS AVERAGED ACROSS MODELS FOR EACH PERSONA.

Persona	Time (s)	Steps	Semantic Similarity	Composite Score
Budget Solo Traveler	69.7	12.9	0.77	0.81
Business Executive Urban	66.1	12.8	0.81	0.83
Family Explorer	75.6	14.0	0.78	0.81
Senior Sightseer	56.7	11.6	0.76	0.81
Tech-Savvy Youngster	68.9	15.7	0.83	0.83



Automation: Frictionless Parking



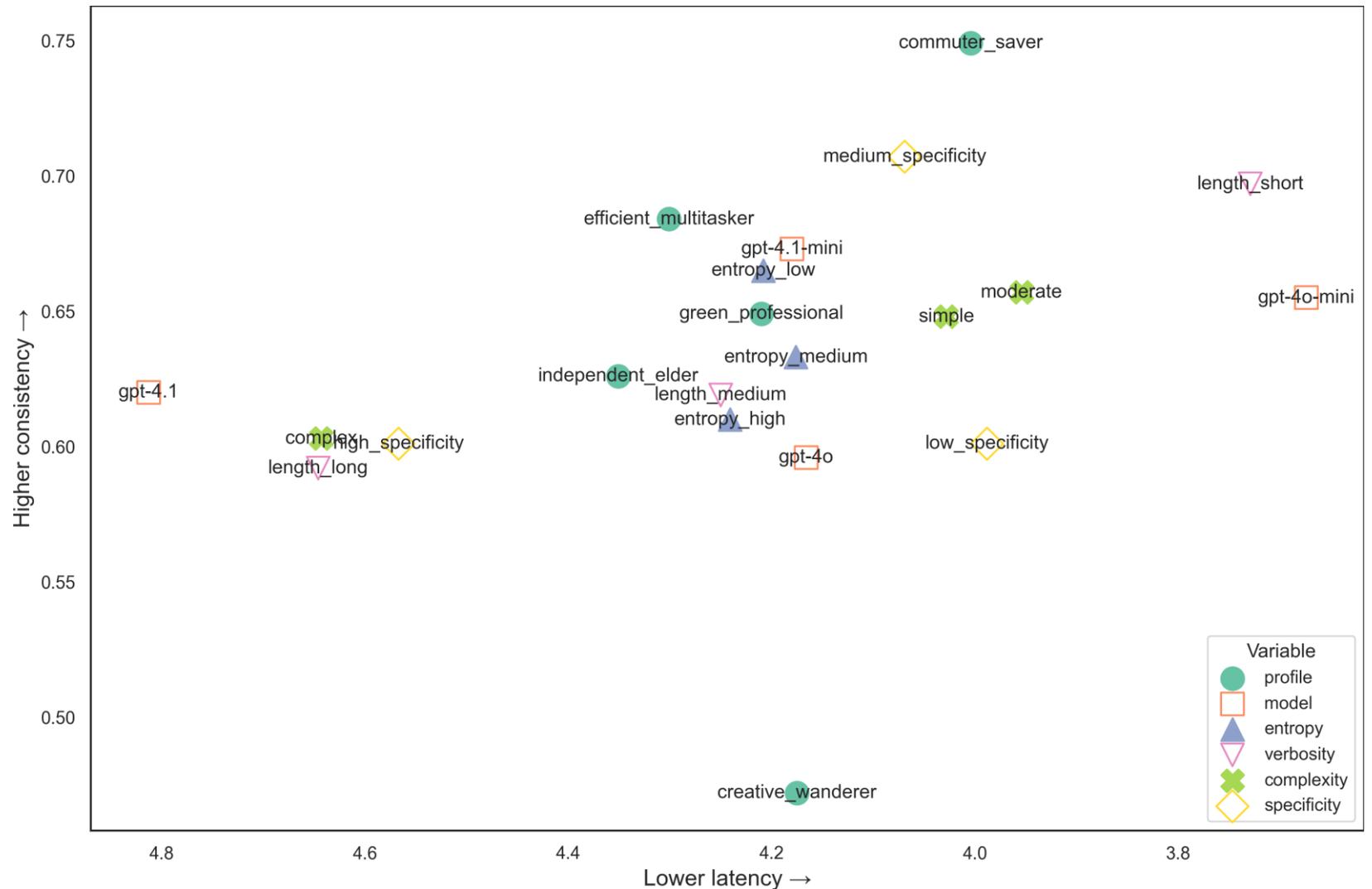
Automation: Frictionless Parking

TABLE 4. Results of the non-parametric Kruskal–Wallis H test for each experimental factor. Boldface indicates $p < .05$.

