

AUTOMOTIVE

Volkswagen Group leverages autonomous tech for parking pilot

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Audi is one of the brands in Volkswagen's parking pilot. Image credit: Audi

By SARAH JONES

Germany's Volkswagen Group is looking to make urban parking less stressful and time consuming with a pilot program that leverages autonomous technology.

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The automotive group is testing out autonomous parking at Hamburg Airport with Volkswagen, Porsche and Audi vehicles, aiming to eventually allow consumers to leave finding a spot to their cars. In cities, drivers can spend upwards of 40 hours per year parking, a figure that Volkswagen seeks to cut with its vision for the future.

Volkswagen Group was reached for comment.

Parking pilot

Volkswagen Group's parking pilot project is part of the company's partnership with the city of Hamburg, Germany to develop it into a model for future mobility.

For the program, experts are testing out the use of autonomous technology to park vehicles in a multi-level lot beside Hamburg Airport's Terminal 2.

In Volkswagen's vision, drivers would reserve a spot at the garage by using a mobile application. When they arrive at the parking garage, they would leave their car at the entrance and the car would park itself, finding an available spot on its own.



Volkswagen is testing autonomous parking. Image courtesy of Volkswagen

The technology uses pictorial markers within the lot to help guide the cars, providing a sense of orientation.

When the driver is ready to head home, he or she sends a message through the app and the car reappears. Along with saving time searching for a spot, the billing is taken care of through the app, removing the need to stop and pay at a machine.

Adding to the service, Volkswagen will enable packages to be delivered to the cars' trunks and freshly laundered dry cleaning to be hung in the car while it is parked.

Audi previously piloted this type of trunk delivery system in 2015 in Munich, Germany ([see story](#)).

Germans spend an average of 41 hours in search of parking spots per year, and the figure climbs to 107 hours per year for New Yorkers, making this vision a potential game changer for urban mobility.

Volkswagen Group is launching a test of autonomous parking

In addition to saving time, autonomous parking could also free up space. If cars park themselves, spaces could be smaller, since there is no need for door clearance.

While limited to a pilot test now, Volkswagen aims to open up autonomous parking to consumers early in the next decade.

"With new mobility solutions we want to give people more time and quality of life by reducing the time spent and stress in road traffic," said Johann Jungwirth, chief digital officer of the Volkswagen Group, in a statement. "Our vision is mobility that is available to everyone, everywhere and at all times at the press of a button and autonomous vehicles play a decisive role here.

"People currently spend around 30 percent of their driving time in urban areas looking for a parking space," he said. "Autonomous parking like we are testing here at Hamburg Airport is an important step on the way to autonomous driving as an integrated full-service concept via an app. We are putting a consistent focus on people and their needs."

Autonomous innovation

Parking has been getting a makeover courtesy of autonomous technology.

For instance, German automaker Mercedes-Benz took another step toward autonomous driving with the launch of connected features for its E-Class model.

The vehicle, which will be available next spring, includes an Intelligent Drive system that enables the driver to ease off the controls on long stretches of road and a Remote Parking Pilot, which lets the owner park their car while standing outside of the vehicle using their cell phone. Rolling out semi-autonomous driving in a consumer model may help convince consumers of the benefits of the now-experimental full-fledged self-driven cars ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Volkswagen sees self-parking cars as a steps towards autonomous driving.

As automotive brands continue to develop driverless technology to bring the auto industry closer to completely autonomous vehicles, consumers in the United States are still not convinced.

While automakers are excited to bring driverless cars into development, many consumers are not as enthused, with a recent accident making matters worse. According to a new Ipsos report, U.S. consumers are more hesitant than other regions with one in four saying they would "never" use an autonomous car ([see story](#)).

Even though consumers are not all on-board with autonomous technology yet, automakers are looking to the future and forging ahead with efforts to reinvent the driving experience.

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