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February 19, 2015

Senator Anna Mackinnon  
Senator Bill Stoltze  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative Lora Reinbold  
Representative Cathy Tilton

RE: SB 58 and HB 120 Support for Transportation Network Services

The Chugiak-Eagle River Chamber requests the Alaska State Legislature to implement public policies and regulations this session that support innovative solutions to community transportation challenges.

Our organization has been on record for many years voicing frustration with the antiquated taxi industry as it exists within the Municipality of Anchorage. The truth is that the taxi industry doesn't serve the residents of Chugiak-Eagle River, or Girdwood, or any outlying area well. Under the current Title 11, it makes no sense for the taxi industry to maintain a consistent presence in our community. Most taxis choose to stay in the Anchorage bowl, where they can rely on lucrative fares to the airport. We have a population of 35,000 and no reliable or convenient intra or inter-community transportation.

This situation serves taxis and taxi companies quite well. But it doesn't serve riders in Chugiak-Eagle River or other outlying areas, where limited public transportation options make an already untenable situation worse. And it doesn't serve Anchorage small businesses, which are denied potential customers that cannot find a reliable ride downtown.

In short, we're all paying the price for a lack of reliable transportation options. With the exception of a handful of medallion owners, the system we have is not serving people as well as it could. We support the creation of opportunities to incentivize innovative companies, such as Uber, that already operate successfully in over 200 cities in the U.S. and 47 countries to date.

Companies such as Uber bring modern technology and efficiencies to a market where it is sorely lacking. Where demand exists for a ride, these "application platform companies" can help find it and link nearby drivers to service that demand. As drivers come on board, people looking for transportation solutions can reliably find one whenever and wherever they want. With more choice and competition comes more opportunities to start and grow a small business. Safety measures are in place to protect both the drivers and the passengers. Uber type companies offer drivers the freedom and flexibility to partner with an online platform, but only after passing a rigorous background check (folks with DUI's need not apply) and a vehicle inspection that ensures only the safest rides are on the road.

Companies such as Uber mean more choice, more competition and more economic opportunity in Anchorage. It also meets a long-neglected need of folks in places like Chugiak-Eagle River for safe, reliable and affordable transportation options. It's a win for riders, a win for drivers and a win for the Anchorage economy -- a highly unusual win-win-win.

We welcome the opportunity to work with our legislators to introduce this platform to Alaska. We in Chugiak-Eagle River have a great deal to win -- and we will definitely continue to lose if things stay the same.

Sincerely,  
*Susan Gorski*  
Susan Gorski  
Executive Director