

# Is that right, Phoenix ?

By Don McCurdy

A recent opinion piece out of Phoenix had some interesting points. To say that I disagree with some of the opinions expressed in the piece would be a major understatement.

The airport has decided, with the assistance of the author of the piece, that there should be a \$4.00 pickup and drop off fee to shared ride vehicles. The author claims that it's Uber's choice as to whether they want to pass that fee on to the consumer. Uh, really?

Have you read Uber's financials? Laughingly, the author points up the "fair share" aspect of Uber paying for the use of the airport pointing up that all other vendors pay the airport for the ability to operate there. I'll give him that part, however, to dream that you can raise the cost of a business service and not expect the price to go up is naïve at best.

Let's face the facts, this is a tax, plain and simple. The writer points up that the taxicabs don't charge the customer or the driver which I have a difficult accepting. There are many ways taxicab companies recapture the revenue lost to the tax depending on how the airport authority assesses the tax, but they do recapture it.

The author further states that if the shared ride companies decide to leave the airport "good riddance". These events don't happen in a vacuum.

Groups scout out cities where they might have a conference. Convention or meeting and ground transportation is a consideration.

The business community has embraced Uber and Lyft. They are choices that would be denied if they are treated too callously. I highly recommend that the author not bother to apply to the diplomatic corps even though there may be several openings.

## Decisions, decisions.

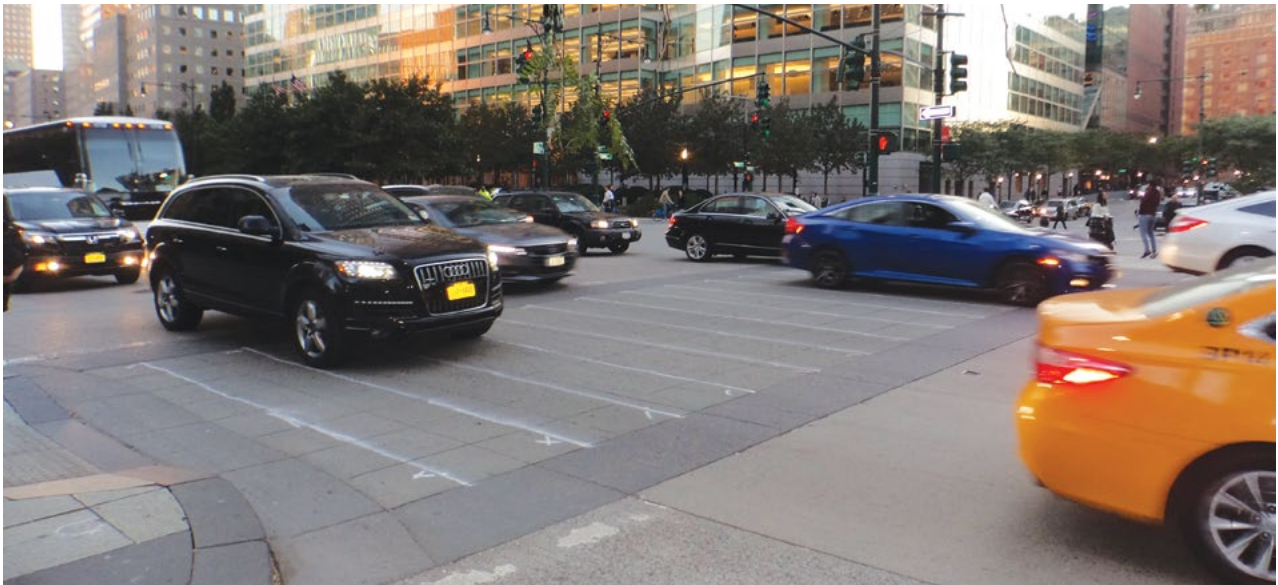
Seattle has decided to initiate a 57 cent per ride tax on all shared ride services trips. The city council is reported to have approved the tax unanimously.

I liked the way the article described the tax as "a way to capitalize on the wild growth of the ride hailing industry." Reminiscent of the old Beatles tune, "if you drive a car, I'll tax the street" the council had found a way to raise taxes while making it invisible to the public. Not only that, but they have someone else collect it for them. Brilliant!

The mayor went on to promise that ride hailing drivers would make Seattle's \$16.00 an hour come summer. The hard part of the whole story is what to do with this new revenue.

