

Volvo teams up with Aurora to reveal an autonomous semi truck



Volvo revealed its first “production-ready” self-driving truck that it’s making with Aurora, the autonomous driving technology company founded by former executives from Google, Uber, and Tesla.

The truck is based on Volvo’s new VNL, which is a Class 8 semi truck built for long-haul transportation. The autonomous version of the truck features an array of sensors and cameras to power Aurora’s Level 4 autonomous driving system, which enables the truck to operate without a human behind the wheel. The companies say the truck is “purpose-designed and purpose-built” for Aurora’s self-driving hardware and software stack.

“This truck is the first of our standardized global autonomous technology platform, which will enable us to introduce additional models in the future, bringing autonomy to all Volvo Group truck brands, and to other geographies and use cases,” Nils Jaeger, president of Volvo Autonomous Solutions,

said in a statement.

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The idea of the vehicle being purpose-built is important for the mass production of self-driving trucks, which is crucial if the companies are ever to achieve a return on the massive amounts of money that they've invested in AV development. The trucks will be built at Volvo's New River Valley plant in Dublin, Virginia, which is the company's largest in the world.

Volvo, which makes about 10 percent of the world's Class 8 trucks, first started working with Aurora in 2018 toward solutions for self-driving trucks. The companies have tested their technology on public roads, with Aurora having driven 1.5 million miles on commercial roads.

Aurora has said it plans to deploy 20 fully autonomous trucks this year, with an eye on expanding to about 100 trucks in 2025 and eventually selling to other companies. The company also is working with German auto supplier Continental to deploy driverless trucks at scale in 2027.

Autonomous trucks were once thought to precede robotaxis and personally owned autonomous vehicles in mass adoption but have run into similar obstacles as those other vehicle types along the way. Some companies have gone out of business, while others have cut plans to deploy driverless trucks as timelines have stretched into the future and funding has dried up. Other automakers are still bullish, designing their own autonomous trucks with hard deadlines for deployment.

Aurora hasn't had any public mishaps, nor has it attracted the kind of negative attention from the government as some of its peers. The company reported a net loss of \$165 million in the first quarter of 2024, which is a 16 percent improvement over the same period the year before.

<https://www.theverge.com/2024/5/20/24161079/volvo-aurora-autonomous-truck-class-8-production-design>