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Dear *Caroline*

Uber Pool / Pop

Thank you for your letter dated 27 November, expressing concerns over the prospect of Uber launching a ridesharing scheme in London.

You will no doubt have seen Uber's announcement yesterday (30 November) that it intends to launch its ridesharing scheme, UberPOOL, in London this coming Friday, 4 December.

UberPOOL allows passengers to share journeys in licenced private hire vehicles, driven by licensed drivers.

There has been, and continues to be, some confusion over Uber's ridesharing plans for the capital. They have promoted two different types of ridesharing models in other international cities:

- Ridesharing where users share a licenced private hire vehicle for a separate fare but are usually unknown to each other (Uber generally terms this internationally as UberPOOL); and
- Ridesharing where users travel together in an ordinary unlicensed private car which is not providing private hire services, (Uber generally, although not exclusively, terms this internationally as UberPOP).

Where Uber has run into difficulties in other cities around the world, it has, in almost every case, been in relation to the UberPOP model.

Uber continues to tell us that it has no plans (or need) to launch UberPOP in the UK; its Chief Executive confirmed this with Sir Peter Hendy last year.

The distinction between the two ridesharing models is something we are keen to clarify. Garrett Emmerson and Peter Blake covered the issue in some detail during their update to the Assembly Transport Committee on Taxi and Private Hire issues on 10 November.

UberPOP is ride sharing in a private car. This type of ride sharing is not regulated or covered by private hire legislation (where vehicles are not 'hired' to provide private hire services. This may be the case where drivers do not get any financial gain from these services other than to cover their costs).

Sir Peter Hendy has previously made the point that anyone operating a car in London for 'hire and reward' purposes would need to be licensed to do so. So ridesharing in a private vehicle, but where a driver is unlicensed and the vehicle is hired for the provision of private hire services, would not be permitted.

Ridesharing services, using licensed private hire vehicles (such as UberPOOL), do not require a separate operator's licence and we have, therefore, not licensed UberPOOL separately from Uber's main licence. These services do, however, require the specific consent of each customer involved to sharing on the basis that separate fares will be paid.

In addition, we do of course recognise that there can be public safety issues associated with strangers sharing rides. We have sought, and received from Uber, a number of assurances relating to passenger safety, insurance and also around the protection of personal data.

We will continue to monitor the service following its launch this Friday.

I am sorry that you have not yet had responses to the three questions you raised at Mayor's Question Time in respect of UberPOOL/UberPOP. I believe these are shortly due to issue, but I hope that I've covered off your concerns in the meantime.

Yours sincerely



Mike Brown MVO