

## Tesla's Robotaxi Rollout in Austin Sparks Safety Concerns and Public Backlash

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Tesla's attempt to bring driverless ride-hailing to Austin, Texas, has quickly turned into a source of confusion and frustration for many residents. Just two weeks after launching its invite-only robotaxi service on June 22, the company is facing criticism from city leaders, safety regulators, and the public.

The service operates much like other ride-hailing apps, with users summoning a Tesla through their phones. Each ride costs \$4.20, a number often referenced by CEO Elon Musk. While there's no one in the driver's seat, a Tesla employee sits up front to manually stop the car if something goes wrong.

And something has gone wrong more than once. Viral videos posted online show the robotaxis making dangerous mistakes. In one clip, a car drops off a passenger in the middle of an intersection. In others, vehicles cross over double yellow lines or brake suddenly without a clear cause. According to NBC News, there are at least 13 documented instances of cars violating traffic rules or behaving unpredictably.

Austin City Council member Vanessa Fuentes has been outspoken about her worries, saying the errors prove the technology isn't ready. She criticized Tesla for not collaborating enough with city officials, even though the company isn't legally required to do so. Another council member, Zo Qadri, said many residents in his district are angry and concerned, describing the rollout as "chaos."

While Tesla's stock price briefly jumped after the service launched, it quickly fell back as the safety issues came to light. Federal regulators at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration have also taken notice and are gathering more information from Tesla.

The company has not publicly shared key details, such as how many miles the cars have driven or how often employees have to intervene. Because Texas has minimal reporting rules for autonomous vehicles, Tesla doesn't have to disclose much to the public or state agencies.

Some officials, like Texas state Representative Vikki Goodwin, urged Tesla to delay the launch until new laws take effect in September. Goodwin, who owns a Tesla herself, said her own experience with the company's automated driving features has made her cautious about trusting driverless cars fully.

Despite the controversies, Tesla plans to keep expanding the service in Austin as it tries to compete with rivals like Waymo, which has hundreds of autonomous vehicles already operating in other major cities. For now, the experiment continues under close watch from regulators and worried Austinites alike.

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