

# Technologists *for* Democracy

## Letter to the Minister of Transportation Ontario from Organizations and Individuals Concerned about Waymo Arriving in Ontario

June 16, 2026

The Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, KC, MPP  
Minister of Transportation  
Office of the Ministry of Transportation Ontario  
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### Re: Open Letter: Protect Ontario from Surveillance Taxis

Dear Minister of Transportation,

We are Technologists for Democracy, a grassroots volunteer organization composed primarily of people who work in tech. We are based in Toronto, and we advocate for the ethical deployment of technology in Canada. Over the past several months, we have spoken to engineers, Uber drivers, delivery drivers, and transit, privacy, and community advocates who have serious concerns regarding Waymo and autonomous vehicles entering Ontario.

Waymo is an autonomous vehicle company founded by Google and owned by its parent company, Alphabet Inc. [They are planning to apply for Ontario's Automated Vehicle Pilot Program](#)<sup>1</sup> for permission to deploy and test driverless taxis in our streets.

We Ontarians have not had the opportunity to voice our concerns. We urge you to reject Waymo's deployment in Ontario.

### Digital Sovereignty & Privacy

We Canadians have a right to our own data and privacy. Data from Alphabet's services like Waymo has been reported to have been used by US law enforcement, as demonstrated by

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<sup>1</sup> Spurr, Ben. *Waymo plans to test robo taxis in Ontario: Toronto's mayor has her doubts about its technology*. April 13, 2026. Toronto Star. [https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/waymo-reportedly-plans-to-test-robo-taxis-in-ontario-torontos-mayor-has-her-doubts-about-its-technology/article\\_8e67c10b-6935-42b9-b754-71345bb950cd.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/waymo-reportedly-plans-to-test-robo-taxis-in-ontario-torontos-mayor-has-her-doubts-about-its-technology/article_8e67c10b-6935-42b9-b754-71345bb950cd.html)

their [collaboration with San Francisco police](#).<sup>2</sup> Waymo's [policies](#)<sup>3</sup> allow Canadian data to be shared outside the country, with the data subject to laws in destination countries like the US. We ask that there be sufficient public consultations with residents on how their data will be shared and to ensure that meaningful public consent is obtained through these dialogues.

In response to Waymo's planned arrival to Ontario, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC) has recommended that the public should be consulted before Waymo deploys any vehicles:<sup>4</sup>

*Automated vehicles are often equipped with sensors and, depending on their configuration, can collect significant amounts of sensitive personal information.*

*Our office [...] recommends that provincial and municipal governments engage in meaningful public consultation before approving the use of automated vehicles in public spaces to support transparency and build public trust.*

Waymo, which is based in the United States, stands to relay large amounts of data on Canadians back to servers in the United States. According to the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Google, which shares the same parent company as Waymo, [has allegedly given away personal data](#) to the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) without notifying users.<sup>5</sup> We are concerned that such allegations may not be exclusive to Google and that Alphabet's companies could engage in similar practices. We are concerned that such sharing of data with law enforcement may prove problematic for Ontarians' data.

## Outsourcing Ontario Jobs

Drivers for Uber, Lyft, taxis and other services form the backbone of the rideshare economy and would be the first ones impacted by Waymo's arrival. These drivers work long and hard — whether to support their families, pay for education, or simply afford groceries — and we are worried that the deployment of services such as Waymo may create a transit market that outsources jobs away from Canada. From drivers' jobs being supplanted by software engineers outside of Canada, to the data labellers in [Kenya](#)<sup>6</sup> that keep machine learning

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<sup>2</sup> Gordon, Aaron. *San Francisco Police Are Using Driverless Cars as Mobile Surveillance Cameras*. May 11, 2022. Vice News. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/san-francisco-police-are-using-driverless-cars-as-mobile-surveillance-cameras/>

<sup>3</sup> *Waymo Services Privacy Policy*. April 10, 2026. Waymo. <https://support.google.com/waymo/answer/9184840>