Factor	Latency (s)		Consistency	
	H	p	H	p
profile	29.515	0.000	248.775	0.000
model	309.482	0.000	28.692	0.000
entropy	1.630	0.443	13.755	0.001
verbosity	254.753	0.000	69.197	0.000
complexity	185.045	0.000	17.797	0.000
specificity	119.926	0.000	64.388	0.000

TABLE 5. Robust GLM coefficient estimates relative to the reference condition. Negative values indicate faster replies (delta latency less than 0) or more stable wording (delta consistency greater than 0). Significance levels are marked as follows: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Level	Δ Latency (s)	Δ Consistency
<i>Profiles</i>		
creative_wanderer	0.172**	-0.277***
efficient_multitasker	0.297***	-0.065***
green_professional	0.206**	-0.100***
independent_elder	0.347***	-0.123***
<i>Model</i>		
gpt-4.1	1.139***	-0.035*
gpt-4.1-mini	0.507***	0.018**
gpt-4o	0.492***	-0.060***
<i>Entropy</i>		
entropy_medium	-0.032	-0.032*
entropy_high	0.033	-0.056***
<i>Verbosity</i>		
length_medium	0.521***	-0.078*
length_long	0.918***	-0.105***
<i>Complexity</i>		
simple	0.074***	-0.009
complex	0.689***	-0.055***
<i>Specificity</i>		
low_specificity	-0.081***	-0.106***
high_specificity	0.498***	-0.106***

