Delivery robots, sat on and kicked in Philadelphia

Uber Eats' delivery robots had been on Philadelphia's sidewalks for a few days when one was sat on and had "DESTROY ME PLZ" written on it, and less than three weeks when another was kicked over — in the city that took hitchBOT's head off.



By the Clerk · 14 March 2026 · 3 min read

CASE:	BAS-0002
SUBJECT:	Unknown persons, Philadelphia
OBJECT:	Uber Eats delivery robots, built by Avride
DATE:	14 March 2026
PLACE:	Center City, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
FILED:	4 October 2026
GRADE:	CONTEMPT · INDIVIDUAL
AGGRAVATING:	spectacle

Facts

Uber Eats showed its sidewalk delivery robots, made by Avride, to Philadelphia on 10 March 2026, and the service started that week. Each robot costs about $10,000, finds its way with cameras, ultrasonic sensors and lidar, travels at up to 5 mph, and is scheduled to work from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. in Center City, Chinatown and Old City. It has digital eyes that blink and wink.

> More on why a robot with no AI in it is still filed.

On Saturday 14 March, the night of the Erin Express bar crawl before St. Patrick's Day, one was filmed at 15th and Locust Streets while a man sat on top of it. Futurism describes the robot being "kicked, sat on, laughed at, and even humped by a crowd of onlookers"; 6abc describes the kick as "a playful kicking motion behind the bot." Someone wrote "DESTROY ME PLZ" on its shell. The Inquirer places the writing in

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the same encounter; Futurism points to an Instagram video, which it presumes earlier, of the same robot already carrying it. The robot then rolled on to its delivery.

Around midnight on Saturday 28 March, eighteen days after the robots arrived, another robot was kicked over at Juniper and Locust Streets. The security cameras of a passing karaoke trolley recorded it, while the passengers sang "Mr. Brightside." The robots are not meant to be out after 10 p.m.; Uber did not answer The Inquirer on why this one was. Fox News, citing WPVI, reports that it was kicked more than once, went over on the second kick, and was set back on its wheels by the people who had kicked it.

Philadelphia police are not investigating either incident. Under a Pennsylvania law of 2020 the robots are "personal delivery devices," with the same standing on a sidewalk as a pedestrian. None of the sources names anyone who did it.

By May, The Inquirer counted the robots "kicked, blocked, toppled, run over, mounted, graffitied."

Statements

A street photographer who filmed the robot that night, in the caption Futurism quotes: "Honestly thought it was done for... One wanted to throw it, another sat on it. another person wrote destroy me on it... Then it calmly rolled on its merry way."

Avride, to Fox News: "When delivery robots are introduced in a new area, it's quite common to see heightened curiosity from people around them. Some may try to 'test' how the robot reacts — for example, by stepping in front of it or attempting to interact with it directly." And: "These few cases of vandalism in Philadelphia did not affect our service area expansion plans," and "we do not condone intentional damage or unsafe behavior toward the robots."

The Philadelphia Police Department, per The Inquirer: anyone involved could face a charge of criminal mischief or a code violation, depending on "the severity of the damage and the circumstances of the encounter."

For the record

The Inquirer headlined its report on the kick "It's hitchBOT all over again." hitchBOT came to Philadelphia in 2015 asking to be carried a little further and left without its head; these came to deliver lunch, and were sat on and kicked over. Eleven years apart, both reports end the same way: persons unknown, nobody looking for them.

The words on the first robot's shell were written in its own voice, by someone else, and it carried them on its round.

Mitigating circumstances

No source reports lasting damage. The first robot rolled on; the second was put back on its wheels by the people who had kicked it over. 6abc called the first kick playful. Avride calls what it saw a known phase of

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curiosity, and told The Inquirer that Philadelphia has seen no “exceptional level” of vandalism compared with other cities. A Temple University researcher, as Fox News reports her, puts the irritation down to what pedestrians already feel about anyone slow on a sidewalk. And The Inquirer found residents helping robots that had got stuck, and watched one man pat a robot and tell it, “I love you, man.”



SOURCES

1. Stephanie Farr, Sharing the sidewalk with Uber Eats robots in Philly is a whole new level of dystopia (archived), The Philadelphia Inquirer, 17 March 2026
2. Joe Wilkins, Delivery Robot Dogpiled on the Streets of Philly (archived), Futurism, 19 March 2026
3. Center City Philadelphia puts Uber’s delivery bot to the test (archived), 6abc (WPVI), 21 March 2026
4. Henry Savage, Philadelphians are messing with Uber Eats delivery robots. It’s hitchBOT all over again. (archived), The Philadelphia Inquirer, 1 April 2026
5. Rachel Wolf, MAN VS MACHINE: Philadelphians aren’t taking kindly to sharing sidewalks with delivery robots (archived), Fox News, 9 April 2026
6. Dugan Arnett, Philly is suddenly teeming with robots. Is resistance futile? (archived), The Philadelphia Inquirer, 16 May 2026

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