



Lawrence OnBoard
Roadside Ridesharing

2979 Republic Rd Oskaloosa KS 66066 785-856-2272 www.lawrenceonboard.org

December 3, 2013

To: Mayor Michael Dever

Re: Change to STO Section 69, Subsection A

Dear Mayor Dever,

I am writing today to introduce you to the ridesharing program I have been developing called Lawrence OnBoard, and to request that the city of Lawrence make changes to the Standard Traffic Ordinance Section 69 in order to allow our organization to continue research and development within the city limits.

Lawrence currently has an excellent bus system, but it has many limitations, especially in service area. Residents who travel between Lawrence and the surrounding communities have no option other than to drive, most often with a single occupant. In fact, nearly 80% of the potential passenger capacity is empty. This is shockingly wasteful, but also a low-hanging fruit. Lawrence OnBoard is working to build a transportation network using those empty seats. The concept is called "Roadside Ridesharing" and looks a little bit like hitchhiking, but it incorporates elements like security protocols, destination signaling and driver incentives to make it safe, easy and reliable. I have attached a detailed description of the concept, including the results of 121 test rides conducted this past year, the results of which are quite promising.

Unfortunately, there is an obstacle standing in the way of further research and implementation of this innovative project. I refer to STO 69, subsection A which reads "No person shall stand upon or along a street or highway for the purpose of soliciting a ride". This wording pretty much rules out roadside ridesharing in any form. I have consulted with our transportation planner, Todd Girdler, and with Captain Paul Fellers from the police department, who both agreed that any change in the ordinance needs to address traffic safety, especially cars stopping for riders in such a way as to block traffic and create a hazard. I have also researched similar ordinances in other states and municipalities to see how they handle the traffic safety issue. I believe the following wording will allow us to operate safely. The first part (A) pertains to the rider's behavior and the second (B) pertains to the driver who stops to pick up the rider.

A) "No person shall stand upon (removed the word "along") a street or highway for the purpose of soliciting a ride."

B) “Pedestrians shall only be picked up where there is adequate road space for vehicles to pull off and not endanger and impede the flow of traffic.”

Other municipalities have included clauses that address dangerous or obnoxious behavior. These could also be incorporated into the wording.

“No person shall attempt to intimidate, threaten, or otherwise annoy passing motorists while soliciting transportation.”

“No person shall solicit transportation upon or along a street or highway during the nighttime, and/or in a manner that distracts a driver’s attention and/or under the influence of alcohol or intoxicating drugs.”

Maria Kaminska from the city attorney’s office informed me that once the commission approves a change in the ordinance, I could potentially work with her and other city staff to hammer out the exact wording.

Lawrence OnBoard is a program which could solve some of the transportation problems for many small communities in Kansas and in the country at large. Because of this potential, the National Transportation Research Board has taken an interest in this project. I will be travelling to Washington DC in January to present a paper on Lawrence OnBoard. This is a great chance to show off our city as a front-runner in innovation.

In closing, I would welcome the opportunity to present Lawrence OnBoard to the city commission and ask for your support for a change in STO 69. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions, concerns or comments.

Sincerely Yours,

Jennifer O’Brien
Director
Lawrence OnBoard

Enclosed: Lawrence OnBoard Progress Report, November 2013

Letter of Support: Sustainability Advisory Board

Letter of Support: Anne Dunning, Professor of Transportation Planning, University of Kansas