

Waymo and Jaguar team up on self-driving luxury ride

SAN FRANCISCO - Waymo and Jaguar Land Rover have joined forces on a posh, self-driving electric car tailored for a ride-hailing service run by the Google-owned firm.



Waymo's latest alliance came as Uber's testing of self-driving cars in the US is on hold due to <u>one of the vehicles being in an accident</u> last week that killed a pedestrian.



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Waymo and Jaguar said they aim to develop a "premium self-driving electric vehicle" based on a new I-Pace model.

Testing of an I-Pace equipped with Waymo self-driving technology will begin later this year, and the goal was to make it part of a Waymo driverless transportation service, according to Jaguar.

The companies forecast that as many as 20,000 I-Pace vehicles could be built in the first two years of production and made available for a Waymo service that lets people summon autonomous rides.

"This is just the beginning," the Waymo team said in an online post.

"The ultimate goal: with Waymo as the driver, products tailored for every purpose and every trip."

For example, self-driving vehicles could be designed for various needs such as working while commuting; celebratory nights out, or napping, according to Waymo.



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Waymo chief executive John Krafcik over the weekend contended that the recent death of a pedestrian in an accident involving an autonomous Uber car would not have occurred with his company's technology.

"At Waymo, we have a lot of confidence that our technology would be able to handle a situation like that," Krafcik told a car dealership conference in Las Vegas on Saturday.



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Police in Arizona released dashcam video taken during the fatal accident, which showed a woman was pushing a bicycle on a poorly lit street outside the crosswalk when she was struck.

Krafcik said that Waymo's vehicles had clocked more than eight million kilometers (4.9 million miles) on routes frequented by pedestrians since 2009 without being involved in a fatal accident.

Waymo early this year announced it was ordering "thousands" of minivans from Fiat Chrysler for the expansion of its autonomous ride-hailing service across several US cities.

Waymo said the additional Chrysler Pacifica vehicles to be delivered from late 2018 will be used for expanding its self-driving taxi program, which is launching this year in Phoenix, Arizona.

Waymo previously ordered 100 of the FCA vehicles in 2016 and another 500 last year as part of a collaboration to build autonomous cars at scale using hardware and software from the technology group.

Waymo appeared to be hitting the accelerator in a race for leadership in autonomous ridesharing, which involves most major automakers, technology developers and services such as Uber and Lyft.

Source: AFP