

A self-driving truck will soon deliver goods to 34 locations in Dallas-Fort Worth

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Credit: Gatik

A California-based autonomous trucking company will begin making deliveries to 34 Sam's Club locations in Dallas-Fort Worth, beginning in July.

Gatik will operate autonomous 26-foot box trucks in North Texas seven days a week as part of the Georgia-Pacific and KBX Logistics

transportation network. Gatik is replacing traditional tractor-trailers with non-detachable box trucks, a move it said will increase delivery route sequences and reduce costs.

The trucks will carry Georgia-Pacific brands like Quilted Northern bath tissue and Dixie products to Sam's Clubs.

Gatik opened a trucking facility in Fort Worth a year ago to serve as its Texas hub. It pledged to create over 500 jobs by 2025.

Gautam Narang, CEO and co-founder of Gatik, described the partnership in a statement as a way to transform regional distribution of goods from semitruck deliveries to one "with unparalleled reliability, speed and consistency."

The number of product fulfillment runs will increase from once or twice a week to two to four times a week, said Richard Steiner, Gatik's head of policy and communications.

"We're going to help to ensure [fewer] out-of-stocks and much more availability and enhanced product flow for Georgia-Pacific's consumers," Steiner said.

Initially, Gatik trucks will operate with a safety driver aboard, but it plans to eventually remove the driver. Gatik began testing the technology with Walmart, the parent company of Sam's Club, in December 2020 on a seven-mile loop in Bentonville, Ark.

Texas is now a key state for self-driving truck experimentation. In April, California-based self-driving trucking company Kodiak Robotics Inc. partnered with carrier fleet U.S. Xpress to launch an autonomously operated cargo service between Dallas-Fort Worth and Atlanta. TuSimple and Waymo are also conducting tests in the Dallas area.

It's a large market to enter, and Gatik expects to add local staff, Steiner said. A medium-duty Gatik truck operates over 20 hours a day, seven days a week. Steiner said each truck will average three runs a day, 50 miles each way.

"It's something which is new for the space, and we're excited to be doing it first here in Texas," Steiner said.

The trucking industry has faced a driver shortage that the pandemic exacerbated. Walmart said in April that it was raising pay for its private fleet of 12,000 [truck drivers](#), including nearly 2,000 in Texas. The company also launched a fleet development program to train the next generation of drivers at a new facility in Dallas.

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