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Oregon lawmakers will try again to repeal the state's gigabit tax break, a four-year-old incentive now widely considered a mistake by members of both parties. Legislators **unanimously created the tax break in 2015** in hopes of luring Google Fiber to bring its super-fast internet service to Portland. When **Google jilted Portland** a year later, Comcast and Frontier Communications moved to capitalize and **claim the tax savings for themselves**.

Efforts to repeal the tax break **stalled at the finish line** during the short legislative session last winter, but lawmakers think they have a better shot this time out. "I feel like our chances of passing this are a lot, lot better," said Rob Nosse, D-Portland, who has filed one of two bills for the 2019 session to repeal the tax break. "I feel like my peers understand and know it's not necessary."

The tax break exempts internet providers from an unusual Oregon tax methodology, which includes some nontangible assets – like a company's brand – in calculating their property tax valuations. The exemption was potentially worth $15 million a year to Comcast, and another $2.5 million to Frontier. When lawmakers drew up the tax break almost four years ago, they restricted it to internet providers offering speeds of at least 1 gigabit per second, 1,000 megabits per second. At the time, Google Fiber was among just a few internet providers promising those speeds to residential customers.

Technology advanced, though, and now gigabit speeds are available to the vast majority of homes in the Portland area and in many other parts of Oregon. That made tax break widely available, too. Oregon cities and counties feared it would cost them significant revenue, and lawmakers came to agree. An Oregon House committee unanimously approved a repeal during last year's short session. The bill overwhelmingly passed the House.

Amid furious lobbying from Comcast, though, **the repeal stalled in the Senate**. That gave Comcast leverage in negotiations over an unrelated tax dispute with the state. In June, **Comcast agreed** never to claim the gigabit tax break and, in exchange, Oregon agreed to accept just $155 million from the company in the separate tax dispute. That's $45 million less than the state had claimed Comcast owed.

The gigabit tax break is still on the books, though, so other internet providers could conceivably capitalize. With Comcast sidelined by its tax deal, though, Nosse doesn't expect anyone will put up a fright. "Given that I don't think Comcast is going to be pushing it," he said. "I think it is going to be easier." – ***Portland Oregonian***

Eight months after pulling its self-driving cars off the road following a fatal accident, Uber Technologies Inc. is putting the vehicles back into service. Uber had previously been pushing to get a fully autonomous vehicle on the roads by year-end, part of its mad dash to keep abreast of rival Alphabet Inc. But those plans were derailed when an Uber car struck and killed a pedestrian in Tempe, Ariz., in a March incident that some safety experts have said was avoidable.

Uber on Thursday will send out just a handful of the self-driving vehicles on a fixed one-mile route between two of its offices in Pittsburgh. It is home to the company's largest testing and development center and one of the three cities where it had been experimenting with the cars. The runs are limited to the daytime during weekdays and speeds no more than 25 miles an hour. Uber will also ensure there are two employees in every car, a safety measure after investigators looking into the Tempe crash found that the lone driver was streaming video to her phone rather than watching the road. The vehicles won't initially pick up passengers, Uber said.

The company is playing catch-up to Alphabet's Waymo, which is considered to be the leader in developing the robot cars. Earlier this month, Waymo launched an autonomous car service in the Phoenix metropolitan area for a small group of customers willing to test it out. Uber stopped testing the cars on public roads immediately following the fatal collision, pulling them out of service in Pittsburgh, Tempe and Toronto. Companies have been pouring billions into the development of self-driving vehicles, which technologists believe can one day operate more safely, reliably and inexpensively than human-driven cars. Uber last year spent about three-quarters of a billion dollars on the project before paring back staff in Arizona following the accident.

Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi has indicated he fully backs developing self-driving vehicles, despite the expense, though there has been persistent investor pressure to either spin off the unit or seek outside investment for a joint venture.

In November, **Uber detailed a new set of safety measures** for its robot cars. In addition to having two test drivers in every vehicle, Uber said it would no longer disable braking systems in the Volvo SUVs it uses and will improve its software and training for its drivers. Uber said it is also putting the vehicles out on the road for testing in San Francisco and Toronto, though they will be driven entirely by humans. The company let its permit to operate self-driving cars in California lapse earlier this year rather than discuss with regulators the Tempe accident.

Uber's test in Pittsburgh comes two years after it started testing self-driving cars **in San Francisco**, without a state permit, **raising the ire of regulators**. California ultimately revoked the registrations of the cars, forcing Uber to pull up stakes and leave for Arizona. It has since closed its office there and laid off hundreds of test drivers.

Uber applied for and was granted permission by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to reinitiate testing of the cars on public roads and won at least one other important endorser of its plan for Pittsburgh: Mayor William Peduto. He had been publicly critical of Uber's civic engagement and skeptical of its safety record. But in a statement, a spokesman said "the city is satisfied that self-driving testing operations by Uber won't introduce an increased safety risk in Pittsburgh." – ***Wall Street Journal***

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