

Lyft, Waymo Team Up To Launch Robotaxi

Offering will use fleet-management services of ride-hailing company

By Kelly Cloonan

Lyft is teaming up with Alphabet's Waymo, with the ride-hailing company adding the robotaxi operator to its slate of partnerships as the race to offer autonomous rides at scale steps up. The companies said they plan to launch Waymo's autonomous service in Nashville, Tenn., starting next year using Lyft's fleet-management services, including vehicle main-

tenance, infrastructure and depot operations. The fleet of autonomous vehicles would first be available on Waymo's app, with plans to expand to Lyft's platform later in 2026. As part of the partnership, Lyft will construct an AV fleet-management facility to charge and service the vehicles. The partnership comes as competition heats up among both ride-hailing and robotaxi companies to offer autonomous rides across the country, often with overlapping partnerships. For ride-hailing companies, autonomous vehicles help address one of their biggest challenges, namely, the cost

and availability of drivers. Lyft currently offers robotaxis in Atlanta through a partnership with May Mobility. It also plans to expand to Dallas with the help of Mobileye and to Germany and the U.K. with Baidu, with both launches slated for next year. Uber Technologies has notched a number of autonomous-vehicle partners, including Waymo. The companies currently offer autonomous rides in Atlanta, Phoenix and Austin, Texas. Uber plans to launch robotaxi services in Asia and the Middle East with Baidu and in Arlington, Texas, with May Mobility, both set for later this year. Waymo offers rides in San



A Waymo autonomous vehicle driving through Los Angeles in May.

Francisco and Los Angeles, with plans to expand to Miami, Dallas and Washington, D.C., next year. It is testing other cities, including Houston, San Antonio and Orlando, Fla.

Waymo's latest partnership is part of its efforts to scale its services to more people in more places, the company said, serving riders in Nashville alongside Lyft's network of drivers.

For Lyft, the collaboration advances its vision of a hybrid future, the company said. "Waymo has proven that its autonomous technology works at scale," Lyft Chief Executive David Risher said.

Battery-Part Maker Entek Agrees to Sell A Majority Stake

By Ben Glickman

Battery-part maker Entek Technology has agreed to sell a majority stake to investment-firm I Squared Capital, which also plans to invest in the company's planned factory in Indiana. The deal was announced Wednesday, confirming a report earlier in the day from The Wall Street Journal. I Squared's \$800 million investment values the Lebanon, Ore.-based company above \$1 billion, according to people familiar with the matter. Privately held Entek makes battery separators, components that prevent short-circuiting. The parts are used in bat-

teries for electric vehicles, military technology and energy-storage systems, among other things. Miami-based I Squared manages around \$50 billion and focuses on infrastructure investments. The firm is expected to fund construction of a previously announced new facility for Entek in Terre Haute, Ind. Entek last year said that it received a loan from the U.S. Energy Department for up to \$1.3 billion to be used for building the facility. The Energy Department is preparing to announce an initial disbursement to Entek of about \$77 million, according to a statement reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.



Indiana then-Gov. Eric Holcomb, center, with Entek executives and others in 2023 at the site of its coming plant in Terre Haute.

Government incentives adopted during the Biden administration led to an influx of investments in energy-transition technology, including battery production. The investments so far have been mired in uncertainty for much of the Trump administration.

Energy Department loans were paused at the beginning of President Trump's term following an executive order. The Republican tax-and-spending bill passed in July eliminated certain tax incentives, such as those for consumers buying electric vehicles or residential solar


panels, but it left others largely intact. It added new requirements for projects to be eligible for incentives, including requiring a larger share of parts to be sourced outside of China. That provision is expected to give an advantage to components that will be made at

Entek's future facility, which was in the works before Trump returned to the White House. Meanwhile, demand for batteries has continued to rise, though weaker-than-expected sales of electric vehicles have prompted pullback from some automakers.

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Amazon Releases AI Tool To Make Ads for Its Clients

By Patrick Coffee

Amazon.com has released a chatbot-style creative assistant designed to help advertisers produce and distribute multimedia ad campaigns almost entirely with artificial intelligence. The move is the latest development in a race among ad sellers to use AI to lure new business, particularly among small and medium-size companies that can't afford to hire ad agencies or create their own campaigns. NBC-Universal parent Comcast, for example, next week intends to introduce an initial version of an AI tool to generate commercials to run on streaming TV. And Meta Platforms, whose Facebook and Instagram already generate significant revenue from small advertisers, plans to fully automate ad creation by the end of next year. Amazon's new product is an updated version of its Creative Studio, a platform released last year to help advertisers develop content. The Studio now includes all of the company's generative AI tools and will be featured in Ad Console, which is part of the larger Amazon Ads platform used by all advertisers. Amazon's goal is to simplify the creative process for the small advertisers that form the core of its massive ad sales business, according to Jay Richman, vice president of product and technology. "We're not talking about professional marketers. These are customers that really need our help growing their business," said Richman. The assistant can develop and edit concepts, scripts, images, videos and voice-overs promoting a given product, said Richman. A company could create a video of an AI-generated model wearing its clothing, then make the sky behind the model more overcast, change the color of their hair or choose a backing track from Amazon's catalog of commer-



Chantal Rossi-Badia, head of video sales, Amazon Ads, speaks at an event in Toronto this past May.

cial music, he said. The results can run across Amazon's ad inventory, including commercial breaks on the Prime streaming service and ads on outside websites sold through the company. The ads may run on platforms that have deals with Amazon, including Disney, Roku and, as of last week, Netflix. Creative Studio content also appears on sellers' brand store pages or product listings. A number of advertisers have already been testing the new offering. Bird Buddy, a company that makes connected bird feeders, used it to help generate a video that it paid to show up in some Amazon search results around Father's Day this summer. An agency worked with Bird Buddy to create and distribute the ad, according to Amazon. Any content created or altered by the Creative Studio will bear a visible watermark, according to Amazon. Advertisers will get a chance to review all creative before it goes through Amazon's automated moderation process that checks for offensive or graphic content that violates the company's terms, a spokeswoman said.

Amazon eventually wants to move beyond small businesses in applying its new service to midmarket companies and so-called tail products that are produced by large corporations but not marketed as actively as their core brands, Richman said. Amazon's ad revenue remains well behind Google and Meta but is growing quickly, increasing 22% year over year to \$15.7 billion in the latest quarter.

The product is an updated version of Amazon's Creative Studio.

Amazon has an advantage due to its relationships with the millions of sellers on its platform and the extensive pool of consumer data it draws from their product sales, said Jeremy Goldman, senior director of marketing, retail and tech briefings at research firm eMarketer. That is especially true among companies that sell packaged goods, because their typical creative approaches fit naturally into the visually-oriented Amazon ecosystem, according to Goldman. Businesses in service-based sectors like financial technology may be a harder sell, though Amazon's size continues to hold significant weight, he said.