

Google's Waymo to expand self-driving partnerships

DETROIT: Waymo, the autonomous car subsidiary of Google's parent company Alphabet, announced Sunday at the Detroit auto show that it would develop its self-driving technology with multiple partners, positioning itself as an automotive supplier.



CEO John Krafcik also said the company would later this month begin testing Chrysler minivans outfitted with its self-driving system on public roads in Arizona and California.

"What we're bringing to market is a self-driving technology platform," Krafcik said during a presentation at the annual Detroit auto show that often features product debuts from auto makers.

Waymo and Chrysler have been building specially-outfitted Pacifica hybrid minivans that are autonomous. The minivans were first unveiled in December.

Krafcik said the self-driving project was aimed at creating a platform, not working on any one specific product.

"This integrated software and hardware platform will allow us to deliver products and services," Krafcik said. "Some of these we may do on our own. Some we may work on with partners."

The first autonomous Chrysler minivans will appear on public roads in Arizona and California later this month, Krafcik said.

"As we get ready to scale...using mass-produced vehicles becomes an imperative," he said.

The self-driving car subsidiary of the technology giant has already conducted millions of miles of testing on earlier iterations of its autonomous system.

Krafcik said they have managed to reduce the cost of its laser-guided radar system by 90 percent, from an original \$75,000 price tag.

"We'll take that cost down even further, with the goal of making this technology accessible to millions of people," he said.

"We're at the point now where we believe we're at an inflection point where we can begin to realize the potential of this technology."

Source: AFP

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