

# Kroger to test grocery deliveries with driverless cars

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This undated photo provided by The Kroger Co. shows a driverless car that the Cincinnati-based company is about to test whether it can steer supermarket customers away from crowded grocery aisles with a fleet of diminutive driverless cars designed to lower delivery costs. The test program announced Thursday, June 28, 2018, could make Kroger the first U.S. grocer to make deliveries with robotic cars that won't have a human riding along to take control in case something goes wrong. (Andrew Brown/The Kroger Co. via AP)

Kroger Co. is about to test whether it can steer supermarket customers away from crowded grocery aisles with a fleet of diminutive driverless cars designed to lower delivery costs.

The test program announced Thursday could make Kroger the first U.S. grocer to make deliveries with robotic cars that won't have a human riding along to take control in case something goes wrong.

Cincinnati-based Kroger is teaming up with Nuro, a Silicon Valley startup founded two years ago by two engineers who worked on self-driving cars at Google. That Google project is now known as Waymo, which plans to introduce a ride-hailing service that is supposed to begin picking up passengers in fully autonomous cars by the end of this year.

Like Waymo, Kroger is only saying its self-driving delivery service will start by the end of this year.

The location of the delivery service hasn't been determined yet either, although it most likely will involve Fry's supermarkets in California or Arizona, said Nuro co-founder Dave Ferguson.

Customers will be able to order groceries from a mobile app, much like people summon an Uber or Lyft ride. After the order is placed, a driverless vehicle will deliver the groceries at a curb, requiring the customers to be present to fetch the items. The vehicles will probably be opened with a numeric code.

Kroger currently offers grocery delivery in vehicles driven by people at about 1,200 of its 2,800 stores, covering about 20 different markets in the U.S. If the Nuro tests go well, Kroger say it's likely to expand its use of driverless cars, potentially allowing its supermarkets to reduce its delivery fees and reassign workers who had been driving cars to other jobs focused on improving customer service.

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