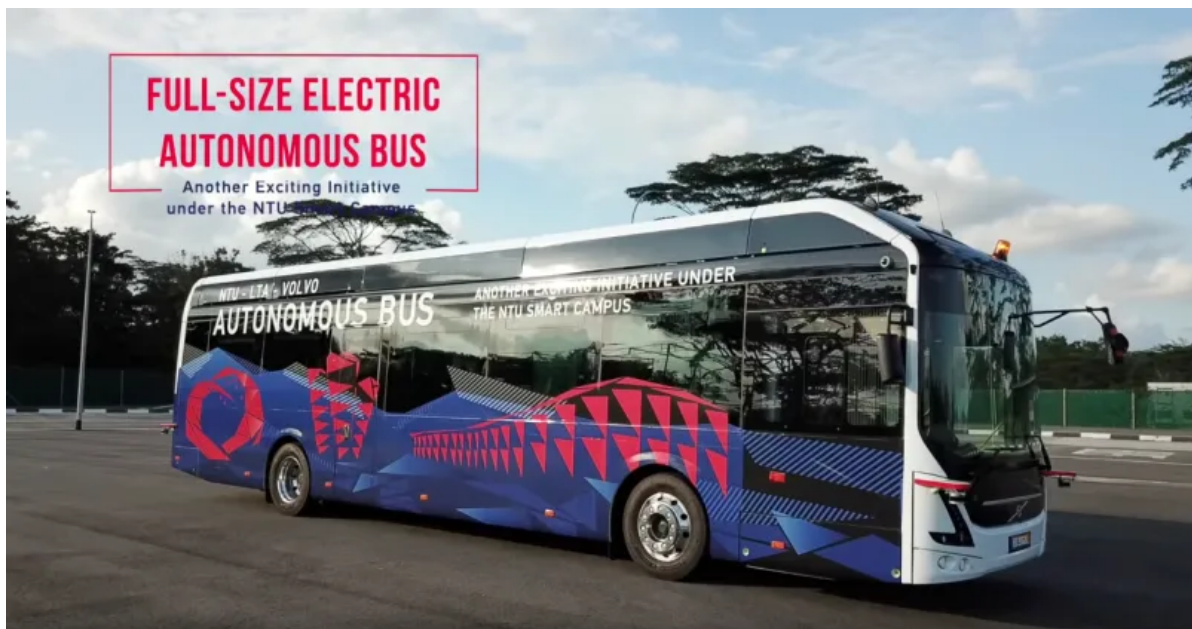


CAR TECHNOLOGY

Volvo's Testing Autonomous Buses in Singapore



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Today 3:45pm



Screenshot: YouTube/NTUsg

Singapore may only be about 280 square miles in size and regularly beset by monsoon, but for those reasons and more it's quickly becoming a hotbed of autonomous vehicle testing. And you may even soon be able to catch a self-driving Volvo bus there.

Volvo will start testing full-size driverless electric buses on the Nanyang Technological University campus in Singapore, Bloomberg reports today. The buses will start on the NTU Smart Campus Future Mobility Solutions test track, basically a small town set up for the sole purpose of testing AVs, where the autonomous bus (AB?) can find out how it handles

crosswalks, sharp inclines, low visibility, and sudden artificial rain storms from a rain machine (not to be confused with the very real sudden monsoons Singapore experiences) in a controlled environment.

And if things go well, they could be used on public roads. Via Bloomberg:

The electric buses, with a capacity close to 80 passengers, will soon begin driving at the campus of Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, before trials are extended to public roads, the Swedish company and its partners said Tuesday.

The city-state is one of the most progressive governments in the world when it comes to AV legislation. You can already hail an autonomous taxi within a limited test area.

While autonomous buses are not anywhere close to being deployed at scale, their eventual use would be a big deal for mass transportation. In theory, fixed-route bus systems driving the same road over and over would be easier to automate than cars making different trips all the time. And this would save governments a boatload of money.

Paying drivers to drive around is the biggest chunk of operating cost for pretty much any bus system, sometimes accounting for 70 percent or more of the annual operating budget. Reducing the number of drivers could free up money to run more frequent service.

Of course, bus drivers are often unionized so there will be, uh, *complications* to rolling out driverless buses when the time comes.

But we're getting way ahead of ourselves. Volvo told Bloomberg it hopes to have the driverless bus running in Singapore on residential roads outside the city center during off-peak hours by 2022.

In the meantime, your friendly—or perhaps not-so-friendly—neighborhood bus driver isn't going anywhere.