

AUTOMOTIVE

Tesla hints at ridesharing as autonomous driving competition heats up

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Tesla Model S

By STAFF REPORTS

U.S. electric automaker Tesla has unveiled plans for a branded ridesharing network, with details to come as early as next year.

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The service originally mentioned in founder Elon Musk's master plan was named in a disclaimer about self-driving capabilities on Tesla's Web site, which barred against using the autopilot features for commercial purposes. A number of automakers are turning to the lucrative ridesharing sector to reach consumers who seek alternatives to car ownership.

Autonomous ambitions

In a message about its enhanced autopilot, which allows the driver to be hands off with their navigation, Tesla made note of the regulatory approval needed in certain jurisdictions. It expects to have a validated update by December.

It also wrote, "Please note also that using a self-driving Tesla for car sharing and ride hailing for friends and family is fine, but doing so for revenue purposes will only be permissible on the Tesla Network, details of which will be released next year."

In July, Tesla Motors unveiled the second part of its master plan, which included an ambitious entry into the world of public transportation.

The sharing plan depends on full autonomy. Once achieved and approved for everyday use, the owner will be able to summon her vehicle from elsewhere.



Tesla Model 3

As a result, Tesla intends to create a shared fleet of customer-owned vehicles, supplemented by its own to meet demand. Vehicles in the fleet, when not being used, will chauffeur other passengers, with the vehicle's owner making money from the transaction, thereby offsetting the cost of the vehicle and making the Model 3 accessible for everyone

The sharing plan puts Tesla in direct competition with services such as Uber and Lyft, who have not unveiled plans for operations in an autonomous era ([see story](#)).

If Tesla rolls out a mobility program, it would also join others in the auto industry, such as BMW, which operates DriveNow in the United Kingdom and ReachNow in the U.S.

The automotive industry has been investigating autonomous vehicles' possibilities for mobility services. For instance, the Mercedes-Benz Future Bus is being put to the test as an unpiloted public transit option ([see story](#)).

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