

Hi, my name is David Rossing. I have worked full-time at Union Cab for over 8 years, ^{to} ~~which helps~~ support our family living in this great city. I am – along with many of my coworkers – a highly skilled driver, committed to providing excellent service to each and every member of our community. I am proud to be an owner-operator at Union Cab because of our collective efforts to truly contribute to Madison-area economic, social and environmental ~~health~~ *well-being*.

It should not be a secret that Union Cab has been struggling to survive in an economy that has seen shrinking resources, benefits and wages for the middle class – especially for those in the public sphere. The investor-class quest for larger profits has taken hold of our healthcare, education, homes, communication, and even our government. The operating logic of this investor-class deems public values as irrelevant, as they drain government control and mine our cultural and environmental resources.

I want to argue that we – as a wisely regulated transit utility – are another threatened, brick & mortar sector of that public sphere, from which venture capitalists seek to extract the low-hanging fruits. I will mention three of the telltale signs that identify this business paradigm:

First, they wish to manipulate markets with practically zero governmental regulation or oversight. This is obvious in light of the fact that Lyft and Uber both launched operations here before any public debate or regulatory approval. They are today literally breaking many of our laws.

Second, they seek to make profits by deferring the actual costs of capital – its purchase, ~~its~~ maintenance and ~~its~~ primary insurance – onto others, and ultimately onto the public at large. They call it “ride sharing,” but money is exchanged. What is really meant by “sharing” is the ability to profit from someone else’s capital investment – a “sharing” that makes ^{far-away} parasitic elites wealthier. And from what we know, do they care at all about the *human* capital they tap into? Do they really care if their drivers are unskilled, ~~and~~ unsupported and untrained in one of today’s most dangerous occupations?

Finally, one of the most notable features of this highly-financed business paradigm is its media-savvy celebration of unproven technological innovations that free us from stable institutions, rules and regulations. How dare we resist the imperative to speed ahead into uncharted territory?

What I believe we need to do is slow down. We don’t need to be the testing grounds for this scheme and meantime quite possibly dismantle companies that have helped build Madison’s great reputation. We taxi drivers are ambassadors of this city. We have a public good here that must be raised above sloppiness, high risk, and greed. They say we have entrenched interests. I say that entrenched interests signal maturity and a public good. They say we can we have a society that is organized and administered by market forces. I say we cannot let go of our commons, of our larger sense of community, which provides security and safeguards for everyone?