

August 17, 2012

To: Plan Commission

From: Ledell Zellers, Downtown Coordinating Committee (DCC) Chair
Mary Carbine, DCC Taxi Subcommittee Chair

Subject: Report (DCC) on Legislative File ID 26603 re: taxis on State St.

Following is background about the action taken by the Downtown Coordinating Committee about the issue of Taxis on State Street. In addition to the DCC hearing testimony and discussing the issues related to taxis on State Street, there was also subcommittee of the DCC formed to dig more deeply into the topic. On that subcommittee were Mary Carbine (chair), Patrick McDonnell and Alder Mike Verweer.

The original version of this ordinance amendment, repealing language allowing taxicabs to enter State Street and wait in designated loading areas, was referred to the Downtown Coordinating Committee for its May 17 meeting at which the DCC formed a subcommittee on Taxis on State Street. This Subcommittee met on June 13, and its recommendations (below) were approved by the full Downtown Coordinating Committee on July 19:

- To support the **alternate** ordinance amendment which repeals language allowing taxicabs to enter State Street and wait in designated loading areas; permits taxicabs to provide service to prospective fares on State Street either by calling a dispatcher or hailing a vehicle between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m., and clarifies that hotel shuttle vehicles are not public passenger vehicles.
- That the existence, location and hours of the current cabstands in Madison be reevaluated with input from downtown stakeholders and taxicab industry representatives.

Both the Subcommittee and DCC as a whole heard extensive public testimony, including from cab drivers and industry representatives, and city staff. Both bodies also considered the city attorney memos.

In making its recommendations the Subcommittee and DCC as a whole considered:

1) The legislative history of taxis on State St., which shows that since 1996, taxis have been permitted by ordinance to drive onto State St. to wait for prospective fares in the evening hours. Since 2001, taxis have been permitted to wait for prospective fares on State St. from 9pm to 5am during Daylight Savings Time, and from 7pm to 5am during Central Standard Time.

3) The [State Street Design Project Design Concepts & Recommendations \(2001\)](#), which through an extensive city-led public process resulted in a community vision of the State St. area (including traffic flow through State St.) and the design for the reconstruction of the street, sidewalks, and adjacent public spaces, which was completed in 2008.

"The State Street Design Project began in September of 2000 and concluded in November of 2001. The

design process was guided by the City of Madison's Department of Planning & Development and assisted by other departments, organizations and private citizens. The scope of work is for redesign of the 100 through 600 blocks of State Street, and redesign of adjacent side streets and special places along the street. The project area is designated as the State Street District, which extends for approximately one block on each side of State Street along the adjacent streets. . . . The design was driven by public input received throughout the planning process. This occurred during many public meetings with a wide variety of groups and the general public. Also, a project office, website and dedicated email address were established to provide opportunities for public input outside of the scheduled meetings."

On Page 15, this plan outlines that a "flex zone has been designed to accommodate service and delivery vehicles, taxi cabs and police vehicles, all parked on a temporary basis, similar to the designated pull-out zones on State Street today." Thus, the flex zone, running the length of the entire 100-600 blocks, was designed to replace the previous designated loading zones. Neither the problems & opportunities section of the plan nor the public input on transportation mentions issues with taxis.

4) Information from the cab companies on the very high level of call volume and service demand at night on State Street, particularly weekend evenings and special events. During peak service demand, their telephone systems cannot handle the call volume, and cabs called often cannot find the person who called for service. This results in many people who want cabs being unable to get one by calling.

5) Testimony from Deb Archer, the President and CEO of the Greater Madison Convention & Visitors Bureau, that the visitor expectation is to be able to hail a cab in the central downtown of a city such as Madison, and that visitors currently have no way to know that one must place a phone call to get a cab in Madison (rather than hail a cab), and that there is no easy way for visitors to know that they must go to a cab stand or where those cab stands are. BID Downtown Ambassadors, who provide visitor services, also report confusion from visitors who are trying to hail a cab and do not know they need to call for a cab, or what numbers to call.

6) The history of testimony from Madison Police (particularly with respect to the Alcohol License Density Ordinance) that large crowds on State Street and University Ave. around bar time are a problem from a safety standpoint, and that it's desirable to keep people moving to their next destination rather than congregated together competing for resources (i.e., taxis).

7) Regarding the "fixed guideway" Transit Mall issues: that State Street has always operated as a controlled, not exclusive, guideway (in other words, use is not restricted exclusively to one sort of vehicle) while receiving federal funding, and that taxicabs are defined as public passenger vehicles. We also received public comment that the Nicolett Mall in Minneapolis is a Transit Mall running through the downtown, on which only buses, taxis, and emergency vehicles are allowed.

8) Regarding potential conflict between Madison Metro and taxis, we heard from city staff that a limited number of bus lines (2) run on State St. after 10 pm, and that on weekends, that number of trips is roughly ½ that of weekday nights. We did not hear any reports from bus drivers that conflict with taxis was an issue.

9) Regarding the taxi stands, the concept was tried in 2009 as part of a city-industry coordinated effort to have a stand on University Ave. The stand needed staffing to work (otherwise, conflicts broke out among patrons trying to get the cabs), and was not successful.

Area merchants and the Greater State Street Business Association have expressed concerns about the new taxi stands. They were implemented without public or industry input, and took away loading zones or parking spaces important to area merchants because they were used by customers after 6pm. The current stands do not seem to be used, especially as some of them are not in high traffic areas or easily seen by people on State St.