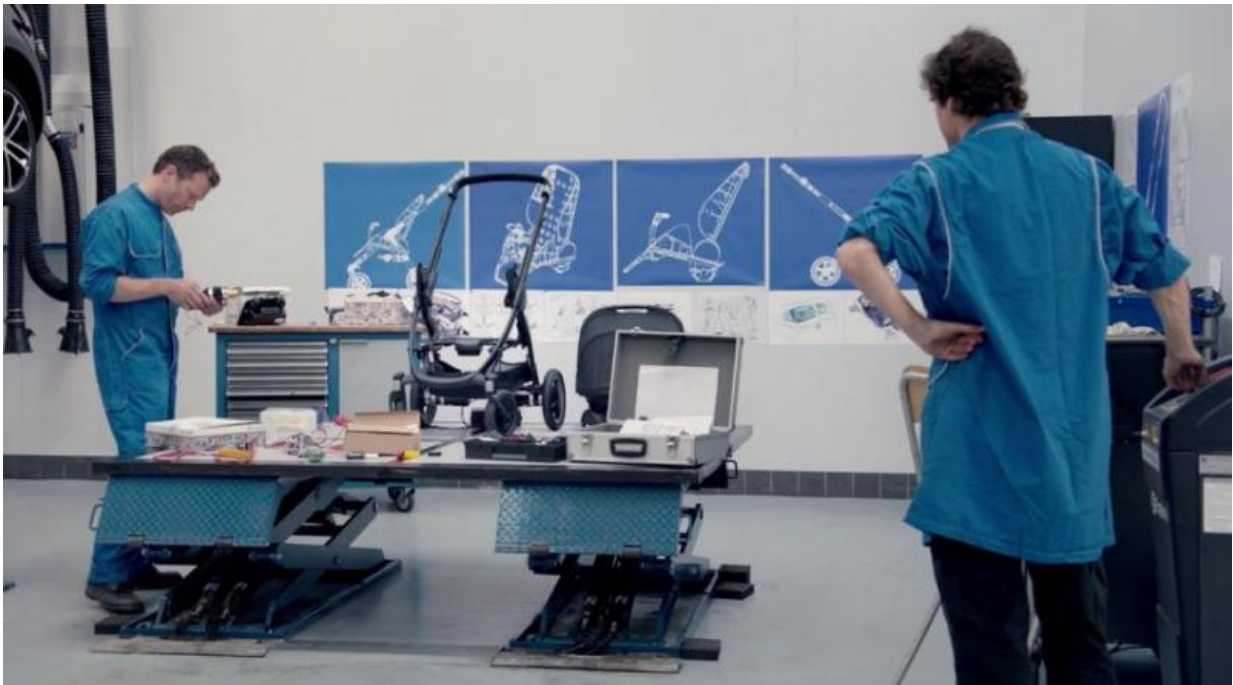


Imagine: baby stroller with braking and cruising mind of its own

August 15 2015, by Nancy Owano



Would you believe a video that shows a stroller self-driving itself safely through a busy park, with a baby inside? That brakes on its own, drives on its own—following Dad a few paces behind as he walks around town? The robo-stroller made its rounds of websites, drawing enough attention for writers to ask, what's up with that? Is the stroller for real?

The baby stroller idea comes from Volkswagen. Bram Jansen, Volkswagen Technician, said they took up the challenge of a stroller that does not just brake automatically but keeps a distance—automatically. A human tester is shown trying the stroller out indoors, pushing it over to the wall but the stroller smartly stops itself to prevent impact. Then he goes out of the house into town and walks around with the stroller following him. "Hay?" A surprised woman seated at an outdoor café holds out her hand to stop what she thinks is a runaway stroller.

Kelsey Atherton in *Popular Science* commented on the video, saying "As it goes on, the scenarios in the video appear increasingly less realistic, ending with a robo-stroller moving back and forth as it keeps up with a child in a [swing](#)."

That last shot seems to be the crowning challenge to credibility. The stroller is rocking a baby to sleep right in step with the back and forth movements of the swing. Noah Joseph in *Autoblog* said there may be a possibility that an engineer off-screen had a remote control and "hopefully without an actual [baby](#) on board." Creative license or not, Atherton said the idea itself was not impossible, as "we're already seeing driverless cars and autonomous robots."

To work on the stroller idea, the Volkswagen team said in the video that they took a sensor from a Golf, referring to the adaptive cruise control sensor that allows the car to keep a safe and exact distance to the vehicle in front. Accordingly, the idea was to program a stroller to keep a fixed distance from the caretaker in front.

It would seem a car manufacturer brand as well known as Volkswagen would have other things to occupy their engineers rather than experimenting with baby strollers. How and why did this all come about? Volkswagen Netherlands took up the challenge of a baby stroller with automatic braking from a Facebook post where a Volkswagen post said a

baby stroller with brakes might be a really good idea.

When can we expect the baby stroller in stores or introduced at car shows? Volkswagen told *Quartz*: The baby stroller in the commercial developed by Volkswagen Netherlands was not an autonomous concept or prototype but rather radio controlled. Reporter Mark Murphy had the story. "The commercial was a humorous way to highlight the [assistance](#) systems on Volkswagen models in the market."

There are no plans presently for a production version. Nonetheless, the Volkswagen team offered an interesting idea on how a stroller of the future may work.

Since the future includes obstacle-avoiding self-driving cars and drones— and [household products](#), as Murphy put it, "with minds of their own," then who knows?

ACHTUNG! Is a creative agency that has been working with Volkswagen Netherlands in a brand campaign, "You expect more when you drive a Volkswagen," in which parents expect [household](#) products to have similar features to their VW vehicles. The Facebook fan had responded to the ad.

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