

## OCL Study Session, How CNY Moves in New Ways

October 6th, 2015; 4:30 – 6 p.m. at Interfaith Works, 1010 James Street, Syracuse

Co-chairs: Heidi Holtz and Mary Kate Intaglietta

OCL: Sandra Barrett and Renée K. Gadoua

Attendees: Russ Andrews, Tom Carlin, Mario Colone, Dan Hartnett, Deborah Hundley, Daniel Kelley, Peter King, Don MacLaughlin, Sarah McIlvain, Dwight Mengel, Peter Sarver, Olive Sephuma, Gary Singh, Lisa Warnecke

### Panelists:

**Fernando de' Aragon**, executive director, Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council

**Jennifer Dotson**, executive director, Ithaca Carshare

**Dwight Mengel**, transportation planner, Tompkins County Department of Social Services

**Mario Colone**, Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council project manager

**Gary Singh**, creator of LiveRidez, Syracuse taxi cab app

### A. Study Committee member Tom Carlin introduced the panel discussion with a PPT.

- Transportation apps include professional taxi apps, taxi alternatives, car sharing.
- “If you can share it, there’s an app or someone is writing an app for it.”
- Most require an account/link to payment.
- It’s a big-city thing. They start in big cities and eventually make way to smaller cities.
- Wild, wild west: low barriers, most services less than 10 years old.
- In Syracuse, riders can book cab via liveridez and needacab
- Taxi alternatives: Uber, Lyft, Sidecar, Shuddle (Uber for kids)
- Uber started in 2009; now in 300 cities worldwide; usually cheaper than taxis.
- Beware surge pricing with Uber: prices increase with demand; some cases in court.
- Ridesharing: Zimride started in 2007 at Cornell. Now at 120 colleges, including SU. Bought by Enterprise in 2013; costs negotiated by driver and rider
- Car-sharing: most are peer to peer (Zipcar, founded in 2000, is biggest.)
- More entrants likely. Consolidations and closures likely. Integration with social media.
- Municipalities need to address liability and licensing issues.

### B. Mario Colone

SMTC looked at community carshare concept a few years ago, but unable to advance project. Member agencies did not want to take on liability/licensing concerns, but SMTC remains interested.

[511NY Southern Tier Rideshare](#): A free and convenient ride-matching service that helps people save money and find greener commute alternatives, such as carpooling. The project is supported by Chemung and Steuben Counties, the New York State Department

of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration to provide free commuter and traveler information.

Syracuse regulates taxi service: background checks/licenses. Limited number of taxicab licenses/medallions.

**C. Gary Singh:** In cab business seven years. Owns five taxis (CNY Green Taxi)

- He sees extreme high and low fluctuations in need, paralleling SU calendar.
- Launched app, LiveRidez, in July, to link existing smaller cab companies for greater efficiency; ability for customers to book on-line.
- Still get more phone calls than ride requests via app
- Has 10-12 licensed taxi owners signed on; would like 25 drivers signed up.
- App charges \$5 for cancellation
- 500 downloads, but only a few calls a day
- Safe for riders and drivers; no need to carry cash.
- If successful, could customize it for other markets.

**D. Dwight Mengel, chief transportation officer, Tompkins County Department of Social Services**

- County sees 23 percent of population turnover per year, so there's a need to educate people about transportation alternatives.
- For a community our size, we have a very large transit system.
- Social services dept. deals with challenging transportation issues, especially for poor and rural clients.
- In 2006-2007, began coordinating with Fernando de' Aragon, of Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council, for monthly discussions of mobility issues. Assessment showed taxi operations, etc., market services, but no one knows what's going on. There was no community education.
- Partnered in 2008-2009 with Cornell Cooperative Extension to develop [Way2Go](#), which offers workshops, projects and events. "Way2Go helps people save money, stress less, go green and improve mobility options," according to its website.
- Showed locally-produced video: "[5 fabulous ways to take charge of your transportation.](#)"
  - Suggestions include: Drive Smart, Go Together, Go Virtual, Go Transit, Go Active

**E. Fernando de' Aragon, exec. dir., Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council**

- Tomkins County imports 15,000 people/day from other counties, creating an opportunity for ride sharing.
- Universities, county, Way2Go applied for NYSERDA grant, studied the market.
- Zimride ran in county for three years under grant. Program had community portal as well as at colleges. (University request/community about 10:1)
- \$18,000/year to fund Zimride. After Enterprise bought it, must formalize coalition for ongoing program. Goal is to sign it and get neighboring communities to join.

- “Things are changing every day in this field.”
- Needed one-way capability for students
- Would like to offer to schools so parents can coordinate rides for kids
- Best would be a statewide system that works.
- You want to focus your community on one service so people can find each other.

#### **F. Jennifer Dotson, exec. dir., Ithaca Carshare**

(Apps are an avenue to the service)

- Carshare provides access to a car when you need it without hassle when you need it and money when you don't need it.
- Knew Ithaca had a lot of people without cars or who had a car but did not drive it often. Zipcar would not provide the service Ithaca wanted.
- Spent two years after incorporation trying to find insurance provider. (New York has only one insurance provider that will write the insurance plan we need. Same provider that Buffalo carshare used until insurance not renewed after accident.)
- Working with Capitol Carshare in Albany to see what laws or regulations needed to get insurance companies to write policies.
- Launched in 2008. Owns 25 cars.
- Ithaca Carshare is a non-profit/breaks even.
- Variety of plans available, including special rates for low-income people and students and staff at Cornell and Ithaca College.
- Mission of nonprofit: Provide education about cost of transportation and effects of transportation on community.
- Reduced rates to make transportation available to all. Not free, since transportation is not free.
- Insurance covers to \$1 million. Could cover members at only \$50,000 but chose higher rate.
- Would like to add accessible vehicle to fleet; has seven-passenger van.
- Transportation council looking at van sharing
- Ithaca has no Zipcar

#### **G. Discussion**

**Mengel:** Non-profit car share allows flexibility. Cars near senior center; volunteer driving programs for agencies

- “Ithaca Carshare is the gold standard of customer service mobility. That makes discussions of other services easy.”
- Does Onondaga County have a dedicated transportation planner in social services? Should it?
- Mengel uses federal transit money and highway funds for programs such as buying wheelchair access vehicle leased to taxi company.
- Collaborative planning necessary for small- to medium-size cities because no one has a lot of money.
- Biggest problem with rideshare is not enough drivers.
- Highest unmet need is for lower-income people to get to work.
- Why isn't low-income housing located near employment opportunities?
- Tomkins County also lost wheels to work and affordable loan programs when federal money went away.

--Submitted by Renée K. Gadoua, study writer