

Uber, Lyft push back against proposed NYC regulations

May 28 2015, by Karen Matthews



Uber drivers and their supporters protest in front of the offices of the Taxi and Limousine Commission in New York, Thursday, May 28, 2015. Uber and Lyft are pushing back against a New York City effort to regulate app-based car services. The proposal before the Taxi and Limousine Commission would require car services that riders can summon with their phones to comply with many of the rules that govern the yellow cabs they compete with. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

Representatives of Uber and Lyft warned Thursday that a New York City effort to regulate app-based ride-hailing services will stall innovation and threaten competition.

The regulations "will be crushing to our thousands of drivers," Michael Allegretti, New York head of public policy for San Francisco-based Uber, said at a public hearing of New York's Taxi and Limousine Commission.

But commission Chairwoman Meera Joshi said the proposed rules changes are minor adjustments to existing regulations that have been mischaracterized by opponents.

She said a requirement that car-service companies inform the commission of updates to their apps would not mean, as critics have charged, that Uber and the other app-based companies would have to divulge technical information.

"It's not software, it's not source code or any advanced programming," Joshi said.

She said requiring the companies to submit trip data to the commission would not invade passengers' privacy.

"We're not requiring the submission of any passenger information or any information about lifestyle and habits at all," Joshi said. "Simply date, time and location of pickup."

Representatives of the app-based car industry and its backers argue that the rules would be burdensome to the industry.

"Will you, the TLC, set the global standard for embracing the future or undermine that progress by unfairly targeting transportation innovation?"

Allegretti asked.



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Diana Dellamere, a public policy manager for Lyft, criticized a proposal limiting the number of electronic devices that a driver can use to two. Some drivers work for multiple companies and have a phone for each company.

"Drivers who might want to experiment with different companies ... will

be forced to choose, and of course they will choose the biggest company," she said.

The regulations address issues including fares, airport pickups and the availability of wheelchair-accessible cars.

Ryan Wanttaja, assistant general counsel for the taxi commission, said passengers would have to agree in advance to so-called "surge pricing," which forces riders to pay a premium during high-demand times. He said apps would have to include a way to request a wheelchair-accessible vehicle.



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Photo/Seth Wenig)

TLC officials said they are working with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which runs the region's airports, to move car service vehicles to designated lots at LaGuardia and Kennedy airports so that they don't clog traffic.

A few dozen Uber drivers rallied outside the commission's Manhattan headquarters before the hearing, chanting "We love Uber!"



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Drivers for Uber, yellow taxis and traditional, non-Internet-based car services packed the hearing room and applauded or booed the speakers.

The commission may vote on the regulations at its June 18 meeting.

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