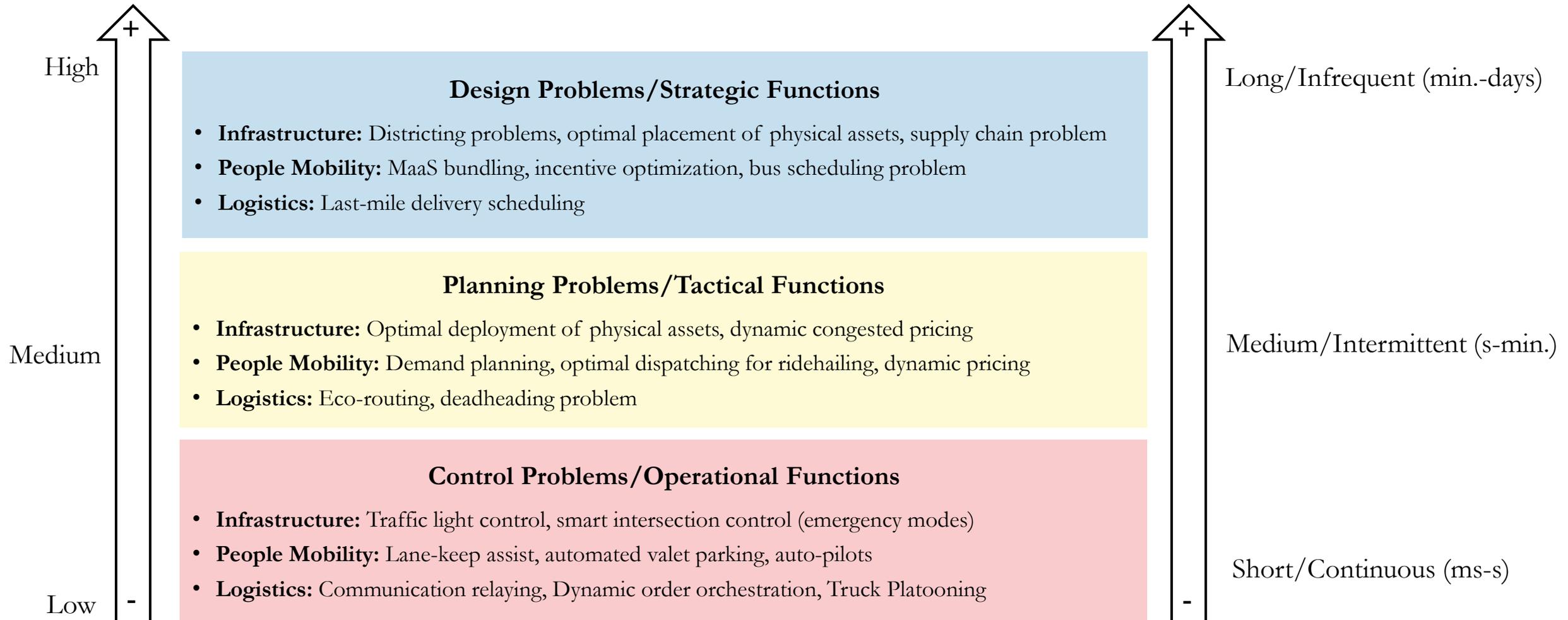


Optimization

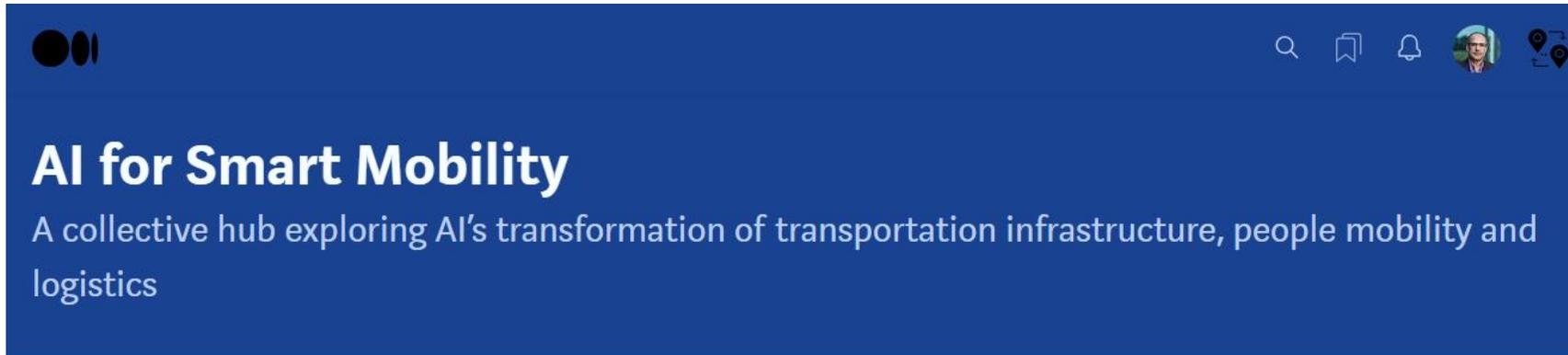


Quality of Solutions

Search Time



Optimization



AI for Smart Mobility
A collective hub exploring AI's transformation of transportation infrastructure, people mobility and logistics



Optimizing Traffic Sensor Placement in the City of Toronto

By Yichen Liao, Xinyi Gong and Amir Hossein Mobasher as part of course project of ECE1724H: Bio-inspired Algorithms for Smart Mobility...

 YICHEN LIAO
Oct 26 · 6 min read



Predicting Ride-Sharing Platform Pricing in New York City with Deep Learning

Yanhao Li, Chen Zhang and Wangwenzan Zhou as part of course project of ECE1724H: Bio-inspired Algorithms for Smart Mobility, University of...

