Waymo self-driving minivans take to more US roads

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Self-driving Waymo Chrysler Pacifica minivans and long-haul trucks will be tested on roads in the US states of Texas and New Mexico

Alphabet's self-driving vehicle unit Waymo is expanding testing to more regions of the United States to explore "new transportation solutions."

Waymo Chrysler Pacifica minivans and long-haul trucks will take to roads in the US states of Texas and New Mexico this week, building on a project in Arizona, according to the company.

"These are interesting and promising commercial routes, and we'll be using our vehicles to explore how the Waymo Driver might be able to create new transportation solutions," Waymo said in a message posted Thursday on Twitter.

Born in a Google lab devoted to big-vision new technology, Waymo became a subsidiary of Alphabet in 2016.

A self-driving car service being tested by Waymo opened up to more people in the Phoenix, Arizona area in late 2018.

Those taking part in the service can use a smartphone application to summon autonomous vehicles to travel in an area about 100 square miles (250 square km) at its maximum, according to Waymo chief John Krafcik.

Waymo expected businesses to be interested in using the autonomous ride service to carry customers to and from shops.

Self-driving vehicle technology is likely to be used in long-haul trucking, since long portions of routes can be tedious highway stretches with fewer variables to handle than on local streets.

Uber self-driving cars will be on the streets of the US capital Washington soon, but only for mapping and data collection, as the rideshare giant moves to prepare for deployment of autonomous vehicles

Services in various stages of deployment are in the works from General Motors' autonomous car division Cruise and electric carmaker Tesla, as well as Waymo.

In late 2019, Hyundai became the latest car maker to deploy autonomous rides in the US market.

Separately Thursday, Uber said it would bring its autonomous vehicles to the US capital Washington starting Friday, for mapping and [data collection](#), building on similar efforts in Dallas, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, and Toronto.

Eric Meyhofer, who heads the Uber Advanced Technologies Group, said the company had no defined timetable for deploying self-driving rideshare vehicles but that data collection is the first step.

For now, "you'll only see these vehicles with two people," including a driver and a data collection specialist, Meyhofer told a panel at the Washington Auto Show.

"We believe self-driving technology has the potential to drive safer streets, cost-effective rides, and increased access ... We feel privileged to be taking our first step towards bringing self-driving technology to life in our nation's capital."

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