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Senate of Pennsylvania

April 15, 2014

Via First Class U.S. Mail

Chairman Robert Powelson
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

A-2014-2415047
A-2014-2415045
A-2014-2416127

RECEIVED
14 APR 17 PM 2:42
CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE

Dear Chairman Powelson,

I am writing to you regarding the attached newspaper article about Lyft's expanded coverage area.

As you may know, my legislative district encompasses many of these communities and the Pittsburgh International Airport. I welcome new businesses that choose to operate in my district, and I am intrigued by this service. However, I want to ensure the safety of those who choose to utilize one of these new ridesharing services.

To ensure the safety of my constituents, I must insist that the PUC require all ride sharing vehicles in Allegheny County to follow safe vehicle maintenance practices, require driver background checks and carry the same or similar insurance that the PUC requires of vehicles that currently provide taxi service. A passenger in a Lyft or Uber-X vehicle should be afforded the same protections as a passenger in a taxi cab or other similarly situated service provider.

I would greatly appreciate your prompt review of this situation so we can create an environment that welcomes new competitive services, but is also responsible and respectful of the laws designed to protect all of our citizens.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to let me know of any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

MATT SMITH
State Senator
37th Senate District
www.SenatorMattSmith.com

RECEIVED
2014 APR 21 PM 11:50
PA P.U.C.
SECRETARY'S BUREAU

cc: PUC Commissioners

Encl.

Lyft expands coverage to airport, Pittsburgh western suburbs

April 2, 2014 11:23 PM

By Kim Lyons / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Ride-share car service Lyft announced Wednesday it will expand its local coverage area into several of Pittsburgh's western suburbs, stretching as far as Pittsburgh International Airport.

The new coverage area will include McKees Rocks and Robinson, the airport and "everything in between," the company said in a statement.

A map from the company website shows Lyft's coverage area now extends as far north as Avalon, into the South Hills, west to the airport and east to the Edgewood-Swissvale area. It shows concentrated "hot spots" in the city and its immediate eastern and southern suburbs.

"When we launch in new markets, we always start with a limited coverage area as we get up and running," said spokeswoman Paige Thelen. "We've seen a very positive response from the Pittsburgh community and noticed that folks were interested in using Lyft to and from the airport and everywhere in between, which is what prompted the expansion."

Lyft is one of a new generation of ride-sharing companies that operate with drivers who use their own vehicles. It originated in San Francisco, as did its closest competitors, Uber and SideCar.

To use Lyft, a would-be passenger downloads its smartphone app, connects via Facebook and provides credit card information for payment purposes. Passengers and drivers connect via the app. After a ride, both rate each other with the passenger choosing how much, if anything, to pay on a donation-based payment structure.

Lyft cars have furry pink mustaches on their front grills, and try to promote a social atmosphere, with passengers invited to sit in the front seat and drivers encouraged to greet passengers with a fist bump.

Uber, which had its Pittsburgh launch last month, doesn't require Facebook registration, but the UberX service it operates in Pittsburgh also handles rides and transactions via a smartphone app.

When Lyft launched in Pittsburgh on Feb. 7, local taxi companies protested that its status as an unlicensed car service was akin to a jitney service, and that it was skirting state licensing and insurance rules.

But Mayor Bill Peduto has called on the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, which oversees taxi companies, to change its rules to allow ride-share companies to operate legally in Pittsburgh.

Lyft also announced Wednesday it had raised \$250 million in a funding round, which would allow it to further expand.

A spokesman for Yellow Cab, the largest taxi company in the Pittsburgh area, did not respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

Jamie Campolongo, president and CEO of Pittsburgh Transportation Group, which operates Yellow Cab, said in February that Lyft and companies like it are breaking the law and present safety issues, both for drivers and passengers. He equated using unregulated ride share services to "electronic hitchhiking."

Read more: <http://www.post-gazette.com/news/transportation/2014/04/02/Lyft-expands-coverage-to-airport-Pittsburgh-western-suburbs/stories/201404020157#ixzz2yQKFQkaC>