

Week commencing 17 August 2026

COVERAGE

3 – 16 August 2026

AUDIENCE

Transport, infrastructure and technology leadership

HANDLING

Internal use — not for onward distribution

IF YOU JUST REMEMBER ONE THING FROM THIS BRIEFING...

London's robotaxi rollout is now moving slower on the regulatory and political track than the vehicles are moving on the road.

Waymo has pushed its own London launch from 2026 towards early 2027, TfL's commissioner says he will refuse licences for unproven services, the Assembly says government has sidelined TfL from the process, and a new parliamentary petition against driverless cabs was published on 10 August. Ask your team: does our guidance still say London robotaxis arrive this year?

THIS FORTNIGHT

Trials, regulation and sentiment

PRIORITY

6 AUG

Waymo's London launch timeline slips from 2026 towards early 2027

Waymo still needs a VSO from the VCA/DVSA before rider-only validation, then an Automated Passenger Service permit before paid rides. Reporting this week puts a 2026 launch as increasingly unlikely, early 2027 more realistic. TfL commissioner Andy Lord says London will not license unproven services.

So what: the most confident 2026 operator is now hedging hardest — treat any remaining 2026 London launch claim as unconfirmed until a permit is actually granted.

PRIORITY

10 AUG

Parliamentary petition demands ban on commercial driverless taxis

The Private Hire & Taxi Driver's Network petitioned Parliament on 10 August to stop licences for fully driverless passenger services, citing risk to over 400,000 private hire and Hackney carriage driver jobs. It needs 10,000 signatures for a government response, 100,000 for a Commons debate.

So what: this is a live parliamentary process, not just union rhetoric — a government response is a realistic possibility within the fortnight.

WATCH

AUG,
REPORTED

London Assembly says government has sidelined TfL on driverless taxi licensing

Transport Committee chair Caroline Russell told the Local Democracy Reporting Service that government has "stepped in on London's devolved powers", granting AV trial permissions without TfL consent. The Committee's inquiry into automated passenger vehicles, opened in June, continues.

So what: a formal devolution dispute between City Hall and Whitehall is now on record — expect it to shape who grants future London permits.

WATCH

29 JUL,
UNRESOLVED

Momenta becomes first Chinese AV developer with a Germany-wide testing permit

Germany's KBA granted Momenta nationwide authorisation for Level 4 testing on urban roads, clearing a hurdle for its Uber-partnered Munich plan. The permit allows testing only — no date is set for on-road trials or paying passengers.

So what: granted just before this fortnight but material to it — Munich is now a live market, not just a stated intention.

PIPELINE

What to expect in the next twelve months

OPERATOR OR AUTHORITY	CITY OR JURISDICTION	MILESTONE OR DECISION	DATE OR EXPECTED DATE
Uber & Wayve	London	Early rider trips for waitlisted users.	Later summer 2026 (stated)
Waymo	London	VSO and APS permit required before rider-only validation.	Early 2027 (revised)
Apollo Go / FreeNow	London (Brent)	Safety-driver testing continues; public riders targeted.	2027 (target)
Momenta / Uber	Munich	On-road Level 4 testing expected to begin.	2026, date tbc
WeRide / Uber / AVOMO	Madrid	Robotaxi pilot with human operators.	Late 2026 (stated)

Company-stated dates are intent, not commitment. Driverless UK passenger services need an APS permit; none issued yet.

REGULATORY AND SECTOR WATCH

What changed, and what is coming

In force now

- AV Act 2024 pilot scheme with a supervising safety driver, in effect since spring 2026 — basis for the Uber/Wayve PHV licence.
- Automated Passenger Services Regulations 2026, laid 23 April, give a legal route to driverless service once a permit is granted — none issued yet.
- UNECE WP.29 adopted the first global framework enabling Level 4 automated driving in June 2026, with UK, EU, US, China and Japan support.

Approaching

- Momenta's Germany-wide testing permit points toward on-road Munich trials; date unconfirmed.
- Stop the Robocabs petition needs 10,000 signatures to trigger a formal government response.
- London Assembly's inquiry continues; a further devolution clash between City Hall and government looks likely.

Standing watch — independent AV safety oversight. ETSC and partners continue pressing Brussels for an EU Road Safety Agency and mandatory collision reporting; the UK's Road Safety Investigation Branch is not yet operational. No change this week.

RECOMMENDED

Three things to do before the next edition

- Check whether client-facing guidance still states London robotaxis arrive in 2026 — Waymo's own timeline no longer supports it.
- Brief PHV and taxi-exposed clients on the Stop the Robocabs petition before the 10,000-signature threshold is reached.
- Track whether TfL secures a formal consent role in future APS permit decisions, not just this one trial.

OUTLOOK — NEXT FORTNIGHT

We assess it is likely the Stop the Robocabs petition passes 10,000 signatures within the fortnight, forcing a government response. It is a realistic possibility that TfL secures a stronger licensing role after the Assembly's intervention. Driverless UK or European rides before spring 2027 remain unlikely.

NEXT EDITION

Monday 31 August 2026. Send additions, corrections or sector intelligence to your ClearPath engagement lead.

