

Waymo to expand autonomous vehicle rides to San Francisco

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In this April 7, 2021 file photo, a Waymo minivan arrives to pick up passengers for an autonomous vehicle ride, in Mesa, Ariz. Waymo's self-driving ride-hailing service is branching out to San Francisco. The Alphabet, Inc., autonomous vehicle unit said Wednesday, March 30, 2022, it has started carrying employees in electric Jaguar I-Pace SUVs without human backup drivers. Credit: AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin, File

Waymo's self-driving ride-hailing service is branching out to San Francisco.

The autonomous vehicle unit of Alphabet, Google's [parent company](#), said Wednesday that it started carrying employees in electric Jaguar I-Pace SUVs without human backup drivers. Previously the company had been testing the vehicles with a safety driver behind the wheel just in case.

Waymo didn't elaborate on when it might offer autonomous rides to the public in San Francisco. The company has been using autonomous minivans without human backups to carry passengers in the East Valley of the Phoenix metro area since 2020.

Waymo also announced Wednesday that soon it will expand driverless rides to Downtown Phoenix. The program will start by carrying Waymo employees with safety drivers in the vehicles, with a goal of opening those rides to residents who join a "trusted tester" program soon after. No date was given for when the humans would be pulled from the vehicles.

The testing in San Francisco comes as competitor Cruise LLC, a General Motors subsidiary, is seeking a permit to charge for fully autonomous rides in the city. Cruise is operating a small fleet of autonomous vehicles that it opened to the [general public](#) at the beginning of February. GM expects to get a permit to charge passengers for autonomous rides this year.

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