

Self-driving golf cart invented by University of Waterloo students

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Self-driving cars may sound like a thing of the future, but two resourceful University of Waterloo students are making it happen. Just don't expect a driverless commute quite yet.

Alex Rodrigues, 19, and Michael Skupien, 20, have rigged a golf cart with navigation technology that allows the vehicle to drive itself.

The cart – or autonomous vehicle, as its designers call it – has a max speed of 20 kilometres per hour. A series of motion detecting lasers and a rooftop GPS system help the cart steer clear of potential obstacles. The driver instantly becomes a passenger whose only job is to lean back and enjoy the ride.

PHOTOS



This golf cart can drive completely on its own thanks to crafty software designed by two savvy University of Waterloo students.

The idea isn't completely new. Google is well underway testing prototypes of a driverless car in California and Texas, and Chinese tech giant Baidu reportedly has their own version in the works.

While the young designers have their eyes set on mass production, their invention isn't meant for public streets. Instead, they hope to introduce the carts to slow-paced environments such as airports, retirement communities and theme parks.

"The objective of the shuttle is not to compete with cars. The goal is to take this technology and put it in a safer, easier to apply place and move people around in private, low-speed environments," said [Alex Rodrigues in an interview with CTV's Janet Dirks](#).

Under the name [Varden Labs](#), Rodrigues and Skupien's self-driving software won them top honours at the University of Waterloo's Velocity pitch competition last Thursday. The concept is simple: the cart simply uses its GPS to follow a predetermined map programmed into its computer.

"That's how we get all our localization," Skupien told CTV. "As the golf cart is driving it's basically following this cookie-cut trail of GPS coordinates."

It only took the pair about two months to build their creation. Now they have high aspirations -- once they finish university, of course.

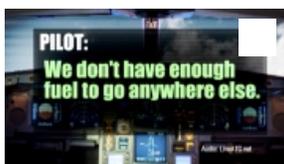
"Our goal in the next few years is that we'll be able to start deploying these around the country," Rodrigues said.

With files from CTV's Janet Dirks.

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