



ROGUE UBER CAB STEAMROLLS INTO PORTLAND

... After law-abiding Union Cab waited 22 months for permits

By **DON McINTOSH**
Associate Editor

Those pro-union cabbies were so polite and law-abiding. They asked the City of Portland for permission to form a new driver-owned co-op, Union Cab, and then waited 22 months for the City to say yes.

Uber, by contrast, didn't bother applying for permits. The app-based ride company launched operations in Portland on Dec. 5 in flagrant violation of City code. Thirteen days later, Mayor Charlie Hales announced that the City will develop a completely new regulatory framework by April 9, 2015, to allow companies like Uber to operate legally. Uber — facing a City lawsuit and \$67,750 in fines — graciously suspended its illegal operation while the City works to make it legal.

To develop the new rules, the City snubbed its existing advisory board — the Private for-Hire Transportation Board of Review — and instead appointed a task force chaired by Mike Greenfield, former director of the State of Oregon Department of Administrative Services. The City needed a “fresh look,” explained Brian Hockaday, aide to Commissioner Steve Novick, at the Private for-Hire Board's Jan. 7 meeting.

Taxi drivers and company representatives grilled Hockaday at the two-hour meeting, but got few answers as to how the rules will be changed.

“I'm really not trying to be evasive,” Hockaday said. “I have no idea what it's going to look like.”

Broadway Cab general manager Raye Miles voiced frustration that the City had a backlog of over 100 new permit requests, and yet promised an illegal operator to change the rules in 90 days.

“Would that have worked for Broadway?” Miles asked Hockaday. “If we just started operating more vehicles, would we be getting the attention?”

“I want to make it really clear,” Hockaday replied. “We have not made any sort of commitment with Uber or any other company on any specific obligations.”

The new task force held its first

meeting Jan. 14 (after this issue went to press). But every feature of existing regulations will be up for reconsideration: whether the City should regulate fares or limit the number of taxi permits, whether it should require insurance, inspections and background checks, whether it should require companies to be accessible to the handicapped.

“I don't know what the City's going to do,” said Union Cab president Kedir Wako, a member of Communications Workers of America Local 7901. “We're watching it closely. It's going to be a big issue in our life.”

Mass rally Jan. 24: Oregon Needs a Raise

The union-endorsed group 15 Now will hold a rally Saturday, Jan. 24, on the steps of the Oregon Capitol in Salem to call for an increase in the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The noon rally will be followed by a statewide gathering at the IKE Box meeting space, 299 Cottage Street Northeast at 1 p.m.

Free bus transportation is being provided from locations all over the state, but riders are asked to sign up at <http://bit.ly/1w4naC3>. From Portland, buses will leave at 10:30 a.m. from the parking lot of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 49, 3536 SE 26th Ave., departing from

Salem at 3 p.m.

Rally cosponsors include Oregon AFL-CIO, Jobs with Justice, Oregon School Employees Association, American Federation of Teachers-Oregon, SEIU Locals 49 and 503, AFSCME Locals 328 and 88, Laborers Local 483, Oregon Education Association, Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Portland Association of Teachers, Oregon State Association of Letter Carriers, Communications Workers of America Local 7901, and Musicians Local 99.

Rally for universal health care

Health Care for All Oregon is organizing a rally on the Capitol steps in Salem Wednesday, Feb. 11, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., to call on state legislators to create a universal health care system for Oregon.

State Sen. Michael Dembrow was able to pass legislation in 2013 authorizing a privately-funded study of how to best fund a universal health care system in Oregon, but it would take \$200,000 to fund the study, and the group has raised just \$50,000 so far. Another bill will be submitted in 2015 to fund the remainder.

Dembrow — the Legislature's lead-

ing supporter of universal health care — will headline the Feb. 11 rally, which will also feature jazz musician Norm Sylvester, the Raging Grannies, and “Mad As Hell Minutes,” an opportunity for participants to share their own health care stories.

Health Care for All-Oregon is a grassroots coalition of over 100 organizations, including unions, businesses, non-profits and church groups. The group is organizing bus transportation and car pools from Portland, Corvallis, Eugene, Ashland, LaGrande and the Oregon Coast. Visit hcao.org to register.



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