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QuickPoint! – Why Do City Leaders Keep Portland in the “Transportation Dark Ages?”

By Steve Buckstein

In November, [Beaverton, Gresham, Hillsboro, and Tigard](#) joined Vancouver, Washington in welcoming ridesharing juggernaut [Uber](#) to operate legally in their cities. Last weekend, [Uber began operating in Portland without permission](#), in effect daring the authorities to stop it. While the City has issued a cease-and-desist order against Uber, more than 10,000 people have signed an [online petition](#) asking Mayor Hales to let the company operate in Portland.

Until now, most major cities have granted virtual monopolies to a few taxicab companies on the assumption that government must protect both the livelihoods of drivers and the safety and convenience of passengers within their jurisdictions. But in a truly free economy, we should celebrate the technological innovation that allows people with cars to make money by giving rides to people who want them.

The “sharing economy” stems from the realization that all of us own assets that we may not use all the time, whether it’s a spare bedroom in your home (think [Airbnb](#)), or an automobile that sits in your driveway for hours a day. It’s time for Portland to live up to its hype and let young (and not so young) creatives do what they do best—create services that the rest of us want and need. It’s time to legalize transit freedom and bring Portland out of the Transportation Dark Ages.

Steve Buckstein is founder and Senior Policy Analyst at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon’s free market public policy research organization.

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