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AFL-CIO calls on Portland to give Uber drivers a voice

By Don McIntosh

At an April 30 rally outside City Hall, Portland City Commissioner Nick Fish announced plans for a city ordinance to give Uber and Lyft drivers more say over wages and working conditions. A public hearing on the concept is tentatively set for May 24. The action is in response to calls from the Oregon AFL-CIO.

Oregon AFL-CIO organizer Alma Raya has spent almost two years talking with Uber and Lyft drivers about pay and working conditions, even while the state labor federation helped defeat proposed legislation backed by so-called transportation network companies (TNCs) that would have declared their drivers to be independent contractors. Existing state law classifies taxi drivers as independent contractors, but in 2015, the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries issued a nonbinding advisory opinion that Uber drivers are in fact employees.

Consider Lyft driver Enrique Kindermann, who took part in the rally outside City Hall. Kindermann pays \$200 a week to rent the 2015 Hyundai he drives for Lyft — through a Lyft partnership with Hertz. Under the



Oregon AFL-CIO organizer Alma Raya, left, has been talking with Uber and Lyft drivers like the ones above outside City Hall. The union federation sees its mandate as fighting for all working people, including “gig economy” workers.

terms of that deal, he’s not allowed to drive for Uber. Kindermann decides what hours he drives, but little else: How much of the fare he keeps, the rules under which he’s rated and can be deactivated, the terms under which he rents his vehicle — all those things are decided by the company and are non-nego-

table. “[Uber and Lyft] have it set up where they’re the only winners,” said Tina Anatra, who has been driving for Uber in the Portland area for eight months.

The proposed ordinance is still being developed, Fish said, but basically it would create a public body in which city staff would

help drivers resolve complaints against TNCs about wages, deactivation or any other issue.

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Learn more about the AFL-CIO’s Transportation Fairness campaign — and sign up for email updates — at transportationfairnesspdx.com

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