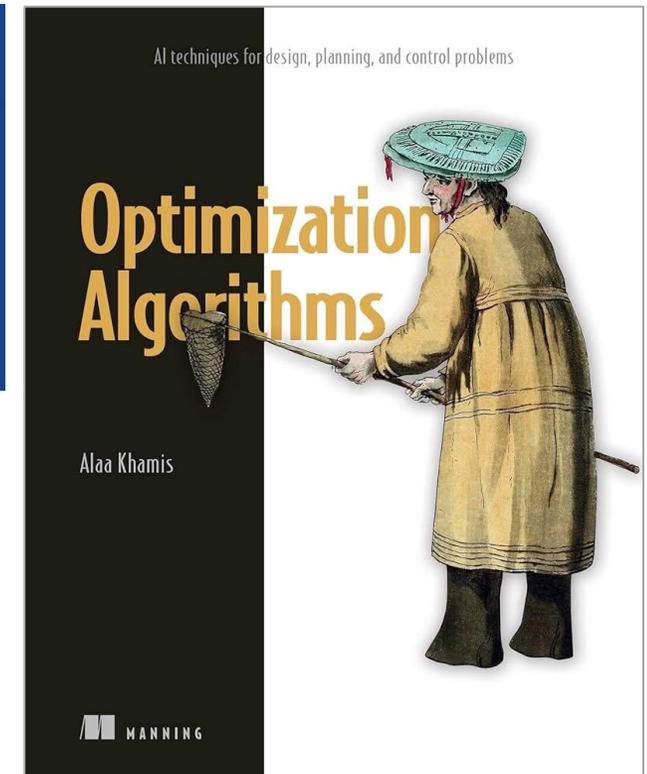
 Allen Zhou
Oct 25 · 18 min read



Optimal Placement of Public Parcel Lockers for Last-Mile Delivery

By Tianwei Zhang and Shiuan-Wen Chen as part of course project of ECE1724H: Bio-inspired Algorithms for Smart Mobility, University of...

