

Wayward Waymo: Officer stops driverless vehicle, unable to write ticket

Waymo robotaxi was driving the wrong way into oncoming traffic

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The spectre of our city streets being filled with driverless cars has been the stuff of Jetson-age science fiction for some time, though companies like Waymo are actively working on such technology which admittedly asks more questions than it answers.

One of those questions is how police will enforce rules of the road if there is no driver behind the wheel. Last month, a cop in Phoenix spotted a vehicle allegedly moving into an oncoming lane of traffic after encountering a construction zone. The officer says this

<https://driving.ca/auto-news/crashes/officer-stops-driverless-waymo-vehicle>

vehicle, which turned out to be a Waymo robotaxi, then proceeded through an intersection after he turned on his cruiser's emergency lights in an attempt to haul it over.

Bodycam footage of the stop shows the police officer marching up to the Waymo-operated Jaguar and confirming his suspicions there was no one behind the wheel. The autonomous car rolled down its window and the cop then spoke with a Waymo support employee who was working at a remote location. Local media investigated the police dispatch records and learned no further action was taken since the force was "unable to issue citation to computer."

Remember that one the next time you get a speed camera ticket in the mail with a \$200 fine attached for doing 61 km/h in a 50 zone (this is a reality in Newfoundland, by the way). Computers can cite humans, but not the other way around. Got it.

To be sure, robotaxis can act erratically in certain situations and should be viewed with the same level of suspicion (at least with existing levels of autonomous driving technology) one would normally reserve for finding a spent nuclear fuel rod in their Kenmore electric water heater. Not only has the tech broadly failed to keep pace with the human ability to suss out a confusing construction zone – in an eye-rolling bit of hubris, Waymo blamed "inconsistent construction signage" for the problem after initially clamming up on the matter – but traffic laws have also yet to catch up with this brave new world.

In other words, we don't expect to stop reporting on incidents such as this Waymo blunder any time soon.