Ford, Lyft join forces to take self-driving cars mainstream

A new partnership between Ford and Lyft will aim to bring self-driving vehicles to the masses and help both companies progress toward more affordable, dependable, and accessible transportation future.

According to Sherif Marakby, Ford vice president, autonomous vehicles and electrification, there is no doubt self-driving vehicles will have an impact on how people and goods will move more efficiently in the future. But the magnitude of that impact - and how quickly self-driving vehicles can benefit society - will largely depend on businesses, government and the public working together.

"As we at Ford continue making progress on developing self-driving technology – through our self-driving vehicle and Argo AI's virtual driver system – we are simultaneously building out the infrastructure and systems necessary to make it easy for people to use our service."

> " Think of it this way: Someday, when you open the Lyft app during a period of high demand, Ford and Lyft software will need to be capable of quickly dispatching a self-driving vehicle so that you can get to your destination as quickly and as safely as possible. "

And that's where Ford's work with Lyft begins.
Lyft has a network of customers, growing demand for rides and strong knowledge of transportation flow within cities.

"We have experience with autonomous vehicle technology development and large-scale manufacturing. Both companies have fleet management and big data experience. With our combined capabilities, we believe we can effectively share information to help make the best decisions for the future," says Marakby.

Among the questions the companies will be answering together:

- "How do we create our technology platform so that it can easily connect with a partner's platform (such as Lyft's) to effectively dispatch a self-driving vehicle?"
- "Based on our shared data and information, which cities should we work with to deliver our self-driving vehicle service?"
- "What kind of infrastructure will be necessary to service and maintain a fleet of self-driving vehicles to ensure they are available whenever a consumer needs one?"

Some view the opportunity with self-driving vehicles as a race to be first. But Ford says it is focussing its efforts on building a service based around people's needs and wants. "We are placing a high priority on safety and dependability so customers will trust the experience that our self-driving technology will one day enable," Marakby says.

"As we build our technology platform, we will deploy human-driven vehicles on Lyft's network. This will allow us to test our platform interface to ensure compatibility with Lyft's customer-facing platform – the one you currently see whenever you open the Lyft app. Our developer teams already are working together, programming our systems so they can communicate with one another. The goal is that customers using Lyft won't notice any difference in their experience.

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"We will also connect our self-driving test vehicles to Lyft's network. We don't, however, plan to put customers in them until we are certain our technology delivers a positive, reassuring experience where we can gain meaningful feedback," he says.

When ready, Ford will have self-driving cars operating alongside Lyft's current community of drivers to help accommodate times of significant consumer demand to ensure that transportation remains timely and affordable.

"We expect that our partnership with Lyft will accelerate our efforts to build a profitable and viable self-driving vehicle business. With Lyft's network and respected brand experience, we expect our ability to scale self-driving vehicles will play a critical role in safely bringing this technology – and its many benefits – to mainstream consumers," Marakby concludes.

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