Khan urges limit on London robotaxis

LEVEL B2

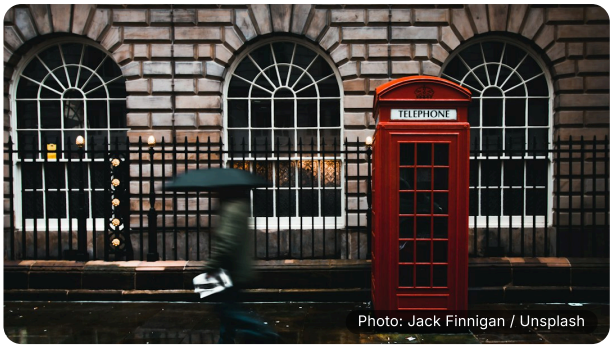


Photo: Jack Finnigan / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. What new transport technology have you seen or tried?
2. How should cities balance innovation and safety?
3. When should governments limit a new service?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

autonomous
able to operate by itself without a human driver

robotaxi
a driverless car that carries paying passengers like a taxi

congestion
too much traffic that slows movement on the roads

regulation
official rules made by authorities to control an activity

rollout
the gradual introduction of a new product or service

consent
official permission given by an authority

framework
a system of rules and guidance for how something works

intervention
action taken to step in and control or correct something

III. READING

London's mayor, Sadiq Khan, has called for a cap on robotaxis as the government plans to allow autonomous vehicles to operate in the capital. He warned that rapid change could harm jobs, worsen congestion and affect air quality, and he questioned whether current regulation is fit for purpose.

Several companies are testing services. Uber began limited passenger rides in September using Wayve's self-driving cars, with a safety driver, under licence from Transport for London (TfL).

Freenow by Lyft has unveiled Chinese robotaxis and hopes to launch fully driverless Baidu Apollo Go cars under a national framework. Waymo, a US operator, is also focused on London. About 24 Apollo Go vehicles are being tested in Brent.

They appeared to handle streets safely, but many trips still need human intervention, especially near roadworks. Under current rules for fully autonomous vehicles, TfL can give or refuse consent for their use in London but cannot manage or license robotaxi services.

Khan said London's narrow roads and scale mean any rollout must be careful, and that TfL needs stronger powers to regulate numbers.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Sadiq Khan calls for cap on numbers of...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Sadiq Khan want a cap on robotaxis?
2. Which company began limited rides with Wayve's cars in September?
3. Where in London are about 24 Apollo Go vehicles being tested?
4. What can TfL do now regarding fully autonomous vehicles?
5. Why does Khan say the rollout in London must be careful?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should London limit robotaxi numbers at the start? Why or why not?
2. Who gains and who loses if robotaxis expand quickly?
3. What rules would make you feel safe using a robotaxi?
4. How could cities reduce congestion as new tech arrives?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Future perfect continuous

Use will have been + verb-ing for an activity continuing up to a future time point. Cues: by/when + future point; for + duration. Example form: will have been testing.

> *"By pilot launch, operators* **will have been testing** *for months."*
>
> *"When services begin, safety teams* **will have been checking** *routes for weeks."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the future perfect continuous form.

1. By the rollout, companies (operate) ___ robotaxis for months. _____
2. Next autumn, passengers (ride) ___ in robotaxis for a year. _____
3. By the launch, a driver (sit) ___ ready for hours. _____
4. By next summer, Londoners (debate) ___ the cap for months. _____
5. When trials expand, operators (adjust) ___ plans for some time. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.

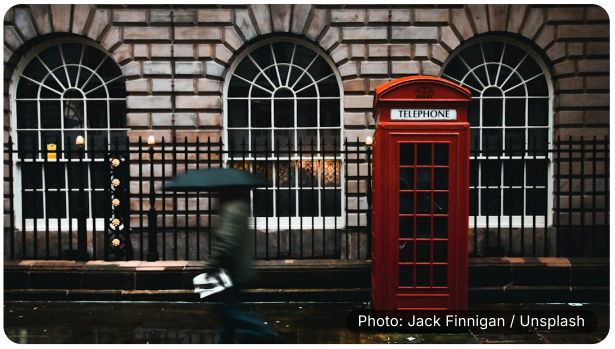


Photo: Jack Finnigan / Unsplash

I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: mayor, cap, autonomous, consent, rollout, framework, congestion. Clarify TfL as London's transport authority.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist (why a cap?) then detail (who, where, what powers). The topic touches people's jobs; start the discussion in pairs and say students may speak about the news, not their own work, if they prefer.
- Differentiation: stronger students summarise Khan's concerns in three sentences; others underline sentences showing risks, companies, and TfL powers.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick show of hands, then pair students with different views to exchange reasons.
2. Prompt ideas: passengers, tech firms, city residents, taxi drivers. Ask for one benefit and one risk.
3. Elicit concrete rules (speed limits, depot checks, emergency stops) and ask for examples.
4. Board two ideas to cut traffic, then form small groups to add one new idea each.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In two teams, write and deliver 90-second statements for or against an initial cap on robotaxis.

Writing: In pairs, draft a 70-word TfL notice explaining its current powers over autonomous vehicles.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Future perfect continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

TEACHERS ONLY

These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.

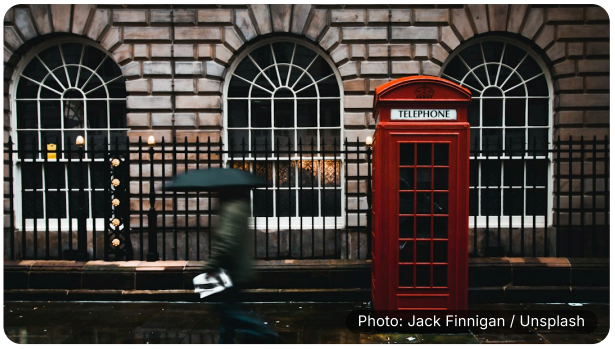


Photo: Jack Finnigan / Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Sadiq Khan want a cap on robotaxis?
   Rapid change could harm jobs, worsen congestion and affect air quality, and he doubts the rules.
2. Which company began limited rides with Wayve's cars in September?
   Uber.
3. Where in London are about 24 Apollo Go vehicles being tested?
   In Brent.
4. What can TfL do now regarding fully autonomous vehicles?
   Give or refuse consent for their use, but not manage or license services.
5. Why does Khan say the rollout in London must be careful?
   Because of London's narrow roads and its scale.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use will have been + verb-ing for an activity continuing up to a future time point. Cues: by/when + future point; for + duration. Example form: will have been testing. (Examples constructed.)

"By pilot launch, operators **will have been testing** *for months."*

"When services begin, safety teams **will have been checking** *routes for weeks."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the future perfect continuous form.

1. By the rollout, companies ___ robotaxis for months. **will have been operating**
2. Next autumn, passengers ___ in robotaxis for a year. **will have been riding**
3. By the launch, a driver ___ ready for hours. **will have been sitting**
4. By next summer, Londoners ___ the cap for months. **will have been debating**
5. When trials expand, operators ___ plans for some time. **will have been adjusting**