

Ride-hailing apps offer new way to get around town

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Fed up with traditional taxis, more city dwellers are tapping their smartphones to hitch rides across town using mobile apps that allow connect riders and drivers.

Internet-based ride-hailing apps such as Lyft, Uber and Sidecar are expanding rapidly in San Francisco, New York and other U.S. cities.

But taxi operators say these ride-summoning services are little more than illegal cabs that don't have permits, pay city fees or follow regulations.

The California Public Utilities Commission in November issued fines and cease-and-desist orders against Lyft, SideCar and Uber for operating illegally.

The commission recently began evaluating the safety of the new ride services and plans to draft rules to regulate them. Last week, the agency reached agreements that allow Lyft and Uber to operate until the rule-making process is complete.

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