 Tianwei Zhang
Oct 24 · 9 min read



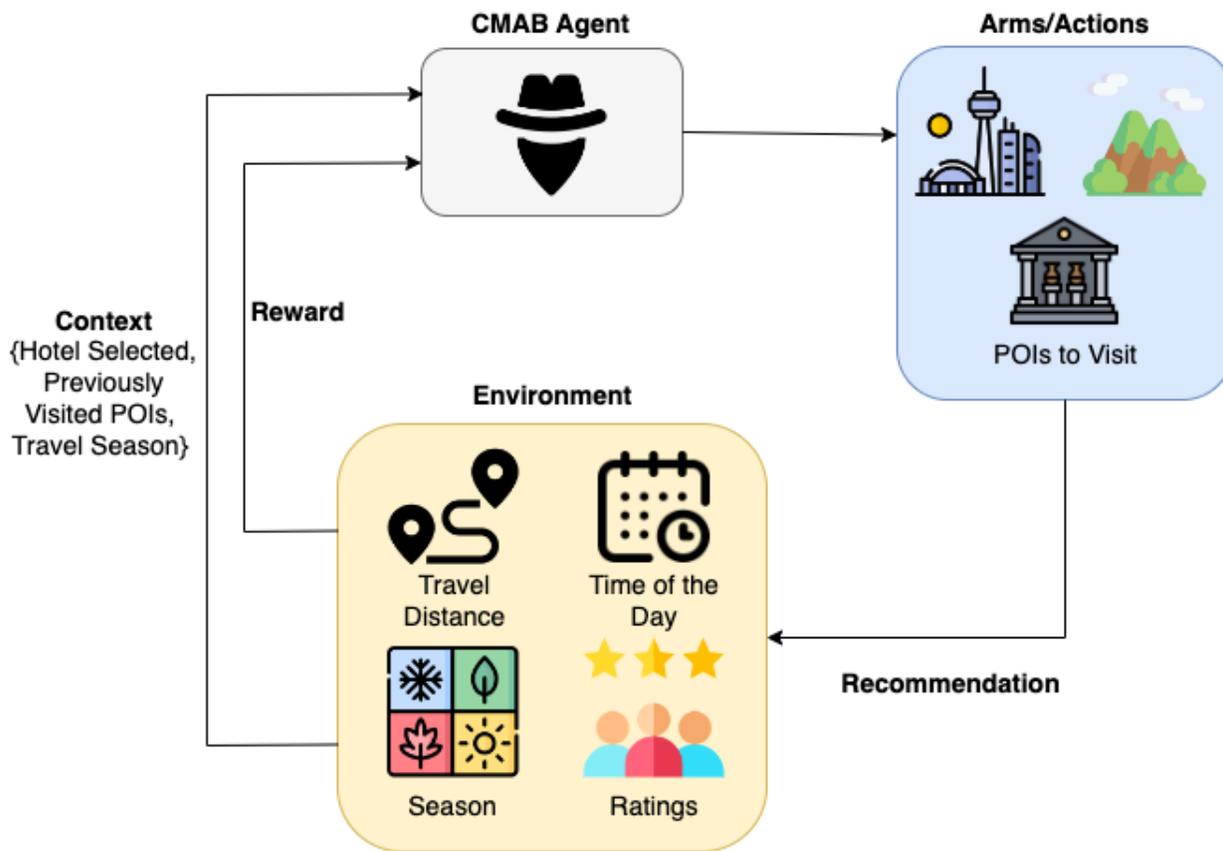
Join us 



<https://github.com/ai4smlab>

Optimization

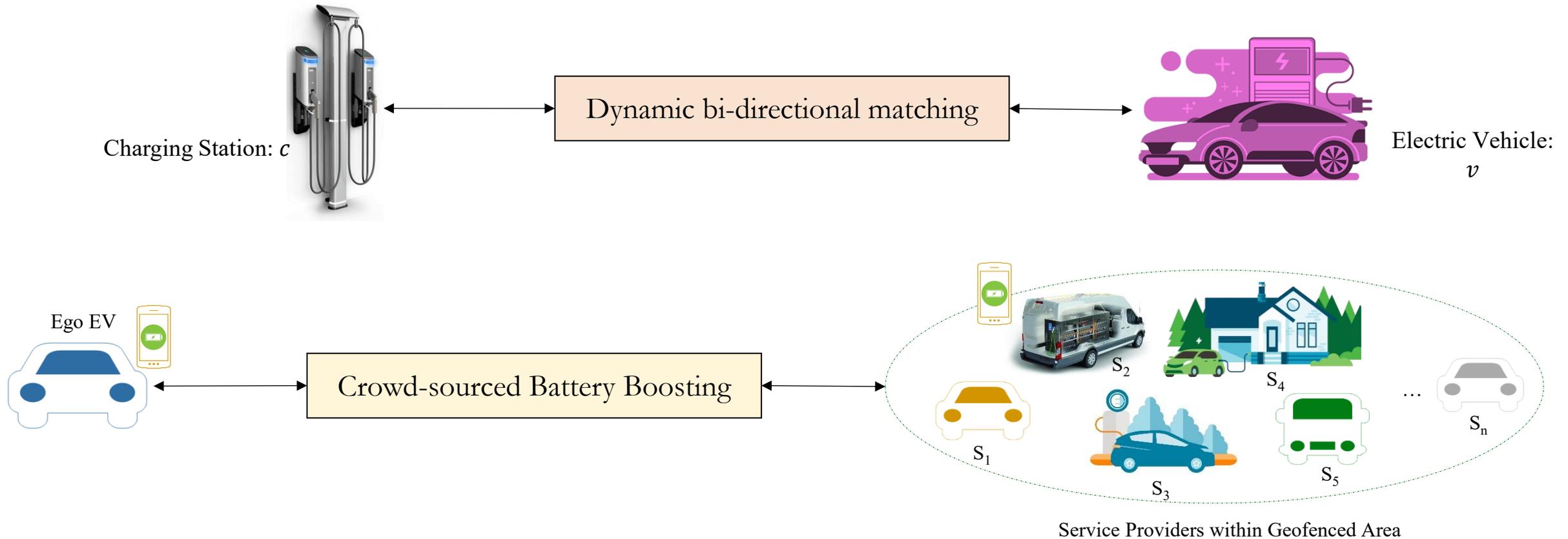
» A Contextual Multi-armed Bandit Approach to Personalized Trip Itinerary Planning



Algorithm	Configuration	Run Time (s)	Reward
One Tour			
AGA	Default	0.109	2.433
Epsilon-Greedy	$\epsilon = 0.05$	0.372	2.711
	$\epsilon = 0.1$	0.646	2.439
Explore-First	first 1/10 of dataset	0.714	2.716
	first 1/3 of dataset	0.804	2.716
Softmax Explorer	$\lambda = 10$	0.283	2.560
Two Tours			
AGA	Default	0.213	4.365
Epsilon-Greedy	$\epsilon = 0.05$	0.550	4.803
	$\epsilon = 0.1$	0.553	4.954
Explore-First	first 1/10 of dataset	1.867	4.464
	first 1/3 of dataset	1.011	5.222
Softmax Explorer	$\lambda = 10$	0.361	5.224
Four Tours			
AGA	Default	0.346	7.306
Epsilon-Greedy	$\epsilon = 0.05$	0.497	9.156
	$\epsilon = 0.1$	0.543	8.239
Explore-First	first 1/10 of dataset	0.959	8.990
	first 1/3 of dataset	0.916	7.882
Softmax Explorer	$\lambda = 10$	0.391	9.357

Optimization

» Dynamic Supply and Demand Matching & Crowd-sourced Battery Boosting



1. Alaa Khamis, RL Macinnes, V Berezin. Dynamic multiple bi-directional supply and demand matching for EV charging. US Patent 12,115,874, 2024.
2. Alaa Khamis, R Abdelmoula, V Berezin, AB Koesdwiady, PEV Pena. Intelligent charging systems and control logic for crowdsourced vehicle energy transfer. US Patent 11,827,117, 2023.
3. A Goudarzi, AM Khamis, J Chau. aming credit system for efficient and compliant renewable energy powered charging station. US Patent App. 18/417,176, 2025.

