

Testimony of Representative Erin C. Molchany  
Concerning the Need for Revision of Transportation Regulations  
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission  
En Banc Transportation Hearing  
28 August 2014

1 Good morning, Chairman Powelson, Honorable Commissioners, and guests. My name is Erin C.  
2 Molchany, and I currently represent the 22<sup>nd</sup> Legislative District in the Pennsylvania General  
3 Assembly.

4  
5 I want to first take the opportunity to thank everyone involved in today's hearing. I am here  
6 today to testify as to the need in the Pittsburgh region for affordable and viable transportation  
7 alternatives—a need that is not a recent development, but an issue that has been problematic  
8 for some time. Speaking from personal experience, I came to Pittsburgh to attend college in  
9 1995, and as a student without a vehicle, navigating around Pittsburgh was not always easy.  
10 From my time as a student, to nearly every professional role I have held since, the need for  
11 increased access to transportation alternatives has been a concern of mine given that I worked  
12 and lived in the City of Pittsburgh. I gladly welcome the conversation that has been spurred by  
13 the growth of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) in Pennsylvania and the fair  
14 consideration given to new innovations by the Public Utility Commission (PUC).

15  
16 I can honestly say that since moving to Pittsburgh almost 20 years ago, the City has changed  
17 dramatically. Pittsburgh's downtown corridor has become an attractive business and cultural  
18 center, and a safe and vibrant cosmopolitan neighborhood with residential properties in high  
19 demand. Pittsburgh has seen itself repeatedly ranked atop lists of "most livable cities"<sup>i</sup> most  
20 recently by The Economist, and best trips in the world<sup>ii</sup>, by National Geographic. We are on the  
21 map in a big way, and now more than ever, we must raise the bar and at least keep up if not  
22 become the leader when it comes to our transportation options.

23  
24 Given that the topic of today's hearing is to examine transportation needs, I do not intend to  
25 offer specific regulatory recommendations, but rather to provide anecdotal support for Senator  
26 Wayne Fontana's legislation regulating transportation network companies, SB1457. I intend to  
27 highlight more than a decade of initiatives by local organization that I have been involved with

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1 designed to improve and address Pittsburgh's transportation shortcomings. I also hope to  
2 encourage the PUC to develop regulations that more readily address market needs by  
3 welcoming consideration for innovations outside the scope of the current structure of the  
4 transportation industry.

5

6 I first advocated for better transportation options in 2002 when I became involved with an  
7 organization called PUMP, the Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project. PUMP was the largest and  
8 most active young professionals' organization in the region charged with attracting and  
9 retaining elusive twenty and thirty-somethings through civic engagement, professional  
10 development and social networking. Recognizing that young professionals want to live and  
11 work in communities that have transportation options and vibrant nighttime economies,  
12 PUMP's transportation committee focused on advocacy related to creating a vibrant and  
13 connected city by improving its transportation options.

14

15 One of the first attempts at addressing need and better connecting young people to the city  
16 was a project called the Ultraviolet Loop. The UV loop as it was referred to, was collaboration  
17 between the Port Authority of Allegheny County, the Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project and  
18 Ground Zero Action Network. Ultraviolet Loop buses were multi-purpose. They provided for  
19 night-owl workers and students without cars; offered convenient transportation to popular  
20 destinations; created an alternative to driving and paying for often hard-to-find parking;  
21 stimulated businesses around the city; and were meant to cut down on people driving under  
22 the influence. The project was funded by several local foundations and Mayor Bill Peduto who  
23 at that time was a member of Pittsburgh City Council. The UV Loop was a dedicated bus route  
24 that encircled the City "stopping in many of Pittsburgh's great neighborhoods and  
25 entertainment highlights including theatres, restaurants, and other performance and cultural  
26 destinations." The UV loop addressed a need and supported the young professional  
27 populations that Pittsburgh sought to retain, evidenced by a ridership survey that showed more

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1 than 60% of passengers were under 30 years old. Unfortunately, the route was discontinued in  
2 2004 when outside funding stopped and service cuts were made at the Port Authority. The UV  
3 Loops was just the first attempt at addressing the city's unmet transportation needs.

