In the last few months, the coronavirus outbreak has completely modified our daily life and transportation habits. As physical distancing measures need to be respected to avoid spreading the virus, shared mobility, including public transport has been radically impacted. In this context, Carol Schweiger, President of Schweiger Consulting and Chairperson of the New England Intelligent Transportation Society, suggests modifications to her 2020 mobility trend predictions presented in February when the full consequences of COVID-19 were not yet apparent.

As follows, the predictions are divided into 7 topics:

- 2020 will see more travel time goals in major urban areas as a result of transportation
planning efforts. The impact of COVID-19 is likely marginal here. Yet, it is possible that the transport planning process may become much more flexible than it is now and start taking into consideration situations such as natural disasters and disease outbreaks.

- Autonomous vehicles (AVs) will actually be put into public transport services. Measures like the implementation of rear-door boarding, elimination of on-board payment and installation of panels next to the driver, were applied to reduce driver exposure. In this context, the deployment of AVs could be seen as a further solution to safeguard transit operators.

- Higher use of artificial intelligence and deep learning in public transport. COVID-19 may accelerate the development of artificial intelligence in many different areas representing a reduction of human contact or proximity. For example, digital assistants could be used to check the temperatures of boarding travellers as well as regulate the number of passengers.

- Traffic management will be recognised as a significant portion of Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS). Even though mobility choices will be affected, COVID-19 effects on this prediction are minimal as including data from traffic management and operations should still be feasible.

- Perfecting the ‘complete’ trip. Before COVID-19, there were numerous barriers to disabled, older, and low-income people attempting to make a “complete” trip. Now, the barriers are even bigger. Performing a complete trip during a pandemic may be challenging unless several solutions are improved. For example, providing real-time seating and wheelchair space availability to help to comply with physical distancing.

- The proliferation of kerb management initiatives and systems. COVID-19 has already made significant changes in this area. Many cities have introduced changes to allow short-term parking and reduce parking near highly frequented areas.

- 2020 will continue to move toward open platforms and data to drive technology-enabled mobility services. COVID-19 can be seen as an accelerator for the development of open platforms and data. For example, incorporating social distancing into a MaaS platform would be one way of ensuring that travellers are provided with all available and safe mobility options.

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