

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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DEPARTMENT OF FOR-HIRE VEHICLES

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FOR-HIRE VEHICLE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

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THURSDAY  
MARCH 22, 2018

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The Advisory Council met in Suite  
3001, 2235 Shannon Place, SE, Washington, D.C.,  
at 10:00 a.m., Linwood Jolly, Chairperson,  
presiding.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

LINWOOD JOLLY, Chairperson  
JASON ARVANITES, Commissioner  
ERNEST CHRAPPAH, Director  
ANTHONY THOMAS, Commissioner  
DAWIT DAGNEW, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT:

JUANDA MIXON, SECRETARY TO THE COUNCIL

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 10:20 a.m.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Good morning. I'd  
4 like to call to order the For-Hire Vehicle  
5 Advisory Council meeting. Today is March 22, the  
6 time is 10:20 a.m. We're at 2235 Shannon Place,  
7 Southeast, in the hearing room, Suite 2032.

8 I'd like to welcome those of you who  
9 came out this morning, thank you for coming out  
10 in spite of inclement weather. We have a small  
11 group today, so the meeting will probably proceed  
12 very quickly.

13 At this time, let's have a moment of  
14 silence for those who have departed us.

15 (Moment of silence.)

16 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you. So as  
17 I look out, I really don't see any of our drivers  
18 that were scheduled to come and testify. We've  
19 heard, you've heard from a few, I've heard from  
20 some, and I believe the Director's heard from a  
21 few. Most have challenges with weather or two-  
22 hour school delays and they're home with

1 children.

2 So in light of that, we'll still move  
3 through our scheduled agenda, but we'll do it,  
4 and we'll take a little twist on this.

5 Yesterday, we had a closed executive  
6 meeting. And for those of us who made the call,  
7 I want to thank you guys for being on the call.  
8 We had an opportunity to discuss in advance  
9 today's topic and get some consensus amongst the  
10 members here.

11 And I would ask probably at this time  
12 if we just take a minute and let the director  
13 give us his overview of what the Department of  
14 For-Hire Vehicles is attempting to do with the  
15 expansion of the Neighborhood Ride Service, so  
16 that we can have it on the record.

17 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Thank you,  
18 Chairperson Jolly and my fellow members of the  
19 For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council. Welcome, good  
20 to see you.

21 The Department is planning to expand  
22 a service that is currently in place by taxicabs

1 to service what has been traditionally defined as  
2 underserved areas. This service is called the  
3 Neighborhood Ride Service, and in a nutshell, it  
4 is a shuttle bus service. Carries less than  
5 eight passengers and runs on a fixed route in  
6 Wards 4, 7, and 8.

7 And what it does, it gives seniors,  
8 people who for some reason cannot use the bus or  
9 choose not to use the bus, or areas where bus  
10 service is not as frequent as it needs to be, an  
11 opportunity to get across town or get to certain  
12 areas faster in a more convenient way.

13 And we've been running this program  
14 not directly. We've been supporting the program  
15 operations through a grant that we made a couple  
16 of years ago, and the service launched back in  
17 the fall of 2016.

18 Last year, we commissioned a review of  
19 the program to identify what works, what can be  
20 improved, in an environment where we have robust  
21 transportation options, including our TNCs,  
22 limousines, and traditional taxi service. During

1 that review, a couple of things came out.

2 One was that user satisfaction with  
3 the Neighborhood Ride Service as it had been  
4 ruled out was very high, 93% of the users said  
5 they were very satisfied with the service.

6 One particular user, feeling maybe to  
7 the Washington Post, Beth, I forget her last  
8 name, she works at the Howard University Hospital  
9 Center, if my facts are correct. And she uses  
10 the service instead of having to walk at night  
11 through an area that is dark where she did not  
12 feel as safe, to help her get around.

13 And the other stories as well, they  
14 are stories about seniors who use the service to  
15 go as a group to do their grocery shopping.

