

Elon Musk Says Tesla Robotaxis Coming Soon

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Elon Musk says Tesla's self-driving robotaxis will finally be ready in Austin, Texas on June 22. These robotaxis are cars that drive themselves without a person behind the wheel, and Musk believes they could make Tesla a lot of money.

But some people don't think it will work as well as Musk says. Other big car companies like Ford and General Motors tried to make robotaxis but gave up because it cost too much and was too hard to make money from. Experts say Tesla's real competition is human drivers from Uber and Lyft because it's still cheaper to pay people than to run robot cars.

Other companies like Google's Waymo already have robotaxis giving rides in places like California. They are far ahead of Tesla because they've given millions of paid rides. Waymo uses special laser sensors (called lidar) to help their cars see what's around them. Tesla only uses cameras, which some experts think is not as safe.

Safety is a big worry. A long time ago, when automatic elevators were first made, buildings still hired people to run the elevators because people were scared to ride without a person there. Experts think the same thing might happen with robotaxis. People might feel nervous about riding in a car that drives all by itself. Tesla's self-driving cars have been in accidents, including one where a person was killed.

Tesla also needs to do well because its profits and car sales are going down. Musk thinks robotaxis will make Tesla super valuable and change the world, but he's been saying they were "coming soon" since 2019, and it still hasn't happened.



Comprehension Questions:

1. What is the main idea of the article?
 - a) Tesla's robotaxis will definitely succeed and replace all human drivers.
 - b) Waymo is the only company that can make safe robotaxis.
 - c) Elon Musk makes wild and unreliable predictions.
 - d) Tesla wants to make robotaxis, but there are problems and doubts.

2. Tesla faces competition from human drivers at Uber and Lyft. What does "competition" mean here?
 - a) A race between cars to see which is faster.
 - b) Companies trying to win more customers than others.
 - c) Uber drivers will attack Tesla robotaxis.
 - d) A new car made by Tesla.

3. Why do experts think human drivers from Uber and Lyft are strong competition for Tesla?
- a) Because human drivers are faster than robot cars.
 - b) Because it's still cheaper to pay human drivers than use robotaxis.
 - c) Because robot cars are too fast.
 - d) Because people only want to ride with famous drivers.
4. What is one reason why people might be afraid to use robotaxis?
- a) They are too expensive to ride.
 - b) Robotaxis have never been tested on real roads.
 - c) The robotaxis only work at night.
 - d) There have been accidents with self-driving cars.
5. Which of these statements is false?
- a) Tesla's robotaxis will use only cameras, not lidar.
 - b) Waymo has already given many robotaxi rides.
 - c) Tesla's robotaxis are making a lot of money now.
 - d) Some experts think lidar is better for safety than cameras.
6. What can you guess about why Ford and GM gave up on robotaxis?
- a) They were too easy to build.
 - b) They could not make enough money from robotaxis.
 - c) They ran out of robot cars to sell.
 - d) People preferred elevators instead.
7. Why might Waymo's robotaxis be safer than Tesla's?
- a) Waymo uses lidar, while Tesla uses only cameras.
 - b) Waymo uses only cameras, while Tesla uses lidar.
 - c) Tesla's cars fly and crash often.
 - d) Tesla does not have wheels on its robotaxis.
8. Why does the article talk about old elevators?
- a) To show that people are always excited about new machines.
 - b) To explain why elevators are dangerous.
 - c) To compare people's fear of robotaxis with old fears of elevators.
 - d) To say that elevators will replace cars.
9. What could happen to Uber drivers if the robotaxis work very well?
- a) Uber drivers may lose their jobs.
 - b) Uber drivers will get free robot cars.
 - c) Uber drivers will get paid more.
 - d) Uber drivers will drive robotaxis.
10. What could happen if Tesla's robotaxis fail?
- a) Tesla might become even more profitable.
 - b) Uber and Lyft will stop using human drivers.
 - c) Waymo will switch to using only cameras.
 - d) Tesla's financial problems could get worse.

Speaking and Writing Activities:

- Discuss these questions with a partner or a small group.
 - Choose one topic and write a response to it. Show your writing to a classmate or teacher.
1. Would you feel safe riding in a car with no driver? Why or why not?
 2. If robotaxis are everywhere in the future, what do you think will happen to taxi and Uber drivers?
 3. Do you think all jobs will one day be done by robots? Why or why not?