



Monday, November 29, 2021

General Government and Licensing Committee
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Submitted by email to gglc@toronto.ca

Dear Chair Paul Ainslie and members of the committee,

Re: GL 27.19 Update on Outstanding Vehicle-for-Hire Directives

We support, for the safety of all road users, the suspension of new vehicle-for-hire licences until a complete training and accreditation program is in place for drivers.

The blocking of bike lanes by Uber and Lyft drivers remains a significant safety issue for city residents who cycle, including food couriers who work late into the night. Based on our experience and observations, this problem is not taken seriously by the management of Uber and Lyft, nor by its drivers despite the risk this conduct poses to cyclists who are forced to skirt around illegally parked cars into motor traffic lanes. This conduct presents a particular peril for novice cyclists and undermines city efforts to promote active transportation.

One of the good news stories during the past two years has been the growing popularity of cycling among city residents, including residents who have taken to cycling for the first time. Indeed, there appears to have been a dramatic increase in the number of food couriers that go about their work on bikes. Both of these groups benefited from the city's quick implementation of 31 km of new bike lanes as a response to the pandemic, but this investment is being undermined by activities such as illegal parking in bike lanes.

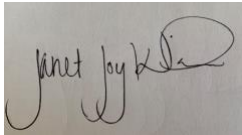
One of the benefits of driver training would be to promote legal road conduct and respect for city by-laws, especially the prohibition against parking or stopping in bike lanes. We have been engaged in this issue for several years and attempted by various means to get the attention of Uber and Lyft, and to educate its drivers with individual interventions, but with little success. The appropriation by Uber and Lyft of bike lanes to pick up and drop off patrons deprives city residents of an intended safety benefit, while foisting on cyclists the task of educating the drivers of ride-hailing services.

In terms of the elements of a training program, we consider curious the staff suggestion that this training focus on “customer service issues.” Road users who are not customers of Uber and Lyft bear an obvious risk to their safety from the conduct of Uber and Lyft drivers. Although Uber and Lyft patrons can complain about the service provided by a particular driver, this option is not available to road users who are prejudiced by the illegal conduct of drivers.

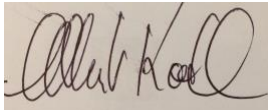
The rationale of Uber and Lyft against the suspension of licences pending a training program appears to be premised on the urgency of new licences, although this approach downloads the risk of poor or non-existent training to other road users, including cyclists. (It also seems to us that if drivers were paid a higher wage for their work, Uber and Lyft could retain its drivers instead of dealing with a constant and predictable turnover.)

The risks identified in our letter are occurring at the very time when city policies to encourage walking and cycling to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are more important than ever. For these reasons, we urge the committee to suspend the issuance of any new ride-hailing licences until a proper training and accreditation program is in place.


Sincerely,



Janet Joy Wilson



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