



Jackson, Mississippi City Council Considers Regulating Uber

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The Jackson, Mississippi City Council is considering a proposal to regulate Uber, a popular transportation network company connecting drivers and riders, similar to government-approved taxicab companies operating in the city.

In return for accepting the city government's regulations, Uber would be allowed to pick up and drop off riders at the city's airport, which they are currently prohibited from doing.

Jackson City Councilman Ashby Foote says legalizing transportation network companies such as Uber is an important way to attract visitors and economic activity.

"I think if we're going to be seen as a pro-business, cutting-edge type of community, we need to make sure that Uber is available for those who are looking for it," Foote said.

'Uber-Friendly and Taxi-Friendly'

Foote says increasing the ease of getting around Jackson helps both consumers and the city.

"One of the things that worries me as a city councilman and citizen of Jackson is that we want to be business-friendly and make a good first impression on people visiting Jackson," Foote said. "We have people visiting who are used to using Uber and may try to contact them once they arrive at the airport, only to find out they aren't allowed in the vicinity to pick up rides.

"It makes a bad first impression on those business people who may be arriving to do business in Jackson," Foote said. "It's important that we be Uber-friendly and taxi-friendly."

'Fundamentally Different'

Matthew Feeney, a policy analyst with the Cato Institute, says regulating Uber drivers as though they are taxicab drivers is not good policy.

"In terms of regulating, there are a couple of options here," Feeney said. "One would be, 'Well, we should regulate Uber with their cars in the way that cabs are.' I think that way is conceptually wrong. For one thing, Uber drivers are driving their own cars on their own time. They are fundamentally very different [from] taxis."

Fewer Rules, Not More

“It is also not the right approach because, I think, it would be worth perhaps moving it to a ‘deregulatory program’ with regards to taxis,” Feeney said.

Feeney says the peer-to-peer economy’s nature replaces the need for government regulations.

“I think any attempt to get Uber operating in or around the airport should be welcomed,” Feeney said. “With that all said, it seems to me that Uber is already carrying out background checks and [has] insurance schemes in place.”

Feeney says government regulators should work to accommodate Uber instead trying to fight it.

“It’s funny to me that they think they can use regulatory structures to keep Uber at bay for the foreseeable future,” Feeney said. “It’s unrealistic. Uber is not going anywhere. It’s unrealistic that taxi companies just think they can permanently keep new technology at bay. They have got to adapt to changes.”