

# Waymo's Self-Driving Cabs Just Got an Important Green Light in California



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Photo: Waymo

In a significant development for Alphabet's autonomous vehicle company, Waymo has secured permission to transport passengers in its self-driving taxis in California, but probably not you.

This week, the California Public Utilities Commission issued the company a permit for its Autonomous Vehicle Pilot program, TechCrunch reported Tuesday. In an emailed statement, a Waymo spokesperson told Gizmodo that the permit will let Waymo employees "hail our vehicles and bring

guests on rides within our South Bay territory.” In other words, you’ll need to be tight with someone at Alphabet if you want to cruise around Silicon Valley in the company’s self-driving cabs.

“This is the next step on our path to eventually expand and offer more Californians opportunities to access our self-driving technology, just as we have gradually done with Waymo One in Metro Phoenix,” the spokesperson added.

Waymo is among just a small handful of companies—including Zoox, Autox, and Pony.ai—that have been granted the permit by the CPUC. While the permit allows Waymo to transport passengers, it can’t charge for trips and there must be a safety driver behind the wheel.

In December, the company announced the launch of its Waymo One ride-share service in Arizona to shuttle around public passengers in the Phoenix area. And last week, Waymo announced a limited partnership with Lyft on its Waymo One program. At the time, CEO John Krafcik touted the deal as giving both parties “the opportunity to collect valuable feedback.”

This week’s development marks yet another baby step toward the inevitable takeover of self-driving car technology, but it may still take some convincing to get people psyched about it. According to a AAA survey released earlier this year, 71 percent of Americans are freaked out by the idea of riding in an autonomous vehicle.

Greg Brannon, AAA’s director of Automotive Engineering and Industry Relations, said in a statement at the time that the “opportunity to interact with partially or fully automated vehicle technology will help remove some of the mystery for consumers and open the door for greater acceptance.”

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