16 And another thing we learned from the  
17 review was that there are new transportation  
18 deserts emerging in the city, where it is not  
19 really about not having the income, but more  
20 about the existing services, whether it's bus,  
21 it's ride-sharing, it's Metro, it's not as  
22 convenient for the user as it can be.

1           So based off those results, we are  
2           planning on expanding the current Neighborhood  
3           Ride Service in a way that leverages all the for-  
4           hire service providers to the degree possible.  
5           And the vision we have is to have a city-wide  
6           service that is basically on demand.

7           So you're going to have minivans or  
8           shuttles that run across the city, shared rides  
9           by default. Not as expensive as a private ride,  
10          but not completely free as well. And it will  
11          have designated pickup points.

12          So think of companies that are no  
13          longer in service, like the Bridge and the Split,  
14          that were offering shared rides. And think of  
15          companies like or services like Uber Pool, Lift  
16          Line, Via, that provide shared rides.

17          So we will be doing something in  
18          between so that residents and visitors will have  
19          access to a shuttle service that is running on a  
20          fixed route or a dynamically generated route that  
21          is going different places across the city.

22          And to accomplish that, we will be

1 asking the public to weigh in, and we are also  
2 asking drivers who want to participate in such a  
3 service to raise your hands, and companies who  
4 also want to support the delivery of such a  
5 service to raise their hands as well.

6           Ultimately, we see the city having a  
7 new network of for-hire vehicle types and  
8 services so that we can have a better shot or a  
9 fairer shot in reducing transportation barriers  
10 that we are beginning to see emerge based upon  
11 different conditions, whether it's lack of access  
12 to a technology, or the cost involved, or the  
13 challenges in not having a credit card. All  
14 those issues we think we can have a good run at  
15 in terms of trying to resolve them.

16           So that's sort of like the plan we  
17 have for the Neighborhood Ride Service expansion.  
18 And I want to sort of frame all of this as part  
19 of a movement that is occurring, not just in DC,  
20 but cities overall. And it borrows heavily from  
21 lessons in maybe developing or less developed  
22 countries where there is not a robust

1 transportation service.

2           So if you go to Tanzania, they have  
3 something called the dala dala service. If you  
4 go to Ghana, they have something called a tro  
5 tro. And even in Israel, they have something  
6 called sheruts. So these are basically minivans  
7 that run on a fixed route, and it is almost never  
8 a solo person that is in there, it is always a  
9 shared ride. And it forms some type of a rapid  
10 transportation network system.

11           So we are borrowing a page, really,  
12 from the foreign world to help our residents and  
13 our visitors move across the city with more  
14 affordable options in a more convenient way. So  
15 that's sort of like the plan we have for now.

16           CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Okay, so let me  
17 ask for any input. I'm actually going to start  
18 at the far left.

19           MEMBER DAGNEW: Well, the only, it's  
20 not an input, just clarification, how is that  
21 individuals who are interested to join, what is  
22 the process for individuals to join this system?



1 Do they have to apply for it? How to apply for  
2 it? And where to apply for it? And when are we  
3 going to start this process?

4 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: I assume you mean  
5 the drivers, or competent drivers.

6 MEMBER DAGNEW: Yes.

7 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Yes, for drivers  
8 to apply for the service or to be a service  
9 provider, we will have information available in  
10 the Client Services Department as early as next  
11 week. We have already published an  
12 administrative issuance on our website that lays  
13 out the parameters of the pilot program.

14 And what we anticipate happening over  
15 the next couple of months is that we would also  
16 provide additional information on the types of  
17 our routes that will be ideal for the service  
18 type, based off the research that we've done.

19 And then have people self-select. I  
20 want to do this route, so if the hours for this  
21 route's going to be morning rush hour, give me a  
22 vehicle license, and that's what I'm going to do.

1 And then outside of those hours, I can go about  
2 my regular duties as well. So that's how we see  
3 this playing out.

