

February 25, 2019

To: Ben Sisko, Local Marketing Manager, New England, Lyft  
Rich Power, Public Policy Manager-East Region, Lyft  
CC: Caroline Samponara Head of Bicycle and Pedestrian Policy, Lyft

Or for Uber:

To: Haven Nichols, Marketing Manager, Uber  
Matthew Coccoluto, Operations and Logistics Manager

A coalition of leading bicycle, pedestrian and transit advocacy organizations in the greater Boston region have drafted this letter to express our concern over the persistent problem of drivers of rideshare vehicles obstructing designated bicycle lanes while in the process of picking up/dropping off their passengers. We are writing you to help develop solutions to this illegal and dangerous practice.

We salute your company's efforts to improve transportation access and build community through ridesharing and more recently through promoting bikeshare, as evidenced by the purchases of Motivate and Jump by Lyft and Uber, respectively. We would hope you agree that safety is paramount for everyone on the road while using your services. Ironically, the common practice of rideshare drivers parking in bike lanes undermines the safety of those bicycling, whether on their own bicycles or on the bikeshare bicycles you provide.

As you know, thousands of people in our communities - from children to senior citizens - bike to school, work, and errands every day. They generally do so in bike lanes when possible, because doing so is safer—when they are not obstructed. The Boston-Metro area municipalities have invested a great deal in the past few years in infrastructure to build accessible and connected networks of bike lanes with the goal of safety for all in mind.

When bike lanes are obstructed by a vehicle, cyclists must ride alongside motor vehicles, where they are unduly exposed to heavy truck, bus, and automobile traffic. Furthermore, obstructed bike lanes increase the danger of bicyclists being hit by an opening car door. Obstructing bicycle lanes is a violation of Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 89 Section 4D), which states :

“The operator of a motor vehicle shall not stand or park the vehicle upon an on-street path or lane designated by an official sign or marking for the exclusive use of bicycles, except in a case of emergency.”

The reason for the Commonwealth's bike lane laws is simple, and intuitive: public safety.

Rideshare drivers regularly violate the bike lane laws throughout the Boston metro region – it happens with maddening frequency, as evidenced by heavy social media documentation and multiple complaints to Police Departments and Parking Control Officers. With the rising popularity of rideshare services, the problem has become even more acute. This practice is giving rideshare companies a bad name.

We believe that we can work together to solve this persistent and dangerous practice; you have the power to direct your drivers to change their behaviors with respect to obstructing bike lanes. We ask you to do the following:

Educate all drivers to not obstruct bike lanes. We have seen examples of training videos produced in other cities and are surprised these are not mandatory viewing for all drivers. Send a push notification to all drivers ending a rideshare and to the exiting passengers to LOOK before opening their doors and potentially hitting a cyclist while exiting. Ultimately, the passenger of the vehicle is the driver's responsibility

Adopt procedures to ensure drivers obey the bike lane laws, and provide serious consequences, including revocation of rideshare driving privileges, when they fail to do so

Share data with local and state governments regarding violations of the bike lane laws by rideshare drivers

Work with municipalities to promote the use of Loading Zones and Passenger Drop-off Zones. This would include offering the ability to local communities to "Geofence" areas (for instance like in Logan Airport)

At the end of a ride when a user gives feedback of less than 5 stars at least one feedback option should be related to bike safety, heightening the care that drivers give to being safer around people biking and giving your company better data about how to train drivers (ex. "stopped/pulled over in a bike lane")

We believe this last recommendation deserves serious consideration and provides the best solution to this problem. Cities, including Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC have designed loading zones for rideshare and peer services. We believe a re-allocation of parking space from private cars to loading zones for rideshares in commercial and dense residential areas would provide a safe and accessible space for rideshares to stand without illegally blocking bike lanes, reducing the dangers to bicyclists and other vulnerable street users. Second, it would make it easier for drivers and customers to identify each other, as they would be meeting in a clearly designated area. Lastly, it would make access to rideshares easier for customers needing assistance due to physical challenges. Currently, these customers must navigate fast-moving motor vehicle traffic to enter the vehicle from the street. With loading zones, they could enter from the curb.

Through cooperation between cities, bicycle advocates, and rideshare companies, we can enact safety reforms that keep everyone safe and allow rideshare companies to flourish and engender strong community support. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Ken Carlson, Chair  
Somerville Bicycle Committee



Galen Mook, Executive Director  
Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition (MassBike)

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Steven Nutter, AICP Director  
Green Cambridge



Phillip Goff, Director  
East Arlington Livable Streets



Sam Christy  
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Janie Katz-Christy Director  
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Josh Zisson, President  
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Pat Bibbins, Chair  
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