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# Flying Taxis. Seriously?

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Heard on [Weekend Edition Sunday](#)



AARTI SHAHANI



## Dictation :

LULU GARCIA-NAVARRO, HOST:

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Here's NPR's Aarti Shahani.

.....

## FILL IN THE BLANKS

AARTI SHAHANI, BYLINE: You .....  
.....who hails a taxi and heads to the ....., where, at  
the ....., your ride is waiting. It .....  
..... a minivan with wings and four seats or more like a gigantic  
drone. ...., it won't fly itself any time soon.  
One seat will be reserved for the driver pilot.

CAREY CANNON: If air taxis are going to be what everybody .....  
....., you know, in thousands at a city, for  
example, you won't be able to find enough conventional pilots.

SHAHANI: Carey Cannon, a chief engineer at Bell - .....  
..... pavilion at South by Southwest, the annual tech, music, film  
convention in ..... Cannon .....  
a virtual reality simulation of what it feels like to drive one of these small, flying  
..... of the .....

CANNON: OK. I'll ..... it a little bit.  
..... just about to go.

SHAHANI: He puts ..... on me and something like a  
..... in my hand. I slip into a .....  
....., only I'm more than a gamer. I'm a trainer for Bell's computer  
software.

CANNON: All right. Now ..... and roll the  
..... wheel up to give it some power.

SHAHANI: How I and others drive will become data, training data for the artificial intelligence ..... much of the job. My VR flying taxi ..... into the Las Vegas skyline.

CANNON: You're just following the green .....  
.....

SHAHANI: All right.

CANNON: (Laughter).

SHAHANI: Oh.

The dream of flying cars is at least as old as the automobile itself. Bell, which makes attack helicopters for the U.S. Navy, is working on this new project with another ..... - Uber Technologies. Boeing and Airbus also have prototypes of these flying cars in the works. Uber has become the face of the ..... mobility movement as it has the most public campaign touting their work ..... Elon Musk says ..... Mars. Uber says they'll get a millennial from San Francisco to San Jose in 15 minutes flat. And their timeline for this flying taxi that does not yet exist - 2023. I moderated a panel at South By.

By way of show of hands, how many of you believe it?

Half the audience ..... that remarkable goal. When I asked if it'll happen within a decade...

Everyone, pretty much.

Jaiwon Shin with NASA, also an Uber partner, was on the ..... While he thinks Uber is being a touch ..... - he put the timeline ..... the mid-2020s - Shin gives his thesis for why it's close.

JAIWON SHIN: Convergence of many different technologies are maturing to the level that now aviation can benefit to put these things together.

SHAHANI: The batteries that ..... can power flight. Companies can ..... and pull data and build artificial intelligence to take over air traffic control, manage ..... drones and taxis in the air. Also, his partner Uber is really well-connected to politicians and regulators. Shin says to move quickly, it'll take technologists and policymakers coordinating.

SHIN: If one segment ....., this is not going to happen.

SHAHANI: When we build the whiz-bangy (ph) future, it's good practice to pause and consider the ..... That's what South by Southwest attendee Cheryl Garabet did when she ..... the mic. Right now, in major cities, people in .....-.....-..... traffic or riding the ..... have to see each other. With flying cars, the ..... can escape to the air and leave the .....-..... forgotten in their .....

CHERYL GARABET: I think of a very dystopian - all of us with money flying around, you know, looking down at the poor homeless, who have no options in that regard. Like, how can cities prepare so that there's not this awful dystopian future for all of us with flying vehicles?

SHAHANI: A strong dose of skepticism to balance the techno-optimism - while no flying taxi exists yet, Uber ..... estimate the near-term cost. That San Francisco to San Jose trip - \$43.

Aarti Shahani, NPR News, Austin.

(SOUNDBITE OF SNARKY PUPPY'S "BLING BLING")