4 But from a broader timeline, we see  
5 ourselves being in a position to support the  
6 launch of the service before the summer. We  
7 currently have a grant application that is open  
8 for people to apply to be micro-transit providers  
9 one way or the other. So that grant application  
10 expires, I believe June 29, so there's time.

11 So in a nutshell, if you are a drive  
12 and you're paying attention or you are  
13 interested, come to the Department's Client  
14 Services area to get more information about how  
15 to participate in the program. And once you make  
16 the decision that this is a direction you want to  
17 go, you will sign a program agreement and then  
18 you'll make some investment on the vehicle aside.

19 We still have some grants that you can  
20 apply as well. So the earlier you get in, the  
21 better it will be for you to start up your  
22 business.

1                   MEMBER DAGNEW: What about is there  
2 any limit as to how many drivers will work on  
3 this for a pilot program?

4                   DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: That's a very good  
5 question. We would consider having a limit on  
6 the overall program. However, we are more  
7 interested in looking at the number of active  
8 drivers and the number of routes. So as long as  
9 there is a marked need for routes, we will have  
10 drivers of like self-select into it.

11                   But based on our research so far, we  
12 don't envision a scenario where there will be  
13 more than 50 drivers. But things can change.  
14 There's just not enough information we have right  
15 now that will support more than 50 drivers. In  
16 fact, it could be as few as just ten vehicles  
17 running the service based off the route.

18                   There's only one route that we have a  
19 strong opinion on, but we want the rest to be  
20 market-driven. We also want existing vehicles on  
21 the road to actually participate in the service  
22 so that we can increase their utilization,

1 increase their revenue miles, and also just  
2 expand economic opportunity.

3 So if someone is thinking about  
4 joining the program, I would say look around for  
5 cars that may be sitting on lots, that are not  
6 being used. It would be a super way to get into  
7 the business, for you to assess what works best  
8 for you. But on the global scale, based on what  
9 we've seen so far, given the network of private  
10 and public vehicles for hire that we have, we  
11 just don't see a huge influx of vehicles.

12 MEMBER DAGNEW: Last but just to  
13 touch, who is going to be responsible to market  
14 this amongst the public, who will introduce this  
15 resolution? Who does the marketing of  
16 introductory for the neighborhood to be involved  
17 in this process?

18 And the second thing is what kind of  
19 app? Will we develop a new app, or are we going  
20 to put this on currently existing apps?

21 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: I'll start with  
22 the second one. And that's a very good question,

1 in terms of the app. And to clarify for the  
2 record, we see micro-transit as a service that  
3 you can access or tap into through an app or  
4 through a telephone, or by standing at designated  
5 pickup points. So we want to eliminate barriers  
6 for people to have access to the service.

7 As far as the app, we are going to go  
8 through a process to invite partners to provide  
9 their apps. We don't see a need for the  
10 Department to build an app for this pilot  
11 service. In fact, we are pretty clear in that we  
12 would not build an app for this service.

13 Yes, we have a digital platform that  
14 sort of like provides APIs to come into the  
15 system. We will provide technology for those who  
16 are interested in integrating to do, but we would  
17 not build an app for this service.

18 We actually think it will be more  
19 helpful for existing apps that are out there to  
20 help deliver this service. Because if that's a  
21 number things becomes back to the marketing  
22 piece, it increases our awareness to an installed

1 base. It also leverages what has worked well in  
2 terms of consumer marketing for the apps that we  
3 already regulate.

4 And third of all, it puts together a  
5 framework where we are actually implementing a  
6 cohesive service leveraging the assets that  
7 already exist. At the same time, we have a grant  
8 application process open. So anybody who  
9 qualifies can apply to support the promotion of  
10 the service as well.

11 What we've learned from the NRS is  
12 that organic growth is definitely less expansive.  
13 Marketing is nice, but the cost of acquiring a  
14 customer for an app can be anywhere from \$60 to  
15 \$80. That's a lot of rides that you could give.