4  
5 The second major attempt to address the need for improved transportation service came in  
6 2004 when the Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project identified the lack of available cabs as an issue  
7 of concern to its young professional members. That year, PUMP hosted a dialogue between  
8 Pittsburgh's cab companies and its members, a project affectionately known as Taxi Cab  
9 Confessions, to express concerns and frustrations associated with Pittsburgh's seemingly non-  
10 existent cab service and, hopefully, to come up with solutions. By way of background,  
11 Pennsylvania had just lowered the blood alcohol level for intoxication at the same time that  
12 parking rates were rising. There was a need and desire for increased transportation options  
13 especially for those seeking responsible and safe transport home at the end of the night.  
14 According to the Post-Gazette, between 2001 and 2004, there were 7 cab stands: 6 located in  
15 downtown Pittsburgh and 1 located in the Strip District. Despite a good dialogue, however, no  
16 resolution was reach. Residents in most neighborhoods were left without a reliable taxi service  
17 as a viable transportation option.

18  
19 One of the latest private attempts to solve this gap in transportation alternatives is Pittsburgh's  
20 recent, focused efforts on better managing its night time economy. In the last 20 years,  
21 business districts in Pittsburgh's Southside and Lawrenceville neighborhoods have changed  
22 dramatically. Through focused revitalization efforts, these city neighborhoods have become  
23 destinations for those seeking restaurants, boutiques, bars and cultural amenities. This kind of  
24 neighborhood renaissance and economic development boom, however, has come with  
25 challenges.

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1 Pittsburgh's South Side has one of the highest concentrations of liquor licenses in the state.  
2 Unfortunately, this one neighborhood has seen an increase in reported crime, and has become  
3 a focus Pittsburgh Police resources on weekend nights. In 2010, City Councilman Bruce Kraus,  
4 engaged the Responsible Hospitality Institute, a national organization that provides consulting  
5 and recommendations to cities seeking to better manage their nighttime economy. Working  
6 with RHI and Councilman Kraus, I was not surprised to hear that an essential component to  
7 their management plan was moving people efficiently and safely away from the business  
8 district after bars had closed. With Pennsylvania ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation for DUI fatalities, the  
9 regulation and influx of transportation network companies like Lyft and Uber could prove to be  
10 an important component of any cities overall plan to ensure everyone can enjoy the attractions  
11 of nightlife and get home safely.

12  
13 Given my involvement in all of these initiatives as a private citizen, it should have been no  
14 surprised to anyone when, as elected official, I carried my concern over transportation  
15 alternatives, which had by then become a passion, to Harrisburg. I was an outspoken advocate  
16 of Act 89, the 2014 infusion of revenue to roads, bridges, and mass transportation across the  
17 commonwealth. I see that Act as a first step in many we need to make Pittsburgh and  
18 Pennsylvania attractive and competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. My passion is one of the reasons I  
19 am here today to share with you my personal experience with this issue.

20  
21 Lyft and Uber are the latest iterations of a possible solution to this ongoing need. I am excited.  
22 Their operation has sparked an enthusiasm for the future of transportation options in  
23 Pittsburgh like I have never seen.

24  
25 So, on the question of a need standard: I submit my remarks, point to the constituent outcry  
26 for the continuation of these TNC services, and the overwhelming success of both of these  
27 business models in cities across the United States and in sharing economies around the world.

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1 I compliment the PUC on a process that resulted in granting experimental licenses, I commend  
2 the ridesharing companies on the stringent guidelines and insurance policies that at times  
3 exceed standards set by statute, and I overwhelmingly support Senator Fontana's efforts with  
4 SB1457.

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6 Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.nextpittsburgh.com/business-tech-news/economist-names-pittsburgh-livable-city/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/best-trips-2012/>