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Expand transportation options in Miami-Dade

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Miami has been heading toward a **transportation** crisis for decades. We thrive on an economy driven by international business and tourism. But the forces that propel economic growth also conflict with outdated infrastructure. More than half of **Miami** hotel patrons' complaints are about traffic and a lack of **transportation options**.

South Florida residents spend 141 million hours **in** traffic yearly -wasting \$3.3 billion **in** fuel and time. More cars are an unsustainable solution - environmentally and economically. **In** order to make **transportation in** South Florida work for residents and visitors alike, flexibility and sustainability are key. More **options** like Lyft's ridesharing platform will help us tackle a critical mobility need **in** South Florida through an innovative, affordable and safe community-based "**transportation** network."

Mayor Gimenez supports Lyft **in Miami**, and is currently working with his administration and county commissioners to ensure that **Miami-Dade** County regulations move into the 21st century. The cities of **Miami** and **Miami Beach** have also urged the county to support Lyft.

The available modes of **transportation in** our community are inadequate and insufficient to fully address or tackle growing and changing needs of residents. Nearly 65 percent of residents refuse to use public **transportation** because it will not get them where they need to go, while 55 percent will not use it because the commute takes too long.

Unfortunately, our urban landscape reinforces vehicle dependency. It is no surprise that reliance on cars has continued to grow: The total number of miles driven **in Miami-Dade** has risen by more than 33 percent **in** a decade. This stands **in** contrast to the national trend away from driving and toward improved **transportation**.

The immediate common-sense solution for our **transportation** challenges lies **in** unlocking the 80 percent of seats already on our roads that are empty. More than 30 percent of residents are willing to rideshare, yet regulators who encourage carpooling are now challenging ridesharing solutions.

Our community cannot afford higher taxes for a comprehensive overhaul of its outdated public **transportation** system. Eleven years ago, the People's **Transportation** Plan imposed a tax to extend Metrorail and bus lines - instead, the tax is funding existing transit operations.

Meanwhile, owning and operating a vehicle is the second highest expense **in** American households, at an average of \$9,000 per year. The innovation that drives economic empowerment across the country has brought about a paradigm shift **in** the way we can and should envision **transportation**: Getting a ride is now cheap, safe and more efficient. Using Lyft, we can empower our community through technology and solve **transportation** issues with cars that are already on the road.

However, some seek to protect established interests at the expense of greater consumer freedom and choice and have not received Lyft warmly **in Miami**. Regulators are trying to force Lyft and other platforms into outdated legal frameworks that do not accommodate changing technology and **transportation** needs. Despite safely operating with enthusiastic support **in** more than 65 cities, Lyft has been unfairly labeled as unregulated and unaccountable. All one needs to do is look at strong regulatory environments **in** California, Colorado and Washington, D.C., to understand that fresh regulatory approaches can deliver safe and dependable **transportation**.

On requesting a Lyft, a passenger is provided with the driver's name, image and information about his or her thoroughly inspected vehicle. Lyft drivers undergo extensive background checks - more rigorous than those required for taxis - and are subject to real-time feedback that ensures passengers and drivers abide by all rules.

Despite regulatory naysayers, opinion polls show that 2,432 high-quality voters support Lyft across the board:

• 71 percent of voters support Mayor Gimenez's efforts to keep ridesharing **in Miami**.

• 75 percent of voters support Lyft's screening of drivers with sexual assault, reckless driving and DUI convictions.

• 79 percent of voters support Lyft's zero-tolerance policy for drugs and alcohol.

• 63 percent of voters support Lyft's vehicle-safety inspections and additional insurance coverage.

Voters are united **in** their support for Lyft as a safe **transportation** solution. No single approach

to **transportation** can serve **Miami**'s expanding needs, but innovations such as Lyft serve an important function **in** a community that values progress and choice. Not only is the opposition to Lyft founded on a desperate attempt to protect an industry that refuses to change, it also ignores strong demand from residents and visitors for a community-oriented **transportation** solution.

With the existence of varied modes of **transportation**, residents actually become more likely to consider the **options** available to them. Since Lyft's Seattle launch, taxi and black-car industries have seen their most successful year ever - thriving **in** a competitive and booming market. Ridesharing is starting the **transportation** revolution that we have all been waiting for. Why stand **in** the way of progress? Jorge Luis Lopez is a **Miami**-based government-affairs counsel.

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