16 So if we look at using taxpayers'  
17 money to support the programs, the Department's  
18 position would be no, we don't have to be the  
19 only entity responsible for marketing. We would  
20 rather invest our dollars in rides. Somebody  
21 else who wants to market, they should do it,  
22 because that's what business is about. Based on

1 profit, you deliver a service.

2 But we are focused on making sure that  
3 every dollar we spend goes towards people getting  
4 a ride. Because the problem we're trying to  
5 solve is eliminate transportation barriers by the  
6 year 2020.

7 MEMBER DAGNEW: Appreciate it, thank  
8 you.

9 MEMBER ARVANITES: Thank you, Director  
10 Chrappah, for the opportunity to comment on this.  
11 You know, being the General Manager of Via, I can  
12 speak on behalf of my company, not necessarily  
13 all TNCs.

14 But I think that we firmly believe  
15 that the future of any sort of major metropolitan  
16 city is one where there's a complementary system  
17 of public transit, but also for-hire vehicles  
18 that emphasize shared rides in particular,  
19 especially over single occupancy rides.

20 And so we are very excited to see the  
21 Department of For-Hire Vehicles trying to find  
22 innovative ways to foster solutions that push the

1 District of Columbia towards a future where we're  
2 trying to get as many people in the vehicles that  
3 already exist. I think that's really great, and  
4 we are excited to see this roll out. Thank you.

5 MEMBER THOMAS: So thank you very  
6 much. I also share the same vision with Jason.  
7 As I driver, I drive currently with Lyft and  
8 Uber, and for me, shared rides, they definitely  
9 increase my earnings over, you know, a given day.  
10 Because I'm filling up the seats, and for  
11 example, with Uber, every additional person that  
12 I pick up, I get an extra dollar.

13 So for earnings like I can have a line  
14 that goes from say, Southeast to Georgetown, and  
15 make \$35 in an hour, versus dropping one person  
16 off and making five dollars, the next person,  
17 five dollars. So we definitely see the need for,  
18 you know, vehicles to fill all the seats.

19 I know that's a mission of Lyft, and  
20 that's why they created Lyft Line, so that you  
21 won't have all these cars where seats are empty.  
22 So I'm definitely looking forward to how this



1 will serve neighborhoods, especially after rush  
2 hour times.

3 If it's, you know, if the service can  
4 run, you know, after nine o'clock when people are  
5 trying to still get to work but it takes an hour,  
6 hour and a half to take two busses, two trains.  
7 And you know, I see this as a very cost-effective  
8 and efficient way, yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Okay, thank you.  
10 So two points came out of our discussion  
11 yesterday, I just wanted to get them on the  
12 record as well.

13 One is, I think, Jason, you had  
14 touched on this. There is a lot of opportunity  
15 for collaboration by doing this. And we did  
16 touch slightly on potential collaboration between  
17 companies like Uber, Lyft, Via, with taxi  
18 companies as well. And that was one point, and I  
19 thought that was very interesting, and we had  
20 great discussion on that.

21 The other point is that we want to,  
22 this is not being done as a way of taking

1 business away from taxis, but, and Dawit, you had  
2 a lot of discussion on that. But we came to the  
3 agreement that, you know, this was actually added  
4 business, but to active taxis, versus a call to  
5 say hey, go get a car, or.

6 But then there is a, I guess, a second  
7 phase that's, based on how well this grows, there  
8 might be the opportunity for, and this is more  
9 business-generated, to say hey, maybe I do get a  
10 minivan and try to participate in that. So I  
11 just wanted to get that on the record. And if  
12 you had any more comments on that clarify what I  
13 just said.

14 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Yeah, I mean the  
15 idea is to fill up existing empty seats. At any  
16 given point in time, there are cars circling  
17 around, looking for passengers. We know that.  
18 And we also know there are passengers looking for  
19 a ride. Some, the barrier is cost. Some, it's  
20 technology. Some, it's mobility. I mean, it  
21 varies across the city.

