

What's Waymo up to in Boston? Here's what we know

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By [Nik DeCosta-Klipa](#)



Two Waymo driverless taxis stop before passing one another on a San Francisco street in 2023. (Terry Chea/AP)

Editor's Note: This is an excerpt from WBUR's daily morning newsletter, WBUR Today. If you like what you read and want it in your inbox, [sign up here](#).

Don't hit that snooze button. Seriously, a new Mass General Brigham study [says it's not good for your sleep quality](#). Plus, we have a lot of news to get to:

Waymo has officially hit our (narrow) streets: The Google-owned self-driving taxi company deployed a small fleet of human-driven cars onto the roads of Greater Boston yesterday, spokesperson Sandy Karp confirmed to WBUR. And while Waymo isn't offering driverless rides here just yet, the funky-looking cars have [caught the attention of some locals](#). Here's what to know about their visit to Boston:

- What is Waymo doing here? The company is collecting data on, as Karp politely put it, Boston's "distinct" driving culture and street conditions (or, to put it another way, our [notoriously aggressive](#) drivers, [windy streets](#) and [senseless rotaries](#)). It's part of [a cross-country road trip from California](#) meant to introduce the vehicles to new experiences. And just to emphasize the point: while the camera-mounted electric Jaguars are the same cars that Waymo operates as autonomous taxis in [a growing number of cities](#), any seen around Boston will have a person manually driving behind the wheel.
- Where will they be? Waymo says the cars will explore "a range of neighborhoods, from Mission Hill and East Boston to Cambridge, Somerville and Southie." They'll also be on I-90 and I-93, for the full traffic-induced road rage experience.
- How long will they be here? Roughly six weeks, now through the end of June.
- Does this mean Waymo will launch self-driving taxis in Boston in the near future? Maybe, but not necessarily. As longtime business reporter Scott Kirsner told WBUR's Tiziana Dearing, "this is intelligence gathering that they've done in other cities — some of which they have eventually launched in and some of which they haven't." [Click here to listen to Scott and Tiziana's full conversation](#) about Waymo's prospective future in Boston — or [read Scott's column on MassLive](#).

Checking out: Massachusetts plans to stop using hotels as part of the state's emergency family shelter system by the end of the summer. Gov. Maura Healey's office [announced yesterday](#) the remaining 32 hotel shelters — down from a peak of 100 in 2023 — will close several months ahead of schedule. (Previously, Healey's office [had pegged Dec. 31 as the target date](#) to stop using hotels for shelter space.)

- Why are they closing early? Healey's office says the number of families in the system has dropped faster than expected, due to [the admission and stay restrictions](#) imposed over the past year. State officials say the total number [fell below 5,000 families last month](#) for the first time since July 2023, and is on pace to drop below 4,000 this summer. At its highest, there were nearly 8,000 families in the system, which state leaders said was [straining the state's budget](#).

A federal judge has ordered Kseniia Petrova, the Russian-born Harvard researcher [detained over undeclared frog embryos](#), to be transferred to Massachusetts. Petrova's lawyer [told the Associated Press](#) that the move is expected to happen within a few weeks. She has spent over 90 days in a Louisiana detention facility [known for its poor conditions](#), following her initial detainment at Logan Airport in February.

- Catch up: The order comes after federal officials filed [new criminal smuggling charges against Petrova in Boston last week](#) — an unusual move at this stage in an immigration case, legal experts [told The New York Times](#). If convicted, she faces a sentence of up to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

Funding fallout: A dance instruction nonprofit in Boston is the latest local group to be hit by Trump administration funding cuts. [BalletRox](#) says hundreds of students will lose access to low-cost dance classes this summer, after the National Endowment for the Arts yanked an already-approved

\$30,000 grant [earlier this month](#). The group was told the grant no longer aligned with Trump administration's priorities.

- What's next: BalletRox program manager Lisa Kelleher says the group is appealing the decision, but thinks it's unlikely they'll get the money back. So they're scrambling to find other revenue sources and asking for donations.

P.S.— If you're a WBUR super fan, next week's WBUR Festival is for you. From behind-the-scenes conversations about *Car Talk* and *Wait Wait... Don't Tell Me!* to your favorite journalists on stage with some of the most interesting voices of our time, it's a weekend basically designed for you to nerd out. Plus, you can come hang out at our street fair to shop, eat, play trivia with local newsroom editors and reporters, and listen to live music. [Buy your tickets now.](#)



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