



Taxicab Commission: Ridesharing a Want, Not a Need in Saint Louis

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By: Joseph Miller

The status of ridesharing companies, like Uber and Lyft, dominated the agenda at this month's meeting of the Metropolitan Taxicab Commission (MTC). When the commission opened the floor to public commenters, [most were supportive](#) of reforms necessary to get ridesharing companies up and running in Saint Louis.

However, despite the public enthusiasm, the commissioners themselves were more critical and directed their criticism mainly at Uber's business model. They doubted whether Uber's background checks were up to their standards, they discussed at length the need for initial drug testing, and they questioned Uber's insurance requirements. As is usual, they claimed that their concerns were only about customer safety.

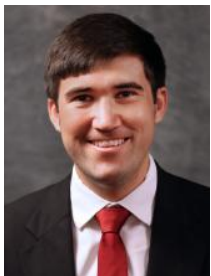
In their nitpicking about which background check was most thorough, the MTC continued to ignore the fact that most of its [for-hire vehicle regulations](#) have nothing to do with safety. How does limiting the number of licensed cabs protect safety? How do pricing regulations determine whether a cab is road worthy? What consumer breathes a sigh of relief knowing that the MTC controls what drivers may wear?

Unfortunately, rather than take an open attitude toward innovation, a regulatory reflex

reigns at the MTC. When the commission was asked to reconsider the necessity of its regulations, one commissioner asked, and I'm paraphrasing, "Would you get your hair cut at an [unlicensed barber](#)?" ([Barbers require licenses in Saint Louis](#) .) He was incredulous to the idea that, yes, many residents would feel perfectly comfortable choosing a barber that did not have the city's seal of approval, if that barber did a good job. That same commissioner ended the meeting by saying that ridesharing companies were a *want*, but customer safety was a *need*. Customer safety as defined by the MTC, not customers themselves.

The MTC would [best serve Saint Louis](#) if it takes the demands of its residents seriously and gives up on its instinct to [delay and control](#) ridesharing companies. More than anything, Saint Louis *needs* a [welcoming business environment](#) ; no one *wants* the MTC to hold the region back.

About the Author



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Joseph Miller was a policy analyst at the Show-Me Institute. He focused on infrastructure, transportation, and municipal issues. He grew up in Itasca, Ill., and earned an undergraduate degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and a master's degree from the University of California-San Diego's School of International Relations and Pacific Studies.

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[3] <https://showmeinstitute.org/2014/05/useless-taxi-regulation-in-saint-louis.html>

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