22 So with this pilot, the focus would be

1 on filling up the empty seats with respect to  
2 active vehicles, and how people make that  
3 business assessment.

4 If I have, for example, a Camry, I can  
5 only take four people. But maybe if they really  
6 want to be comfortable, three, you know. So if  
7 this part of my business is growing, then maybe  
8 I'll move up to a minivan, where I can carry a  
9 little bit more.

10 Or, I'll move to a Shadow and have  
11 some part of it converted so it can support  
12 bigger wheelchairs, because there are mobility  
13 challenges that some of our residents face. But  
14 what I've done operates on the idea that build,  
15 they will come. We want to adopt the approach of  
16 experimenting, tinkering, fine-tuning, so that  
17 people can get a high return on the investment  
18 they make.

19 And for the government, we want to  
20 make sure that any subsidies or any financial  
21 contribution that we make, a lot of the money  
22 goes towards reducing the cost of the ride for

1 our residents. So there will be ample  
2 opportunity to figure out what the perfect model  
3 is going to be, but out of the gate, we'll be  
4 looking to make sure that existing vehicles are  
5 utilized to the degree possible.

6 And if there's a need to branch out,  
7 we will have some quantitative limits on the  
8 number of new cars or new drivers, so to speak,  
9 who can participate. That's the whole purpose of  
10 the pilot, it has to be a controlled environment.

11 MEMBER DAGNEW: Let me just get back  
12 there. What about, I don't know if you've seen  
13 in the past year or so, there's a lot of taxi  
14 drivers returning their tags.

15 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Yeah.

16 MEMBER DAGNEW: They couldn't compete  
17 no more or probably they just want to give up.  
18 Now, what about if we, and you know, those  
19 drivers want to stay with their old cars. Can we  
20 consider that X service we in the past discussed,  
21 as opposed to my new taxi, those who are  
22 returning a tag can get a private tag, own cars,

1 can they participate?

2 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Yeah, definitely,  
3 we see that as one pathway, where somebody gets  
4 sort of like their private vehicle and they want  
5 to participate in the micro-transit program.  
6 That is where it'll become critical to have app  
7 partners who are already being regulated, so that  
8 the trip is dispatched appropriately to that  
9 private vehicle.

10 So we see this really as an  
11 opportunity to not only solve transportation  
12 barriers for our residents, but also give drivers  
13 another, a pathway to owning their own business,  
14 where you don't necessarily have to invest in a  
15 taxi vehicle to be the for-hire business.

16 Sure, if private vehicle is your  
17 thing, more power to you. You don't have to  
18 paint, you don't have to get a cruising light,  
19 you can take the same vehicle to church, you can  
20 take the same vehicle to the mosque, you can take  
21 the same vehicle to work.

22 So we're going to encourage fluidity

1 between vehicle classes. And want to make sure  
2 that we, again, do that in the context of a pilot  
3 so that we learn. Because there are some things  
4 you would not be able to figure out until you  
5 actually put sort of like the service on the  
6 road. So thank you for bringing it up, and that  
7 is definitely one way for drivers to get back  
8 into the game.

9 MEMBER DAGNEW: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: So at this point,  
11 we're at the public comment section, and I'll  
12 just ask for the record, is there anybody here  
13 that wishes to make a public comment on this  
14 discussion today? I don't see any hands. So I  
15 will say no. Ms. Mixon, Director, you don't see  
16 any hands, correct?

17 SECRETARY MIXON: Correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Okay. So that  
19 being said, just finally, just want to thank  
20 everybody once again for coming out. Thank all  
21 of the drivers for coming out, and thank the  
22 Director for his leadership here. We appreciate

1 working with you, and we look to continue our  
2 relationship. This meeting is adjourned.

3 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
4 went off the record at 10:44 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Advisory Council Meeting

Before: DC DFHV

Date: 03-22-18

Place: Washington, DC

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under  
my direction; further, that said transcript is a  
true and accurate record of the proceedings.



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Court Reporter

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