

# TAAS TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE 2019

**Held over two days in July, this second annual Transport-as-a-Service event attracted some 400 decision-makers to the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham**

Those attending represented interests from across the entire value chain of the Connected and Autonomous Vehicle (CAV), Electric Vehicle (EV), Energy/Battery, Charging, Infrastructure and Future Mobility industry. The event, staged by Angel Business Communications Ltd in partnership with Coventry University, and WMG at the University of Warwick, included two co-located conferences; the inaugural TaaS Technology Awards; pitches from five start-up businesses, and an exhibition zone supported by a score of sponsors.

There can be little doubt that the rapid evolution of the mobility marketplace has been accompanied by fragmentation and a want of standardisation, e.g. electric and hybrid vehicles use up to four different charging plugs. That shortcoming is replicated elsewhere, said HERE Mobility's Alon Pastor, who pointed to the proliferation of stand-alone apps that can make trip planning a disjointed, time-consuming process. "We do need competition in the market, but not the confusion that can arise in performing the task of getting from point A to point B," said Pastor. He saw three steps as a necessary solution to this

challenge: *versatility*, where apps accommodate multiple modes of transport; *visibility*, where they take users through trip planning, ticketing, hotel booking and other required steps; and *optimization* where, regardless of what users adopt as their preferred app, they deliver an efficient, unified service based on shared data and on behavioral science techniques that understand how people move around. Providing this mobility marketplace model was, said Pastor, something HERE was enabling with its portfolio of suitable APIs and tools.

Of course, to get to point B you need an address that is unambiguous, clearly and easily announced and universally applicable. This was the theme of a presentation by George Hall from what3words. He recounted how the London-based business had draped the globe with a virtual 3 x 3m grid and assigned three unique words from a vocabulary of 40,000 English words to each of its 57 trillion grid squares. This geocoding system – the first designed for speech recognition – can also convert the three-word address to GPS coordinates and place a pin on a map. The system is now available in 37 languages and in use with more than 1000 businesses, government agencies and NGOs across 170 countries.

Tomaso Grossi from TomTom chose mapping for autonomous vehicles as his topic, making the point that these would differ significantly to those used in contemporary navigation systems. While most automakers were testing high-definition maps for Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), TomTom's HD Map now includes RoadDNA Suite, a set of layers that enable accurate and robust localisation for autonomous vehicles and can integrate data from optical, radar and LiDAR sensors.

Autonomous vehicle sensors and their integration formed another strand of the programme, with Mike Dempsey from Claytex reviewing the company's work in developing tools and real-world models that can simulate camera, LiDAR, Radar, Ultrasound, GPS and IMU sensors, and Zeina Nazer from Cities Forum exploring the challenges and opportunities for LiDAR sensors within ADAS.

While four-wheeled transport featured high on the agenda, micro-mobility in the shape of electric scooters, bike-sharing services and so on came a close second. Nor were the needs of pedestrians and the disabled overlooked, with an important segment of the programme devoted to their safety and access to services in a rapidly changing world.

**More on this event at: <https://taas.technology/highlights-2019>**



This panel session, hosted by James Carter, Principal Consultant at Vision Mobility (right), explored how to break through with micro-mobility. Panelists included Beate Kubitz (TravelSpirit), Sigrid Dalberg-Krajewski (Trafic), Alan Clarke (LimeBike), and Mark Thomas (Ridecell). Photos: GEOconnexion



The main conference featured more than 40 presentations as well as panel sessions and start-up pitches

# MAKING A SMART CITY A SAFE CITY

**Building partnerships and working collaboratively to create safer spaces and smarter cities was the focus of a Roundtable media event hosted by Safe & the City and What3Words.**



Pictured (from L-R): Jane Stephenson and Gigi Etienne (What3Words), Jessica Bateman (freelance writer), Naina Bajekal and Suyin Haynes (TIME Magazine), David Savage (Tech Talks) and Sonya Barlow (founder, Like Minded Females).

Held at The AllBright Fitzrovia Club in central London at the end of July, the initiative was borne of a successful partnership already cemented between the two tech startups. Those leading the discussion included Jillian Kowalchuk, CEO & Founder of Safe & the City, and Jane Stephenson, Emergency Services Marketing. The roundtable focussed on three topics:

- Safety in Numbers: How can we create smarter cities together?
- Designing for the Future: Tech-enabled safer spaces
- Movement for Change: How governments and businesses can support tech campaigns working to improve safety?

The question of: 'What is a Smart City' led the group discussion. Often described as clean, friendly and with good transport connections, Smart Cities are also associated with technology, connected and modern. With this in mind, two approaches to smarter cities were presented, i.e. TOP DOWN, where cities become smart by integrating data gathered from different kinds of sensors (smart meters & CCTV cameras among others) into a single virtual platform, and BOTTOM UP when new technologies and new data are used as a means to enable citizens to devise solutions, acquire new skills, and improve interaction with public authorities.

The challenges of ensuring systems are in place to enable not just smart cities but

also safer ones - while recognising different genders, race and nationality - prompted a range of suggestions and ideas that included:

- Learning from other models that create open and smart systems
- Ensuring that everyday technologies are connective and integrated between systems, and are free, universal and accessible to different groups
- The ability to collect insights and evolve on the model, but with data protection and offline capabilities in place
- Learning from other tech in developing countries

On the second point of 'Tech-enabled safer spaces', the importance of multi-agency collaboration as in the universal digital communication between what3words and the UK emergency services was cited as an innovative example of where this had worked successfully.

The Roundtable touched on buzzword, the democracy of data, supporting a vision where everyone in the world is able to navigate in their native language, via voice or type. On this note, the group also touched on the issue of diversity in enabling the design of safer spaces - prompting the suggestion from one member of flipping the model of 'testing' with the same convenient 'diverse' group of people to the most vulnerable, at-risk group to get their buy-in to drive safety initiatives and community safeguarding.

The Roundtable closed on the third point presenting how governments and businesses could be part of the solution and highlighting that, while the private sector has the networks and ability to bring everyone together behind a single programme of change, it was equally important to be part of government consultative processes that had access to every level of society down to grassroots; as well as the support of government bodies. Essentially what is needed is a single voice that gets it; will advocate for it at a local level, and push it out.

Note: Safe & the City is working closely with the Mayor of London's Women's Night Safety Charter, part of the Mayor's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and London's commitment to the UN Women Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces global initiative.





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