



Starship has raised fresh funds to develop its fleet of autonomous delivery robots | Photo source [Starship](#)

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SELF-DRIVING DELIVERY ROBOTS

  MOBILITY & TRANSPORT

A major autonomous delivery robot company has raised new funding as investors bet that the future of delivery is robotic

Spotted: The growth in same-day delivery has spurred an increase in the market for autonomous delivery robots (ADRs). Designed for last-mile delivery of small packages, the market in ADRs is expected to see an explosion in growth over the next 5 to 10 years, with some predicting a CAGR of around 35 per cent or more over that time. As evidence, Starship Technologies, one of the bigger players in ADR has just completed a new Series B funding round, bringing its total raised to more than \$100 million (around €91 million).

Starship currently operates in the US and UK, and its pavement-based robots have completed more than 3 million deliveries. The company has partnerships with grocers, such as Tesco and the Co-op in the UK, and college campuses, such as North Carolina A&T and South Dakota State University. It currently makes around 10,000 deliveries a day using a fleet of about 1,700 robots. As a result, the company has improved the robots' ability to navigate. While initially street crossings were carried out by human operators, today the robots manage most crossings autonomously.

The more the robots are used, the more they learn about navigating different conditions, and the closer the robots come to full autonomy. Starship CEO Alastair Westgarth told Forbes in November 2021 that, "when we first encountered snow it was something the robots weren't familiar with, it produced different images from the cameras, and the sensors reacted differently, so we had to train our systems to deal with that environment. They are constantly learning ... our autonomy today is orders of magnitude bigger."

The scale and wealth of experience means that Starship has also managed to get average delivery costs down below the human equivalent. The company will use the Series B fund to expand as well as invest in new initiatives, including exploring new business models and developing larger robots that travel on the road. The company is also looking how to provide more branded experiences for its partner businesses, such as leasing the robots for sole use by some customers.

While many are betting big on ADRs to reduce the cost and impact of last mile deliveries, others are working on delivering more efficiency using human power. Innovators in this space include a German [delivery service](#) using cargo bikes and electric vehicles and a small [autonomous helicopter](#) for larger deliveries.

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Takeaway:

Some [research](#) estimates that last mile delivery may represent up to 40 per cent of total transport costs, and may be responsible for as much as 30 per cent of the pollution in some cities. This could potentially be reduced by the use of autonomous robots, which in addition to potentially saving on carbon emissions (if charged from renewable sources), also do not contribute to road congestion when used on sidewalks. Of course, Starship has competition – a lot of competition, including from Caterpillar-owned Marble, Amazon, and other delivery companies.