


October 16, 2019

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Patrick A. Duhaney, City Manager 
Subject: Details of New Pilot Program for Rideshare Pickup and Drop-Off in Downtown Cincinnati

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the City's implementation of a pilot program that designates specific pickup and drop-off locations for ridesharing in several high-traffic areas within the Central Business District, Over-the-Rhine and The Banks. This memo outlines the background that led to the institution of the program, an overview of how the program works, and a breakdown of the outreach aimed at notifying the public of the change and how it may affect them.

Please note that most of these designated zones are only about one block in size. Additionally, rideshare service in all other parts of the Central Business District, OTR and The Banks will continue as usual. Passengers are still permitted to drop-off and pick up as they have previously in areas outside the designated rideshare zones.

As a reminder, this is only a pilot program and the City Administration understands there may be a need to adjust the plan as data on the effectiveness of these rideshare designation zones is received.

Background

The Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, in collaboration with Uber and the City of Cincinnati, participated in a Mobility Lab that kicked off in January 2018. As part of that process, Fehr & Peers evaluated how Cincinnatians use and share curb space on streets with pedestrians and various other types of vehicles (cars, bikes, e-scooters, the streetcar, etc.). The consultant used a combination of traffic, video, photo and rideshare data provided by Uber to make its recommendation. The information was presented to Council earlier this year in the context of the "Downtown Traffic Study."

One of the recommendations from Fehr & Peers was the implementation of a formalized pilot program for designated rideshare pickup and drop-offs at select locations in the City's urban core. These designations were to be limited to small areas known to present considerable traffic congestion and safety concerns. In some of these areas we have witnessed multiple times where people exited in the middle of the street. These designations will ensure passengers have to exit on the sidewalk.

These recommendations aimed to build off the successes realized from the first rideshare zone installed on Elm Street north of Henry Street in Over-the-Rhine in March 2018, which predates the recommendations by Fehr & Peers. The goal of this installation was to break up considerable traffic congestion in the Brewery District. By all accounts this location has been a success at improving traffic flow and mitigating safety issues.

The Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) presented the recommendations from Fehr & Peers along with other mobility improvements in Downtown at the March 19, 2019, meeting of Major Projects and Smart Government Committee. See the attached presentation.

A second rideshare zone installation occurred on Second Street between Walnut and Main streets in April 2019. It too has been well received by patrons and business owners.

Outreach

Before moving forward with the formal installation of any additional rideshare zones, DOTE and partner agencies participated in a variety of stakeholder meetings to help notify businesses and stakeholders of why these zones needed to be installed and offer the opportunity to provide feedback on the plan. Outreach to stakeholders along Walnut Street (including the Aronoff Center, Contemporary Arts Center and other businesses) took place between May and June of 2019. Additional digital communications, including several social media posts to the public announcing these plans as well as a specific email to Walnut Street stakeholders (September 20, 2019) have been sent as well.

On Tuesday, October 15, 2019, the Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) formally announced to the public details about the new pickup and drop-off locations. Information was conveyed via press release as well as various social media channels.

Several questions from residents and stakeholders were received shortly after the initial release of the final details of the pilot program. Many of these questions appear to stem from a handful of social media posts and at least one news media report that contained misinformation or misrepresented certain elements of the pilot program. The City has worked to address these issues as they have come in and will continue to do so moving forward.

The City Administration and various stakeholders are working on a more robust communications strategy to inform the public about the rideshare designations and offer additional opportunities for residents to provide feedback on the overall effectiveness of the pilot program.

How the Pilot Program Works

The new pickup and drop-off points provide drivers and passengers using Uber and Lyft's rideshare service, as well as taxis and individual commuters, dedicated locations to meet and drop off in Downtown's most congested areas. The rideshare apps will direct the user to the most convenient pickup location which may be a new City identified location or the user's current location. In most instances a rideshare user will not be asked to walk more than one block to their pickup location.

Drivers for Uber and Lyft also are made aware of the zones via a geofence installed on phone apps that direct them to the appropriate location to meet passengers. Again, the largest of these areas will be roughly the size of one city block.

Please note that this new pilot program does not restrict pickup or drop-off locations. Passengers are still permitted to drop-off and pick up in all other parts of downtown, OTR, and The Banks.

The City has heard some initial feedback about fears regarding safety and concerns for those who suffer from physical limitations or disabilities. One of the goals of these rideshare zones is to provide safer and closer access to key venues. The City is sensitive to these concerns and will share received feedback with project partners and look to make necessary changes where possible.

The new locations are designated by bright blue and green graphical signage. Please see the attached materials for the map of the specific pickup and drop-off locations as well as the times these zones are in effect.

Details about the program are prominently outlined on the City's website: <https://cincinnati-oh.gov/dote/news/new-rideshare-locations-established-on-multiple-downtown-streets/>

Information is also being regularly displayed with the news media and stakeholder groups as well as with the public via social media.

Attachments

cc: John S. Brazina, Director, Transportation and Engineering