The current plans are funding affordable housing, funding the delayed downtown streetcar, bus service, light rail tunnels and possibly a voucher program for needy riders. Why, they've even proposed a center where drivers could seek help if deactivated by the companies. All in all, absolutely necessary projects to make Seattle a better place??? Uh huh.

I have wondered about the details of the proposed wage guarantee in this and other cities:



Will it be for the duration of the time the driver is signed on the system? Will it be the time the driver is in transit to a trip and loaded? Will the driver be penalized if they reject a job? How about if they time out on an offer? Will the ride hailing companies limit the number of vehicles signed on the app to those necessary to provide good service or continue to allow as many drivers to sign on the app as want to?

Yes, the devil is in the details. Driver and company will have to work on the details so both can get what they need to survive.

I would forecast that the number of driving jobs will be reduced when the wage increases. That is not necessarily a bad thing as it will allow companies to cull out unproductive or complaint generating drivers, allowing a more efficient and user friendly industry.

## Have we analyzed this issue?

A recent report, reportedly from Uber, documents the problem the “gig economy” has with rape, attempted rape, groping, unwanted kissing to various body parts, for a somewhat staggering total of 5,981 reports of some sort of sexual abuse. So, what is the problem?

Well, one comment in one of the numerous articles on the subject, quoted Uber’s chief legal officer saying: “but I’m not surprised by those numbers and I’m not surprised because sexual violence is just much more pervasive in society than I think most people realize.” Yep, it’s society.

Actually, Jerry Kozubal told us almost a decade ago that we have a clue here as to the potential root of the problem. We all remember Jerry, the guy who was kicked off the Winnipeg taxi board after he commented that it appeared that drivers from other cultures had a problem relating properly to Canadian women, right? Well, here is a perfect opportunity for us all to find out the truth.

Uber, with some simple additions to their driver database, can tell us if Jerry is right or racist. Actually, Jerry said it was cultural, not racial. Well here is our chance to see if there is a problem and correct it or to determine that that it is not the problem and seek other remedies.

Wouldn’t it be a feather in Uber’s cap if they managed to isolate potential problems in this area and to take proactive steps to mitigate the problem? I would think so. So, here are the questions:

- Are the accused drivers born and raised here in the United States? If not, what is their country of origin?
- Next, how long have he been in the United States?

We’ll leave off the sensitive question of the legality of their status. That would draw too much flack.

Isolating a trend in these groups, if there is one, would enable Uber to be proactive in isolating which drivers might need “sensitivity training”.

Sensitivity training would enable these groups to have a full understanding of societal norms here in the United States. The intended result would be that the actions of these groups would not cost the company potential lawsuits. As well, it would spare the company the embarrassment two years from now when they’re scheduled to release the next report.

Or, we can just assume that everyone from everywhere immediately understands what conduct is acceptable here in the United States and the current report simply depicts a misunderstanding. Can we handle the truth or was Colonel Jessep, in the movie, *A Few Good Men*, right?

## “It’s a mixed-up world”

The New York City Taxicab and Limousine Commission (TLC) is reported to have sent out an email tip to drivers regarding the proper use of pronouns: **he or she or ze (no gender preference)**. Do not assume a passenger’s race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, disability, or destination.

The TLC completely snubs pronouns which can only be seen as blatant discrimination, despite the email originating from the TLC’s Office of Inclusion.

There are times when I read the language of the country of my birth, the United States, and I wonder if I actually speak the English language.

For instance, a quote from the article read, “It encouraged drivers to introduce their pronouns, noted the use of someone’s ‘preferred pronoun’ and told drivers to be aware that using ‘it’ or ‘he-she’ are offensive to the LGBTQ community.”

What does “introduce your pronoun mean?” Good afternoon, this is my pronoun, there are many pronouns like it but this one is mine. Is this a critical service provided by the government or a message from the PC police? I am continually amazed at what government spends money doing for us.

## Next step.

Waymo is reported to be carrying passengers without the “safety drivers” in their autonomous vehicles. According to the author, Waymo prefers trips to be labeled “rider only” instead of fully driverless.

Apparently, the term freaks people out slightly less. The number of passengers, not reported, is limited and the area of town the “rider only” trips are allowed is also restricted. There are still numerous Waymo vehicles with the safety driver, but the future is happening.

***If you have any comments regarding this or any of my articles please feel free to contact me at: [don@mcacres.com](mailto:don@mcacres.com). - dmc***