

Lyft and Uber launch programs to cater to seniors

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Uber and Lyft spent the last four years cornering the millennial market. Now they're going after a new demographic: senior citizens.

Both ride-hailing companies recently announced partnerships with service providers that allow older customers to book rides through a phone operator, bypassing smartphone apps entirely.

The partnerships come as both companies continue to compete neck and neck for drivers and passengers, with both companies announcing similar features (retirement benefits, health insurance and gas discounts, and same-day pay features for drivers, as well as carpooling, fare-splitting and scheduled rides) within months, weeks or even days of each other.

Lyft announced a partnership with the San Diego firm GreatCall on Tuesday. Uber announced a similar partnership with the Los Angeles firm 24Hr HomeCare last week.

Neither service requires customers to have accounts with Uber or Lyft or to own smartphones. Lyft's operator service is only available to GreatCall members, and Uber's operator service through 24Hr Home Care, named RideWith24, is available to the public via a toll-free number.

"As we looked at the challenges older consumers have with staying in their home longer, one of the main issues is transportation," said David Inns, chief executive of GreatCall, which boasts more than 900,000

customers nationwide. "With a lot of people in the seniors age group, they're not at the stage where downloading an app and using it effectively is a great option."

With GreatCall, customers press zero on their GreatCall Jitterbug phones and speak with an operator, who books the ride on their behalf. The operator has access to Lyft's Concierge platform, which lets them contact the assigned driver to let them know they are picking up an elderly passenger who may require assistance. Billing for the ride then appears on their GreatCall statement.

To book a ride with Uber, customers call RideWith24 to speak with an operator, who takes the customer's [credit card details](#) on file and books a ride for them.

Both services are currently available in California, Florida, Arizona and Dallas.

The partnerships are similar to a service offered by GogoGrandparent, a startup founded by San Diego native Justin Boogaard, which lets seniors call an operator to book rides with Uber, and use other on-demand services such as Instacart (grocery delivery), Munchery (dinner delivery) and Postmates (shopping).

Boogaard's [service](#) is still in beta, but is available nationwide. The startup was accepted by tech incubator Y Combinator in July.

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