

Eco-friendly deliveries: Uber rolls out electric delivery fleet in SA

 By Robin Fredericks

10 Nov 2023

Marking a decade of presence in South Africa, Uber has launched its first fleet of electric vehicles, Uber Package, formerly known as Uber Connect. The Uber Package delivery fleet will fully switch to electric vehicles, starting in Cape Town in 2023 and then expanding to Johannesburg in 2024. This is in line with its Uber's global goal of becoming a zero-emission platform by 2040.



Source: Supplied

In the 10 years since its launch in South Africa, Uber has grown to serve over 80% of the urban population in nearly 30 cities nationwide.

Uber is also adding new services in South Africa. Delivery people can now pick up prepaid items from any store with Uber Store Pick-Ups. Uber Van is now available in Cape Town, and Uber Black is launching in Durban.

Additionally, riders can now reserve airport pickups for UberX, Uber Comfort, and Uber XL rides. Uber Eats is also launching Uber Live, which lets customers receive orders anywhere.

We caught up with Kagiso Khaole, the general manager for Uber in South Africa, to find out more about the launch, the measures Uber is taking to achieve its target of becoming a zero-emission platform, and Uber's plan to expand its services and reach in South Africa in the coming years.

■ What factors contributed to Uber's decision to launch an electric-vehicle-only delivery service in South Africa?

Uber takes immense pride in leading the industry in EV progress. As of 2023, we operate the world's largest zero-emissions rideshare platform (outside of China), supporting tens of thousands of all-electric drivers. We are committed to being part of the solution to accelerate the transition to a green and sustainable future in South Africa.

Launching Electric Vehicles in South Africa is a key step in transitioning the Uber Package fleet to be fully electric and achieving Uber's global target of becoming a zero-emission platform by 2040.

Uber Package will first be available in Cape Town. Uber Package is an in-app same-day delivery service that allows people to send and receive items such as a business order, care package or gift.

■ ***How does the battery swapping system for the electric delivery scooters work?***

The bike's battery can be swapped in less than a minute at charging stations that host several batteries. The charging station looks to have integrated surveillance as well.

These batteries have different ranges and speeds. One is rated as medium speed and, with a 1.5kW battery and a 55km/h top speed. The other has a 4kW battery, a range of about 110km on a charge, and a top speed of 95km/h. That's the high-speed option.

■ ***What specific measures is Uber taking to achieve its global target of becoming a zero-emission platform by 2040?***

Globally, we're committed to a zero-emissions platform by 2040, with Canada, Europe, and the US aiming for zero-emission mobility by 2030. As part of this initiative, we recently launched an electric product in Kenya and South Africa, the first in Africa.

We're investing \$800m globally over the next five years to help drivers achieve these emissions-reduction goals. Uber Green, our no or low-emission ride product, is widely available in over 100 major urban markets across two continents, and we're committed to expanding it in Africa.

Celebrating our 10th year in Africa, Uber's partnership with Go Green Africa and our new electric product roll-out showcases our commitment to a sustainable agenda.

We're eager to support this electric vehicle policy and collaborate with the government to accelerate a cleaner and more sustainable transportation ecosystem in markets where Uber is present.



Kagiso Khaole, General Manager for Uber in Sub-Saharan Africa.

■ ***How does Uber plan to expand its Uber Store Pick-Ups service to other cities in South Africa?***

Store Pick-Ups allows users to request delivery people to pick up prepaid items from any store in the country where Uber Eats is present.

■ ***What are the reasons for Uber's decision to introduce Uber Black in Durban and expand Uber Van to Cape Town?***

Our mobility business in South Africa has grown over the past few years, evidenced by expansion to nearly 30 cities across the country and it is our mission to increase mobility options based on consumer demand for the product. We introduced these products in these cities based on feedback we gathered following the launches in other cities.

■ ***How does Uber Live differ from its existing food delivery services, and what specific benefits does it offer to customers?***

Uber Live is a mobile ordering solution for when people are not at home or a usual location.

We are excited about the launch of Uber Live as we are able to take the food shopping experience to the next level for attendees at large events such as festivals, concerts or sporting celebrations, eliminating endless queues to allow our users

to enjoy the event to the fullest.

What plans does Uber have to further expand its services and reach in South Africa in the coming years?

Our mobility business in South Africa has grown over the past few years, evidenced by expansion to nearly 30 cities across the country, and providing independent earning opportunities for over 20,000 earners.

Our goal is to contribute to seamless mobility and delivery by innovating new ways to help both riders and drivers move smoothly, hassle-free and feel safe on every trip and we know that our work is not done.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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