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'Uber commute' is next frontier for CEO Travis Kalanick

May 24, 2016 Marie Mawad



"We can turn every car into a shared car - the next frontier is the Uber commute," CEO Travis Kalanick says.

Amid resistance from European lawmakers, Uber Technologies founder Travis Kalanick called on local regulators to promote the financial incentives car owners could benefit from if they were to pick up a neighbour and share their ride to work.

"We can turn every car into a shared car - the next frontier is the Uber commute," CEO Mr Kalanick said on Monday at a conference in Brussels. "Is there a way that someone could pick up a neighbour on the way to work? We have the technology for it, but there are also regulatory frameworks we have to work with. Why can't these folks get a little more incentive?"

Mr Kalanick said he met with regulators at the European Commission earlier in the day to talk about how cities can solve

problems like traffic, parking, and having too many cars on the roads.

"We're making our case but also learning what it's going to take to bring our kind of innovation to many cities here in Europe," Mr Kalanick said at the conference, organised by think tank Lisbon Council. "I got my first course in speaking European this morning at the European Commission."

Thousands of people were car-pooling with UberPool in San Francisco and 19 cities in China, Mr Kalanick said.

"Imagine if the 300,000 Brussels citizens driving into work this morning could pick somebody up and make a small profit from doing it," Mr Kalanick said. "More people would car pool, we'd have less congestion, the air would be less polluted, we'd all live in a better place. The city doesn't even have to use taxes to make it happen."

China drive

In China, Uber is seeking to catch up to local rival Didi Chuxing, which has launched in hundreds of cities and this month got \$US1 billion in backing from Apple.

"China's an expensive place and it takes a lot of funds," Mr Kalanick told reporters after the conference about Apple's investment. At the same time, "there's a lot of funding in this environment because there's so much progress on the other side".

Uber's profits can help fund its expansion into new markets and products, Mr Kalanick said. When asked whether the company needs to go back to investors to raise more money, Mr Kalanick said "We'll keep you posted on that."

China's Didi, already backed by Alibaba Group Holding and

Tencent Holdings, is valued at about \$US26 billion after the latest round of \$US3 billion, including Apple's contribution, people familiar have said. Uber has been valued at \$US62.5 billion and is the biggest ride-sharing app globally.

European stalls

Uber's initiatives to expand into new services outside its traditional chauffeured-car business have faced steep regulatory hurdles in Europe. Its UberPop business, which lets unlicensed drivers use their own car to pick up riders for a cheaper fee, was banned this month in Sweden after facing a similar fate in France and the Netherlands earlier.

Meanwhile local rivals including Spain's Cabify, backed by Rakuten, and France's Chauffeur-Prive, backed by La Banque Postale's XAnge, are adding to existing pressure by taxis and other local players. They're catering to bankers, lawyers and corporate customers to stand out from Uber.