<sup>4</sup> *Statement from the Ontario Privacy Commissioner on Waymo*. May 2026. Technologists for Democracy. <https://techfordemocracy.ca/2026/05/03/statement-from-ontario-privacy-commissioner-on-waymo/>

<sup>5</sup> Del Valle, Gaby. *Privacy advocates want Google to stop handing consumer data over to ICE*. April 14, 2026. The Verge. <https://www.theverge.com/news/911789/eff-google-giving-data-ice-california-new-york>

<sup>6</sup> Lee, Dave. *FWhy Big Tech pays poor Kenyans to teach self-driving Cars*. November 2, 2018. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-46055595>



models up to date, all the way to the [support staff](#)<sup>7</sup> that remotely assist autonomous cars in need of help, we are concerned that the local economy may lose valuable jobs.

Waymo's robotaxis turn to fleet response operators for technical guidance when completing difficult tasks. [Some operators are based overseas](#).<sup>6</sup> We do not know if operators are required to pass a driver's tests to adequately drive on Ontario roads and if there are mechanisms to ensure they comply with Ontario's road safety laws. We do not believe that remote support staff are sufficient to safely assist vehicles.

## **Weakening Public Transit & Increasing Congestion**

Public transit is an essential part of the city's development. In Toronto, for instance, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) continues to fight for increased investment in transit from all levels of government to ensure everyone has access to reliable public transit. However, the TTC is projected to face a [\\$37.3 billion shortfall in capital needs funding over the next 15 years](#).<sup>8</sup> We are concerned that Waymo's deployment may lead to a decrease in the use of public transit as it has been reported that [Waymo is increasing app taxi use](#)<sup>9</sup> which could lead to reductions in farebox revenue for transit agencies not just in Toronto, but across Ontario.

Transit is a cost-effective, space-efficient and environmentally-friendly mode of travel. Waymo's entrance could hamper decades-long efforts to make transit better, increase farebox revenue, ensure roads move more people, and improve our cities' traffic.

Introducing another vehicle ridehailing service may lead to increased car use over alternative forms of transportation. Police officers in Nashville have had to manually move Waymos from intersections on busy nights [in congested areas of the city](#).<sup>10</sup> Traffic congestion is already a major issue in downtown Toronto. We believe that putting more cars on the road will not address our pressing congestion issue.

## **Hidden Costs**

In Austin, Texas, there have been cases where Waymos have not stopped for school buses. Austin is now spending resources to teach Waymo's cars how to drive in school zones. And

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<sup>7</sup> Tangermann, Victor. *It Turns Out That When Waymos Are Stumped, They Get Intervention From Workers in the Philippines*. February 6, 2026. Futurism. <https://futurism.com/advanced-transport/waymos-controlled-workers-philippines>

<sup>8</sup> *Recommended 2026-2035 Capital Budget and Plan, 15-Year Capital Investment Plan, and Real Estate Investment Plan Update*. January 7, 2026. Toronto Transit Commission. Pp. 18-20. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2026/ttc/bgrd/backgroundfile-261184.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Lebowitz, Sophia. *Waymo Means Way Mo' Cars, According To Uber Docs*. April 17, 2026. Streetsblog NYC. <https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2026/04/17/waymo-means-way-mo-cars-according-to-uber-docs>

<sup>10</sup> Jackson, Aubriella. *Body camera video shows officer moving Waymo blocking Broadway traffic*. April 20, 2026. WKRN. <https://www.wkrn.com/news/local-news/nashville/bodycam-waymo-broadway-police/>

despite the City of Austin's efforts, Waymo's vehicles [have not yet shown any change in behaviour around school buses](#).<sup>11</sup>

Along with Nashville footing the bill to move Waymos and unclog traffic, there are still cases where [Waymo cars freeze and block streets](#)<sup>12</sup> in San Francisco where Waymo was first deployed. We ask the MTO to clarify how support will be provided to deal with Waymo's vehicles across Ontario when they get stuck.