Potential Barriers



Potential Barriers

- » Adversarial and Edge Cases
- » VRU Adversarial Behaviors
- » Domain Adaptation
- » Learning Over Time
- » Model Predictability and Interpretability
- » Impact on Human Cognition
- » Cybersecurity
- » Data Privacy, Equity and Ownership
- » Responsible AI Governance Framework



Potential Barriers: Adversarial and Edge Cases



Construction



Sudden temporary traffic shifts



Human guidance that may override traffic lights, and signs



Banners with life-size human picture or Air puppet inflatable balloon



Tesla nearly hits a moving train during foggy weather



Confusing roundabout



Traffic light swinging in wind



Slippery snow with no lane markings or visible shoulder



Sandstorms



Tesla confuses moon for traffic light



Pedestrian wearing clothes with same color as the pole



Plastic bag filled with Air



Cohabitation with diverse transportation



Unusual road users



Uber self-driving car struck and killed a woman in Tempe, Arizona

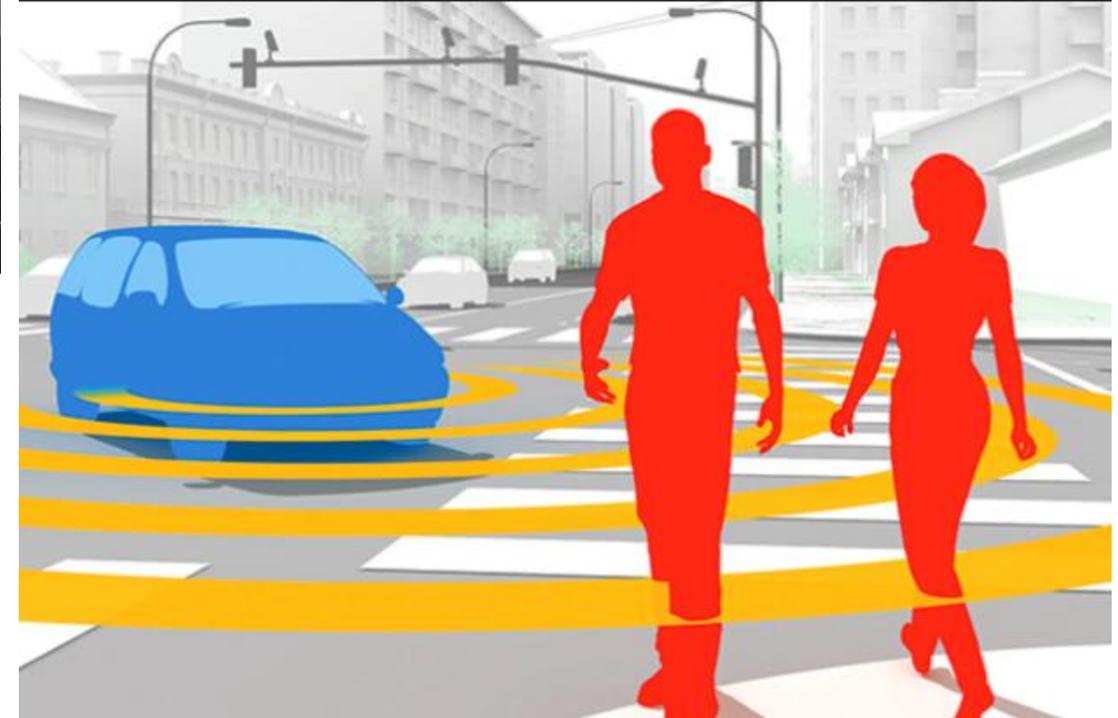
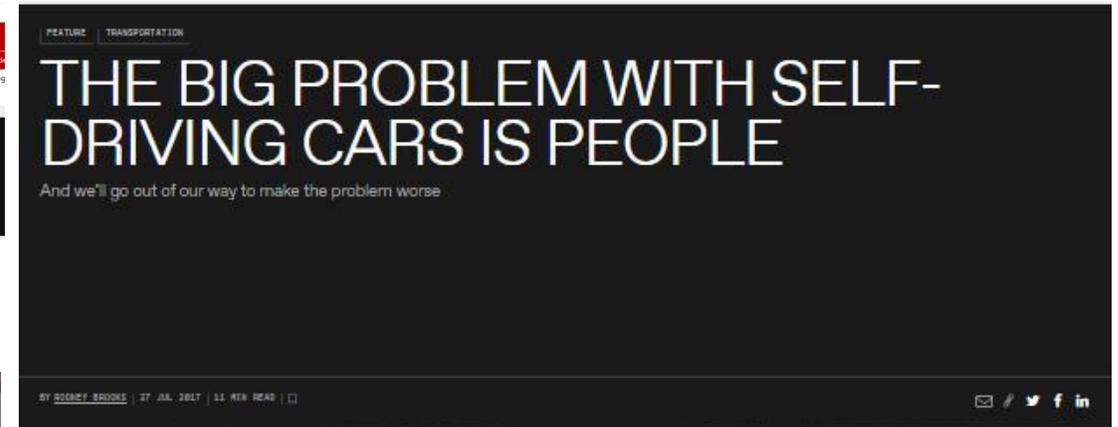
Potential Barriers: Technology

