

Amazon's Scout Delivery Bot Expands Its Contact-Free Footprint

|

55 mins ago

Scout, Amazon's autonomous six-wheeled delivery device, is expanding its routes to "select customers" in Atlanta and Franklin, Tenn.

According to a blog post, Amazon is "starting with a small number" of the devices in each city, and they will deliver during daylight hours Monday to Friday. As of January 2019, Amazon had six Scouts in Snohomish County, Wash. Amazon declined to comment on how many devices it operates now.

Like earlier field tests, Scout will initially be chaperoned by "an Amazon Scout Ambassador" in its new neighborhoods.

Amazon says Scout is "the size of a small cooler," but a spokesperson declined to comment on precisely how much each device can carry. It does not appear customers can select delivery specifically via Scout—Amazon says customers in eligible delivery zones place orders as usual and their packages are delivered by either a carrier or Scout.

Amazon did not respond to questions about why it expanded to Irvine, Calif., in August 2019 and now Atlanta and Franklin, but weather likely plays a role. In the blog post, Sean Scott, vice president of Amazon Scout, said the new locations expose Scout to "varied neighborhoods with different climates." (Although Scott notes Amazon also has "a significant presence in these areas through our corporate offices and logistics facilities.")



Scout is expanding to Franklin, Tenn. Access to talent is another potential motivator. Amazon said it is “looking forward to” partnering with schools in these areas “to build the next generation of innovators.”

And, of course, Amazon says Scout helps it deliver on its promise to be net-zero carbon by 2040, although it’s worth noting that a group called Amazon Employees for Climate Justice has criticized Amazon’s Climate Pledge. They say the pledge does not do enough because even making 50% of Amazon shipments net-zero carbon by 2030 does not necessarily mean a decrease in emissions compared to current levels, given Amazon’s rate of growth. (Amazon has since added the name of its Climate Pledge to the 800,000-square-foot Seattle arena that will house the city’s WNBA and NHL teams.)

While Amazon says Scout has “quietly [played] its part” in the platform’s effort to deliver goods during the Covid-19 pandemic, it’s certainly in good company among autonomous robots offering contact-free delivery.

In December 2018, on-demand delivery company Postmates debuted a self-driving robot named Serve to deliver food, packages and

other smaller items in cities.

A month later, PepsiCo announced its fleet of self-driving Snackbots was bringing snacks and drinks to the nearly 5,000 students at the University of the Pacific's Stockton, Calif., campus.

And, a month after that, logistics company FedEx debuted its SameDay Bot, which it said would deliver small shipments from retail partners like AutoZone, Lowe's, Pizza Hut, Target, Walgreens and Walmart.

Amazon says Scout moves at a walking pace and has learned to navigate around pets and pedestrians, as well as objects such as surfboards, luggage, refrigerators and Christmas trees. The SameDay Bot can also travel on sidewalks and avoid obstacles—and it can climb stairs.

<https://www.adweek.com/retail/amazons-scout-deliverybot-expand-s-its-contact-free-footprint/>