



Uber's Self-Driving Trucks Are Delivering Freight In Arizona

The trucking industry is ready to be completely disrupted as autonomous big-rig trucks hit the highways. There are 3.5 million professional truck drivers in the United States who will be at risk of unemployment. To a Technocrat mind, this is considered 'progress'. □
TN Editor

Uber's big push to dominate the trucking industry took a leap forward today with the announcement that the ride-hailing giant is now operating its fleet of self-driving trucks on its freight-hauling app. The shipments are taking place in Arizona, where the ride-hailing giant is also testing out its robot taxis. Uber said it is using a transfer hub model, in which the trucks drive autonomously on the highway and human drivers take over for the last miles.

By using transfer hubs, Uber argues that its use of robot trucks will add more jobs, at least in the short term. The reason is that Uber's self-driving trucks aren't advanced enough for dock-to-dock runs, and they won't be for a long time. They still require a safety driver behind the

wheel during operation. In the meantime, shippers use Uber Freight to book a trucker, who arrives in a conventional long-haul truck. The trucker then drives a short-haul trip to a transfer hub outside of town, where they are met by one of Uber's self-driving trucks (with an Uber-employed safety driver on board).

The trailer is transferred to the self-driving truck, which then drives autonomously for the long-haul, highway portion of the trip — including a safety driver behind the wheel. Near the destination, the self-driving truck exits the highway and takes the load to a second transfer hub. A second driver in a conventional truck picks up the trailer and provides the short haul for delivery to the final destination. That driver just dropped off a different load at the same hub before receiving the autonomous truck delivery.

Uber won't say how many trucks it's currently operating, the types of goods it's shipping, the number of miles driven, nor how many deliveries it has completed autonomously. Uber's Advanced Technology Group, which oversees all of the company's self-driving efforts, said that its vehicles have collectively driven 2 million miles. The hope is to eventually reach a point where this process — human-driven short-hauls and autonomously driven long-hauls — becomes "continuous," said Alden Woodrow, the product lead for self-driving trucks at Uber.

"We're not at the point where that system is running 24-7 at all times," Woodrow said. "But that's the direction that we'd like to get to."

Uber Freight, billed as an app that matches truckers with companies that need cargo shipped across the country, [launched in May 2017](#). Months before, [the company purchased a trucking brokerage](#) called 4Front Logistics in Chicago to help ease its effort to break into the long-haul freight business — an acknowledgment that the \$70 billion ride-hailing company needed some help building scale in the notoriously fractured trucking industry. These types of brokerages connect manufacturers and retailers that are shipping goods with truck owners and fleets.

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