

Tesla launches driverless Model Y robo-taxi service in Austin with safety monitors

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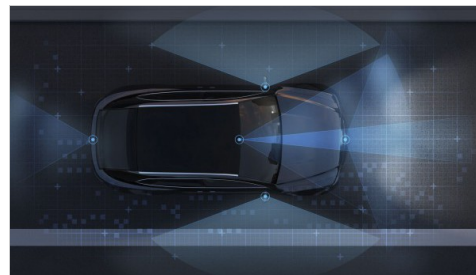
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Tesla's new robo-taxi service in Austin invites early customers to experience driverless rides with safety monitors aboard

Tesla has initiated rides in its driverless Model Y sport utility vehicles in Austin, Texas, marking the first significant test to deploy fully autonomous vehicles utilizing cameras and end-to-end AI, according to a report published by TechCrunch on June 22. This approach contrasts with other companies such as Waymo. Tesla sent invitations to selected customers for early access to the robo-taxi service, allowing them to hail rides using a new app for a flat fee of \$4.20 per ride. These invitations were largely given to Tesla's prominent online supporters. The service operates daily from 6 a.m. to 12 a.m., with limitations during adverse weather.



Source: Getty Images

The service begins with about 10 Model Y SUVs in South Austin, and each ride includes a Tesla employee as a safety monitor in the passenger seat. While Tesla's robo-taxi information page offers instructions and general rider rules, it lacks detailed information such as that provided by competitors. Observers, including Ed Niedermeyer, author of *Ludicrous, The Unvarnished Story of Tesla Motors*, have noted Tesla's actions, including a depot in South Austin and the presence of branded robo-taxis.

CEO Elon Musk has sporadically shared information about the robo-taxi rollout, with many of the details coming from supporters. However, Tesla has attempted to restrict certain information releases to maintain confidentiality regarding trade secrets and business operations. The company uses human safety monitors in the passenger seat, whose role remains unclear. Unlike other autonomous vehicle companies, Tesla has moved to market operations without futuristic models and relies on a new version of its Full Self-Driving software. Cameras in the vehicles are not used by default during rides, except in emergencies or post-ride checks.

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