

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1575 Will Guam Be Part of Elon Musk's Robotaxi Network?

You may recall that there's been a fair amount of talk about self-driving cars, and that one day we'd be able to slide into the back seat of our ride, and maybe eat our breakfast as we leisurely listen to a certain talkshow host, as the car drives us to work. It was the brainchild of Tesla's Elon Musk, and he's been ridiculed over his claims that full self-driving vehicles are closer than we think. How close? For Musk's critics, they might want to cover their ears. I'm Jerry Roberts, and today, we'll ponder that question, along with whether Guam will be a part of all this. That's coming next on The Extra Point.

Elon Musk had popularity that seemingly knew no boundaries. He was universally hailed as a genius by just about everybody, including both Democrats and Republicans.

Tesla stock was flying high, Space-X had a string of successful launches, the Starlink network had circled the globe with thousands of low-orbit satellites, bringing reliable — and in many cases — faster Internet service to communities far and wide. Musk was on a roll like nobody had seen in recent memory. In the process, he became the world's wealthiest person.

Media couldn't get enough of Elon, and that's because a Musk-hungry public demanded it. Then he bought Twitter and proclaimed that he would protect free speech, and in the eyes of millions of liberals, he became an enemy of the people.

However you feel about Elon Musk, he is a mere six weeks away from pulling back the curtain on what he claims will revolutionize personal transportation.

On August 8th, Robotaxi will be formally introduced as Tesla's entrant into the what is termed the autonomous ride-hailing market. If you're familiar with Uber, Lyft, and Grab from your travels or living elsewhere, Robotaxi will be just like them with one slight difference — there's no driver. You summon the ride via an

app, the car drives up, driver seat empty, you get in, and the car accelerates. You don't have to tell it where to go. It already knows. You don't pay. You already did. The vehicle will get you to your destination, you get out. That's it.

Tesla's FSD (Full Self-Driving) software, now in beta testing, is the backbone powering the Robotaxi's capabilities. This advanced system can already handle tasks like lane changes, stop-sign recognition, and highway entry without direct driver input.

Will it freak people out the first time they catch a "robo-ride?" My bet is that everybody will have their eyes glued on the road, to watch the vehicle go through all the decisions and adjustments that a human driver would.

Now it's time for a little speculation. Will the Robotaxi come to Guam? I understand there are Teslas on the island, though not many, and the Starlink service is also available here. We also have a number of charging stations. That means the basic components are in place. Let's get to some details.

The fundamental concept is that you, the Tesla owner, would make your vehicle available for ride hailing, during the hours you aren't using it. It would be activated through the Tesla software system, over the Internet. Somebody wants a ride, the system scans the network for available cars, and yours is selected. The car starts up, drives away, completes the ride and the fare is deposited into your bank account. Then, it catches another fare or just comes back to your place and parks itself.

What does a system like that cost? The FSD software that controls the vehicle is priced at \$15,000 if you buy it outright, but a lease of the system will go for somewhere between \$100-200 monthly. For most people, affordability will not be an issue.

(Con't.)

Maybe you're thinking, "Hey, what about the insurance to cover self-driving cars?" Good question. It's not a settled issue, but it'll get there. Plainly, if FSDs result in fewer accidents and fewer claims, insurance rates will come down.

Is there enough income potential to buy a Tesla, get it to Guam, and do this Robotaxi thing?

Musk says the FSD taxi service is expected to allow Tesla owners to earn up to \$30,000 per year by adding their vehicles to the ride-hailing fleet.

Should Guam's taxi industry be nervous about all this? Well, if the system works and driverless vehicles start popping up here, the ground transportation game is going to change.

We'll all find out how close FSDs are to joining our roadways...in just six weeks.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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