



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 4

COUNCILMEMBER ALEX PEDERSEN

January 27, 2020

Uber Corporation
Nathan Hambley
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Caleb Weaver
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Lyft Corporation
Government Relations
185 Berry Street, Suite 5000
San Francisco, CA 94107

Re: Questions Regarding Surge Pricing Policies in Emergency Situations

Dear Transportation Network Companies:

As you know, last Wednesday, January 23, 2020 there was a serious shooting incident in downtown Seattle during the afternoon rush hour. In addition to causing one person's death and half a dozen more to suffer serious injuries, the public safety incident caused substantial disruption to the tens of thousands of people who rely upon our region's robust transit system. I appreciate the statements by both of your organizations, as [reported in the Seattle Times on January 24](#), that you had suspended "high demand" or "surge" pricing during this crisis period.

The Seattle Times article also reports, however, that some customers believe they paid relatively higher rates during the crisis as they attempted to flee downtown while suspects were still at large. If true, this business practice by either company would be deeply disturbing in a city that permits you to use our public streets. Access to mobility during emergencies should not be determined by ability to pay. I appreciate that Lyft at least stated to the Seattle Times that you will refund charges to those who may have paid the higher rate during the crisis period.

In light of the above information, I would appreciate hearing from you concerning these issues:

1. Please confirm whether you had surge pricing in effect at any time during the afternoon of Wednesday, January 23, 2020.
2. Have you been able to track and refund charges to anyone charged more than "1x" during the crisis period in downtown Seattle on January 23, 2020?

3. Do you have a formal policy for responding to such emergency / life safety incidents, including pricing? If so, please share it with my office and the City of Seattle's [Office of Emergency Management](#).
4. It has been very difficult for my staff to locate your contact information (email or phone). The lack of readily available contacts complicates the City's ability to deal with emergencies as they occur. Will you provide contact information to the City of Seattle in the near future?

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you wish to discuss, please feel free to call me or my transportation staff lead, Toby Thaler (206 256-6267).

Regards,



Councilmember Alex Pedersen
Chair, Transportation Committee, Seattle City Council

cc:

Deputy Mayor Shafali Ranganathan,
Director of Emergency Management Barb Graff,
Director of Seattle's Department of Transportation (SDOT) Sam Zimbabwe,
City Council Liaison for SDOT Shauna Larsen.