At Hartsfield–Jackson International Airport there were signs the strike was having little impact as passengers hailed rides.

Passenger Lori Rosano waited at the airport’s Uber and Lyft pickup area for her driver Wednesday afternoon. Like many other passengers, she said she hadn’t heard about the strike but still would have requested the ride. “We still have places to get to, and it’s still preferred over taxis,” Rosano said. “And I have to get to this meeting on time.”

Hartsfield–Jackson typically gets as many as 23,000 Uber and Lyft pickups and drop-offs a day, and airport officials developed contingency plans with the taxi industry to handle passengers who need rides. “We are hopeful that there will be many drivers still working today,” Hartsfield–Jackson general manager John Selden said. “If there’s some customer demand, we will be calling the surrounding communities and working with our taxi dispatch system.”

The 12-hour strike is part of a nationwide labor walkout against Uber and Lyft. Drivers are seeking higher pay and improved working conditions.

At Wednesday's rally, Uber driver Keith Wolfson of Stone Mountain said he earned just $11.68 on a recent fare of $29.23 — about 40%. He said the rest went to Uber. “I'm not saying everything about Uber is horrible,” Wolfson said. “But the compensation system needs to be fair.”

Josh Harris of Atlanta has driven for Lyft for about eight months. He said he used to earn about $900 a week. After recent pay adjustments, Harris said he now earns $600 to $700 a week and had to take a security job to make ends meet.

Uber and Lyft did not comment on how much the strike disrupted their services. They issued statements saying they're working to address drivers’ concerns.

Uber cited a series of steps it’s taken to improve the lot of drivers. “Whether it’s more consistent earnings, stronger insurance protections or fully funded four-year degrees for drivers or their families, we’ll continue working to improve the experience for and with drivers,” the company said.

Lyft said drivers’ hourly earnings have increased over the past two years, and its drivers earn more than $20 an hour on average. “We know that access to flexible, extra income makes a big difference for millions of people, and we're constantly working to improve how we can best serve our driver community,” the company said.

The strike comes as Uber is preparing for an initial public stock offering this week. Lyft also recently became a publicly traded company.

The two firms are battling to dominate the market for ride-hailing services. As they court shareholders, they have little incentive to pay drivers more, said Joyce Beebe, a Rice University economist who has studied the companies.
Beebe does not believe the strike will result in significant concessions from the companies.
“I believe, essentially, they are asking a for-profit company to give up some part of their profits to make the
driver happier,” she said. “If Uber gives in, they will probably provide a one-time bonus, if anything.”
Some passengers found themselves caught in the middle.
Airport traveler Jared Kenney of Phoenix said he didn’t know about the strike, but it wouldn’t have affected his
plans to take Lyft from the airport Wednesday afternoon.
“We’re from out of town,” Kenney said. “We need something to get around.”
He said a strike could make sense for drivers.
“That’s what brings about change,” Kenney said. Still, he said he understood why some drivers didn’t partici-
pate in the strike.
“Some of the drivers need the money, too,” Kenney said. “They’ve got bills to pay just like everyone else.”