» Adversarial and Edge Cases



Potential Barriers: Technology

» VRU Adversarial Behaviors



1. Alaa Khamis and Wei Tong. Vulnerable road user's adversarial behavior recognition. Granted patent: US12280786B2 United States, 2025.
2. Alaa Khamis, et al. Vulnerable road user's adversarial behavior opportunity and capability. Granted patent: US20240383503A1, United States, 2025.
3. Alaa Khamis, et al. Responses to vulnerable road user's adversarial behavior. Granted patent: US12391281B2, United States, 2025..

Potential Barriers: Responsible AI Governance Framework

Responsible

AI



Ethics



Safety



Security



Privacy



Compliance



Bias



Performance



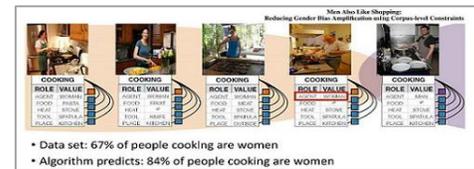
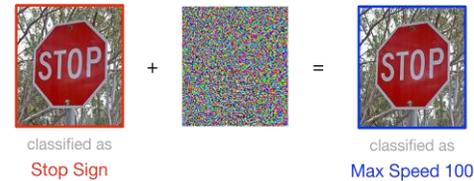
Transparency

TECHNOLOGY

The Future of Artificial Intelligence Depends on Trust

If it is to drive business success, AI cannot hide in a black box. For more insight, see ["3 Steps to Building Trust in AI."](#)

by Anand Rao and Euan Cameron



Gender Classifier	Darker Male	Darker Female	Lighter Male	Lighter Female	Largest Gap
Microsoft	94.0%	79.2%	100%	98.3%	20.8%
FACE++	99.3%	65.5%	99.2%	94.0%	33.8%
IBM	88.0%	65.3%	99.7%	92.9%	34.4%

Concluding Remarks



Concluding Remarks



The future mobility is **people-centric, software-defined, connected, and electric.**



Smart mobility is a wide umbrella for different systems and services to meet various **end-user needs** without compromising the **collective good of the society and the environment.**



AI is an evolving technology that empowers us with gigahertz level reasoning and learning capabilities and ability to analyze large amount of multidimensional data and generate actionable insights. **AI = Augmented Intelligence.**



AI is a foundational technology and a driving force behind several existing and emerging smart mobility systems and services.



AI is a Good Follower, but a Dangerous Leader. Responsible AI governed by a well-developed **governance framework** will be a good follower and a good leader as well.

Ending with a smile

By Alaa Khamis based on 1940 Walt Disney "Fantasia"



The Magic of AI

https://www.linkedin.com/post/s/alaakhamis_iworkforgm-smartmobility-aiforgood-activity-6826985448750108672-utBL

