

Lyft plans to test a feature allowing users to schedule rides a day in advance (Update)

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Lyft is rolling out a new feature that's common among taxi and car services yet rare among app-based ride companies.

The San Francisco firm announced Monday that it will soon roll out an advanced reservation feature that will let customers use the Lyft app to schedule a ride up to 24 hours before they need it.

The feature will be tested by Lyft employees in San Francisco before it launches in other markets.

The move signals an evolution for Lyft, according to Rebecca Lindland, a senior analyst with Kelley Blue Book, who said providing a reservation system recognizes that there's growing demand from consumers for planned rides, such as trips to the airport.

"This appeals to a broader audience," Lindland said. "There's an audience that doesn't want an impulse ride. These are people with schedules, people who are shift workers, and it speaks to the fact that Lyft and Uber are becoming more acceptable as a means for professional people to get around. It's not just a millennial kind of thing."

Lyft competitor Uber declined to comment on whether it was developing a similar feature.

Lindland said accommodating scheduled rides is smart, and that Lyft's

move probably will hurt the taxi industry because the feature is one of the remaining advantages of taxis.

Lyft and Uber do not currently let customers book rides in advance. The closest feature that Lyft offers is a carpooling option, available only in the Bay Area, which lets users plan carpools up to a day ahead.

Third-party apps such as Kommen and TimeTravel let users schedule a time for the apps to book a ride on behalf of the customer, but neither are official partners of Lyft and Uber, nor can they secure a booking ahead of time.

Taxi apps such as Curbed and Flywheel offer an advanced booking feature, as did the now-defunct ride-hailing service Sidecar.

A Lyft spokeswoman said in a prepared statement that on-demand rides remain core to Lyft.

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