

## Uber Will Return to Eugene, Ore.

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(TNS) — Uber said that it plans to resume service in the local area after Eugene city officials updated rules aimed at clearing the way for the return of ride-hailing companies after a three-year absence.

Company spokesman Nathan Hambley said Uber hopes to announce a launch date "soon" but doesn't have a firm date yet. Eugene is the largest Oregon city without ride-hailing service.

"We appreciate that Eugene has taken the steps necessary to update the city's regulations to accommodate new transportation options," Hambley said.

However, Lyft won't be competing in the market — at least at this time. The company said it still has concerns about the city's certification process for candidate drivers and its overly broad definition of what constitutes an employee. Ride-hailing companies and regulators have battled for years over whether drivers are employees or independent contractors.

"Unfortunately, the ride-sharing rules approved by the city contain unnecessary provisions that prevent us from entering Eugene at this time. We will continue to work

with city leaders to try to reach a mutually agreeable solution," Lyft spokesman Adrian Durbin said.

The announcements came hours after the city announced in a press release the adoption of the updated rules and said that ride-hailing firms — which it calls transportation network companies — [now can apply for a license to operate in the area](#).

City officials are prepping for ride-hailing services to resume. They announced the times that city employees will be available to process applications for driver certifications once a ride-hailing company secures an operating license. A city spokeswoman said it should take only a couple of days to license a company once the city receives an application.

"The community was clear that they value these transportation services and that safety is a top priority," Denny Braud, the city's planning and development director, [said of the updated rules](#). "We look forward to working with Uber and Lyft and to the additional transportation options they can bring to Eugene."

The revised rules, which took effect July 19, remove a major hurdle that the ride-hailing companies earlier had identified as preventing a return to the Eugene-Springfield area.

Under the proposed rules put out for public comment, the city required a candidate driver to possess a valid Oregon driver's license. [Both companies objected, noting that many University of Oregon students](#) who may want to work as ride-hailing drivers because of the flexible hours are from out-of-state.

[The adopted rules](#) require a candidate driver to have a valid driver's license from any state.

The city had said the in-state license requirement ensured that the state Driver & Motor Vehicle Services would notify the city when a ride-hailing driver is cited or arrested for an offense such as drunken driving. A city spokeswoman had said the city would not receive similar notifications for drivers with out-of-state driver's licenses.

The adopted rules note that the city doesn't expect a lot of out-of-state ride-hailing drivers because they must be at least 21 years old. And it noted that other states, including California, provide notifications that the city receives from Oregon's DMV. For drivers in states that don't provide those notifications, the city said it would periodically check their driver's record.

There are other changes made in response to comments received during the public-comment period, including from the city of Springfield and the county's visitor's bureau, that the proposed rules needed to be more in line with those adopted in other Oregon cities where ride-hailing now operates, including Bend, Corvallis and Salem.

### **They include:**

- Vehicles equipped with fire extinguishers are recommended rather than required; first-aid kits are required.
- Ride-hailing drivers are barred from discriminating against protected classes rather than being required to respond to any request for service.
- Vehicles must be no more than 15 years old rather than no more than a decade old.

- Drivers must take a six-hour break after driving for 12 hours rather than being barred from working more than 12 hours in each 24-hour period.

Eugene manages the licensing of companies and drivers for for-hire transportation services that operate in Springfield.

Uber operated in the Eugene-Springfield area for less than a year before suspending operations in April 2015. At the time, [a city hearings official ruled](#) that the company must secure a vehicle-for-hire license to continue operating in Eugene. [To settle a lawsuit filed by the city](#), Uber then agreed not to resume service in Eugene without securing that license.

Lyft has never operated in the Eugene-Springfield area.

The companies never sought a license under the city's former ordinance and rules because they disagreed with the city's requirements for insurance, vehicle inspections and driver background checks.

In April, Eugene city councilors eased the ordinance's requirements to help lure back the ride-hailing companies while seeking to protect public safety and maintain the same rules that apply to taxi companies. The Eugene Police Department would run criminal background checks on ride-hailing drivers.

Representatives of three local taxi companies didn't return phone messages seeking comment Wednesday.

The changes came after intense lobbying by Eugene's tech and business sectors whose representatives said the ride-hailing companies provide an important transportation alternative for visitors.

"The new rules open the door to exciting new transportation choices in the community," said Matt Sayre, vice president of the Technology Association of Oregon. "We are immensely thankful to city of Eugene staff and are thrilled to have reached this significant milestone."

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