

# Major blow to Elon Musk as billionaire could be forced to cancel long-awaited dream

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By [ELLYN LAPOINTE](#)

**Elon Musk's Tesla** plans to roll-out **self-driving 'robotaxis'** in just a few weeks, but auto safety officials may force the billionaire to cancel his long-awaited dream

**Tesla** was set to **launch the service next month** in Austin, **Texas**, unleashing taxis powered by its Full Self-Driving (FSD) program.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recently caught wind of Musk's upcoming rollout and sent the company a letter to gather additional information.

The NHTSA wants to 'understand how Tesla plans to evaluate its vehicles and driving automation technologies for use on public roads' before the robotaxis are unleashed on busy Austin streets.

The agency **highlighted its investigations into four crashes and a pedestrian linked to Tesla's FDS.**

The blow has led to Musk's critics suggesting he will have to put a pin in his plans.

Dan O'Dowd, CEO of a software company that sells automotive driving software services and an outspoken critic of Tesla (his competitor), thinks that Musk is secretly grateful for the NHTSA inquiry.

'You can almost hear Elon's sigh of relief,' O'Dowd said in a Monday X post. 'He now has an excuse for canceling Tesla's June robotaxi launch.'



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**Elon Musk's Tesla plans to roll-out self-driving 'robotaxis' in just a few weeks, but federal auto safety regulators aren't sold on the idea**

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s in April about his June launch and posted on X that the service was available to an 'early set of employees' in Austin and the San Francisco Bay Area.

He said Tesla will first use existing Model Y vehicles outfitted with an 'unsupervised' version of its FSD software that has yet to be released.

The automaker is also developing a dedicated autonomous model, **dubbed the Cybercab**, with production starting next year.

'I **predict** that there will be millions of Teslas operating fully autonomously in the second half of next year,' he said.

Musk made a similar prediction six years ago, in 2019, saying 'next year, for sure, we'll **have over one million robotaxis on the road.**'

Tesla also revealed in April that it has **completed more than 1,500 trips and 15,000 miles of autonomous driving**, which has helped them develop and test FSD networks, the associated mobile app and other supporting technologies.

However, the NHTSA seems alarmed at the idea of Tesla is basing the robotaxi service on its FSD program.

Since October 2024, the NHTSA has been investigating Tesla's FSD software — an advanced driver-assistance system that allows vehicles to operate semi-autonomously — due to concerns about its performance in low-visibility conditions.



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**Tesla is targeting June for the launch of its robotaxi service in Austin, Texas, which promises to provide self-driving rides on demand**

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The current FSD software, also known as FSD Supervised, requires the driver to keep their hands on the wheel and be ready to take control at any time, even as the car automatically handles certain driving operations like breaking and steering.

The unsupervised version, however, won't require a driver at all.

This is a major leap forward from the FSD Supervised, which the NHTSA is already concerned about.

In its letter, the agency pressed Tesla for more information about the planned robotaxi launch.

NHTSA asked how similar FSD Unsupervised will be to the software that's currently under investigation, how big the robotaxi fleet will be, which Tesla models will be used, and how the company plans to ensure that the system is safe.

The agency also asked Tesla to explain how it 'intends to ensure the safety of its robotaxi operations in reduced roadway visibility conditions, such as sun glare, fog, airborne dust, rain, or snow.'

Tesla is required to respond to the NHTSA's information request by June 19.

If Tesla fails to meet this deadline, or the answers it provides are not satisfactory, it could delay the robotaxi launch.

'It won't be long until Elon claims Tesla was totally ready but the pesky regulators stopped him!' O'Dowd said on Monday.



'Mighty convenient, do you think Elon ordered the NHTSA to send this letter?'

He's not the only one skeptical about whether Tesla's robotaxis will actually be ready to launch by June.

Analyst Alexander Potter from Piper Sandler has **expressed doubts** about Tesla's ability to meet its ambitious timeline for deploying robotaxis, as the status of FSD Unsupervised is largely unknown and the current FSD Supervised software hasn't been updated in months.