



The electric cars are piloted by a remote driver, removing some of the hassles associated with ride sharing programmes | Photo source T-Mobile

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REMOTE-PILOTED RIDE-SHARING COMES TO VEGAS

 MOBILITY & TRANSPORT

A ride sharing concept that uses remote drivers to "pilot" autonomous vehicles is being rolled out in Las Vegas, with the help of 5G network T-Mobile

Spotted: While we are waiting around for self-driving cars to become a reality, startup Halo has decided to take a somewhat different approach. The ride-sharing firm is offering vehicles driven by a remote driver. In Halo's system, humans pilot the driverless vehicles from a remote location using proprietary technology run on 5G.

Nine cameras feed video from the vehicle to a specially-trained remote driver, whom Halo calls a "pilot". Radar and ultrasonic sensors act as a backup. An automated mechanism also brings cars to a full stop if a potential safety hazard or system anomaly is detected. An AI system allows the car to learn in the background, even while humans control the vehicle, building a feedback loop to improve safety over time.

Users of Halo's service will be able to summon a driverless EV using a mobile app. The rider hops in and the pilot takes the car to its destination. On arrival, no parking is needed — the rider hops out and the Halo moves on to its next pick-up. The system is initially planned for use in Las Vegas, which is very open to autonomous vehicle experimentation – both Lyft and Aptiv have trialled autonomous driving schemes in the city.

Justin Jones, Clark County Commissioner of District F and Vice-Chair of the Southern Nevada Regional Transportation Commission, noted in a press release:, "For years, Nevada has been a hub for innovation in autonomous vehicles and a leader in this space. Halo and 5G technology offer an intelligent transition between where we are today and where we want to go in the coming years, giving residents and visitors a better, more energy efficient way to move throughout this great city."

Autonomous vehicle production is moving forward at a rapid pace, although many questions remain. One of these is how rapidly the necessary 5G networks, such as the one used in Halo’s pilot, can be rolled out. Another is whether people will fully trust the technology. This may be one reason we have seen autonomous technology applied first to a range of other vehicles – from [ferries](#) to [ocean cleaners](#).

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Takeaway:

Halo is betting that not having to search for a ride-sharing car in a parking lot or find parking at the other end, will elevate its offering above other ride-share options. However, it’s not clear if people will view this as an option for ride-sharing or as an autonomous cab. However, it is also a halfway house between partial assist (level 2) and fully autonomous (level 5), and may help consumers to “ease into” the idea of autonomous driving. Anand Nandakumar, the founder and CEO of Halo points out that, “Full autonomy is a massive challenge from both a technical and social trust perspective that won’t be solved for years to come. But Halo has been designed to address these challenges by building automation over time starting with a solution that consumers will feel comfortable using today.”