# Waymo robotaxi glitch highlights challenges in autonomous vehicle technology



A recent incident involving a Waymo robotaxi in Los Angeles has drawn attention to the challenges of autonomous vehicle technology, despite the company's efforts to lead in the sector. On a December day, Mike Johns ordered a Waymo robotaxi for transportation to the airport, concerned about potentially missing his flight. However, what should have been a straightforward journey quickly turned into a frustrating experience as the vehicle began to drive in circles.

Upon being picked up, Johns found himself trapped inside the vehicle while it repeatedly circled a parking lot instead of proceeding to his destination. This prompted him to contact Waymo's customer support for assistance. “It’s circling around a parking lot,” he communicated to the operator, expressing his concern about whether the vehicle had been hacked. He highlighted his predicament, stating, “I’ve got my seatbelt on, I can’t get out of the car. Why is this thing going in a circle? I’m getting dizzy.”

During the five minutes that ensued, Waymo's support team attempted to regain control of the autonomous Jaguar I-Pace, even suggesting that Johns use the Waymo app to pause the ride, to which he responded that the company should be able to take control of the vehicle without needing assistance from him. Eventually, after a prolonged episode of erratic driving, the robotaxi was brought back under control, allowing Johns to arrive at the airport, albeit shaken from the experience.

In a statement provided to CBS News, Waymo acknowledged the malfunction, identifying it as a software glitch, and asserted that measures have been taken to rectify the issue and prevent future occurrences. The company also confirmed that Johns was not charged for the distressing ride.

Following the incident, Johns voiced his frustration regarding the experience, questioning the lack of empathy and human connection in dealing with the problem. “Where’s the empathy? Where’s the human connection to this?” he remarked, critiquing the state of technology in service of customers.

This event has occurred in the context of increasing scrutiny towards Waymo and its autonomous vehicle technology. The company recently faced an investigation by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration following several crashes, and notable previous incidents included autonomous vehicles converging at a San Francisco parking lot and engaging in excessive honking during late-night hours.

As the landscape of artificial intelligence and automation in transportation continues to evolve, the ability of companies like Waymo to address technological limitations and enhance customer service remains critical in shaping the future of mobility solutions and consumer trust in fully autonomous systems.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-01-05/los-angeles-man-trapped-in-circling-waymo-says-he-missed-his-flight-home> - Corroborates the incident of a Waymo robotaxi circling in a parking lot and the passenger's frustration with the experience.
2. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-01-05/los-angeles-man-trapped-in-circling-waymo-says-he-missed-his-flight-home> - Details Mike Johns' experience, including his call to Waymo's customer support and the vehicle's erratic behavior.
3. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-01-05/los-angeles-man-trapped-in-circling-waymo-says-he-missed-his-flight-home> - Mentions Waymo's acknowledgment of the software glitch and their measures to prevent future occurrences.
4. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-01-05/los-angeles-man-trapped-in-circling-waymo-says-he-missed-his-flight-home> - Highlights Johns' criticism of the lack of empathy and human connection in Waymo's customer service.
5. <https://incidentdatabase.ai/cite/881> - Provides context on another incident involving a Waymo robotaxi, this time colliding with a Serve Robotics delivery robot, highlighting the challenges of autonomous vehicle technology.
6. <https://techcrunch.com/2024/12/31/a-waymo-robotaxi-and-a-serve-delivery-robot-collided-in-los-angeles/> - Details the collision between a Waymo robotaxi and a Serve Robotics delivery robot, illustrating other safety and coordination issues with autonomous vehicles.
7. <https://techcrunch.com/2024/12/31/a-waymo-robotaxi-and-a-serve-delivery-robot-collided-in-los-angeles/> - Explains the response and liability considerations following the collision, which is relevant to the broader context of autonomous vehicle incidents.
8. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-01-05/los-angeles-man-trapped-in-circling-waymo-says-he-missed-his-flight-home> - Mentions previous incidents, such as autonomous vehicles converging at a San Francisco parking lot, which adds to the scrutiny of Waymo's technology.
9. <https://incidentdatabase.ai/cite/881> - Provides additional details on the incident involving the Waymo robotaxi and Serve Robotics delivery robot, emphasizing the need for improved AI systems in autonomous vehicles.
10. <https://techcrunch.com/2024/12/31/a-waymo-robotaxi-and-a-serve-delivery-robot-collided-in-los-angeles/> - Discusses the importance of companies addressing technological limitations and enhancing customer service in the context of autonomous vehicle technology.
11. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-01-05/los-angeles-man-trapped-in-circling-waymo-says-he-missed-his-flight-home> - Highlights the broader implications of such incidents on consumer trust in fully autonomous systems.
12. <https://www.carscoops.com/2025/01/waymo-robotaxi-freaks-out-starts-doing-circles-in-parking-lot-with-passenger-onboard/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data