Additionally, the streetcars of [Toronto may create unique problems for self-driving systems](#)<sup>13</sup> that are not common in other cities. Will the TTC need to deploy more support for Waymo's vehicles stuck behind streetcars or on streetcar tracks? Will the TTC need to teach Waymo's vehicles how to stop when streetcars drop off passengers? Will Toronto police need to manually drive Waymo's vehicles off of Spadina, the Gardiner, or any of Toronto's busy streets during rush hour? In a February 2020 article from WIRED, experts observed that [snow poses a challenge to driverless vehicles](#) as their machine learning models are trained to deploy in fair weather like in Arizona or California.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear whether snowy conditions have been adequately addressed since then.

Waymo cars will have to navigate blizzards, heavy rain, and flooding. The province will need to be equipped to address the deployment of these vehicles in adverse weather. We ask that the burden of preparedness be put on Waymo instead of our governments.

## Accessibility

While Waymo's [accessibility features](#) do accommodate certain disabilities, they are limited in scope and in their location.<sup>15</sup> A July 2021 consultation from the U.S. Access Board [provides recommendations](#) to accommodate a wide array of disabilities, with suggestions such as changing conventional vehicle and service design, ensuring sufficient space for wheelchairs in vehicles, and using signs and gestures for deaf people.<sup>16</sup> Is Waymo designed to meet the needs of riders with disabilities? Does their accessibility strategy cover a wide range of disabilities and accommodate for under-privileged riders?

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<sup>11</sup> Marshall, Aarian. *A School District Tried to Help Train Waymos to Stop for School Buses. It Didn't Work*. March 29, 2026. WIRED. <https://www.wired.com/story/a-school-district-tried-to-help-train-waymos-to-stop-for-school-buses-it-didnt-work/>

<sup>12</sup> *3 Waymo self-driving cars in 'standoff' cause traffic jam in San Francisco*. December 8, 2025. KGO / ABC 7 News. <https://abc7news.com/post/waymo-driving-cars-standoff-cause-traffic-jam-san-francisco-video-shows/18264976/>

<sup>13</sup> Swadden, Patrick. *Toronto Tesla owners can now use self-driving mode downtown. But safety experts are worried*. November 24, 2022. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/tesla-driverless-technology-downtown-toronto-1.6662340>

<sup>14</sup> Knight, Will. *Snow and Ice Pose a Vexing Obstacle for Self-Driving Cars*. February 3, 2020. WIRED. <https://www.wired.com/story/snow-ice-pose-vexing-obstacle-self-driving-cars/>

<sup>15</sup> *Waymo Accessibility Features*. 2025. Waymo Help. <https://support.google.com/waymo/answer/9566824?hl=en>

<sup>16</sup> *Public Forum on Inclusive Design of AVs: Summary Report*. July 2021. U.S. Access Board. <https://www.access-board.gov/av/report.html>



We believe that such efforts are best served by public services that guarantee accessible transportation for people with disabilities and riders of all income brackets. We are concerned that the province would delegate accessible transportation to a foreign private company which is incentivized to serve only those who can afford it, without a guarantee of adequately accommodating the disability community. We ask that the province focus on funding existing public accessibility efforts and expanding them.

**Protect Ontario or Protect Waymo?**

We urge you to reconsider allowing an American company access to Ontario data without Ontarians' consent.

We urge you to consider all the drivers whose jobs could be outsourced away from Canada.

We urge you to listen to Canadians concerned about public transit and congestion that services like Waymo may exacerbate.

We urge the Government of Ontario to avoid treating Ontario like a test environment and rather like a province worthy of public consultation and meaningful consent from its residents.

We urge the Government of Ontario to improve accessibility services already provided by existing publicly-owned programs.

We urge the Government of Ontario to reject Waymo for the Automated Vehicle Pilot Program.

Sincerely,

Technologists for Democracy  
[techfordemocracy.ca](http://techfordemocracy.ca)

[names and emails of signatories]