

New Driving Simulator Graphics Face Mixed Reviews



IOWA CITY – In their latest attempt to make driving simulator studies more entertaining, graphic artists at the National Advanced Driving Simulator (NADS) have made some interesting additions to their visuals.

“We wanted to throw some curveballs in there, see if participants really were as aware of their surroundings as they claim to be,” Transportation Visualization Program Manager Shawn Allen said. “No, these new graphics don’t hold any scientific value, but it’s just kind of fun for everyone. Especially me.”

Comments left on the NADS [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages by study participants report sightings of Waldo, the Simpson’s house, and a Jetsons flying car in the virtual worlds. Commonly known as Easter eggs, graphics such as these are sometimes placed in video games or movies as intentional inside jokes, hidden messages or images, or secret features. The term evokes the idea of a traditional Easter egg hunt, as users try to find these hidden (or not so hidden) details. NADS staff refused to confirm how many Easter eggs have been added to their simulated worlds but, according to Allen, “it’s more than a dozen, less than a pound.”

NADS Director Dan McGehee added that the graphics keep NADS programmers happy and probably don’t change the results of the studies, though they may in some cases. He couldn’t be

sure. “But isn’t that momentary distraction worth it if it makes the experience more fun for everyone involved?”

So far, most comments left on NADS social media seem to be generally positive. “I liked that little surprise of The Shining twins standing on the sidewalk,” Jim B. said on Facebook. Tisha M. tweeted that she enjoyed passing Herbie the Love Bug taking a curve on two wheels. However, one glaring negative Facebook post is drawing some attention. When the commenter was contacted, he said he was less than thrilled with the graphics.

“I heard there’d be Easter eggs in this thing,” the Easter Bunny said. “I was at the NADS for a few hours, drove the car, saw no eggs whatsoever, and only got paid about a hundred bucks. Where’s the fun in that?”

Rose Schmitt, NADS Staff Research Assistant, said that they make no promises on what participants will experience in their simulated drives. “But you can certainly help us make the roads safer for everyone, even bunnies, by registering as a participant on our website.”

To sign-up to be a NADS driving study participant, visit: www.drivingstudies.com