# Uber and Lyft renew focus on driverless technology



Uber and Lyft, having previously stepped back from their initiatives in driverless technology, are now renewing their investments in this sector. The two prominent ride-hailing companies are reportedly making significant advancements toward integrating driverless cars into their services, as highlighted in a recent article by The Wall Street Journal (WSJ).

Plans are underway for Uber to allow customers in Austin and Atlanta to request rides via Waymo, a company under Google’s umbrella, later this year. Similarly, Lyft is also preparing to launch a pilot program in Atlanta in partnership with May Mobility. Both firms are not only focusing on the operational management of these autonomous fleets but are also investing in training personnel to maintain the vehicles amid the development of necessary infrastructure for their storage and charging.

“This level of nitty-gritty, it takes years to build,” said Andrew Macdonald, Uber’s senior vice president of mobility, in his discussion with the WSJ. “It’s not something you can do by flipping a switch.” His remarks underline the complexity involved in scaling these innovative technologies for mass use.

The push for integrating driverless cars comes at a time when there are increasing indicators that this technology may expand beyond its current limited experimental settings. Despite this, industry analysts have expressed caution regarding the immediate transition to fully autonomous transportation services. Concerns remain about how driverless vehicles will perform in densely populated urban environments, such as New York City, or in challenging weather conditions. Robert Mollins, an analyst at Gordon Haskett Research Advisors, pointed out the potential shortcomings of autonomous vehicles, stating, “No one’s saying ‘let’s go send some of these cars to Boston in the middle of winter.’ What happens when all of these sensors get covered in snow?”

The economic viability of driverless car services also necessitates the seamless integration of payment systems. Evgeny Klochikhin, founder and CEO of Sheeva.AI, discussed the need for a frictionless cashless payment mechanism within the transportation experience. He mentioned, “It’s a new market. We do not have transactions right now inside cars. None of us are familiar with what it would even mean,” proposing that new payment methods must be as convenient as current ones to facilitate widespread adoption of robotaxis, as noted in PYMNTS's reporting.

In a wider analysis of the changing landscape of logistics and commerce, PYMNTS CEO Karen Webster provided insights into the impacts these trends may have on the digital economy for the year ahead. She expressed that “the rise of ultra-efficient logistics will turn physical stores into relics for many product categories.” The evolution from same-day delivery to same-hour delivery is indicated to drastically reshape consumer habits, leading to diminished foot traffic in brick-and-mortar shops. Webster noted, “We’re already seeing this trend in our data — globally, click-and-collect is losing its appeal, with shoppers opting for delivery or curbside pickup to avoid entering stores altogether.”

Both companies’ renewed focus on driverless technology and the broader forecasts of changing consumer behaviour reflect the dynamic nature of the transportation and retail sectors amid an unprecedented shift towards automation and efficiency. As they venture into the deployment of these cutting-edge technologies, the future of ride-hailing and retail remains a subject of keen observation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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