Tesla awarded ride-hail permit in California, a first step for robotaxis



With its new permit, Tesla can transport its own employees as passengers in Tesla vehicles on a pre-arranged basis, according to CPUC. It can then transition to using the permit to transport members of the public, but will need to notify the agency first before initiating that step.

TCP permits are different from the permits for ridehailing companies like Uber and Lyft, which operate as transportation network companies that connect independent drivers to customers via mobile apps.

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Also, its important to note that Tesla is not yet participating in CPUC's autonomous vehicle passenger program – though it will need to do so if it intends to launch a commercial passenger service using driverless cars. The company would also need to obtain permission from the California Department of Motor Vehicles to test fully driverless vehicles – which it has yet to do.

Musk has caught a lot of flack over the years for repeatedly promising that fully autonomous vehicles were just one to two years away – and then failing to deliver. Also there are lingering questions about the readiness of the technology on which Tesla claims its vehicles can drive autonomously, especially its camera-only sensor suite that eschews radar, lidar, and other redundant safety systems.

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