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PEOPLE'S COUNSEL APPLAUDS DECISION THAT UBER IS SUBJECT TO PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OVERSIGHT

BALTIMORE, Md. (August 6, 2014) – The Public Service Commission “got it right” in its decision today that Uber Technologies is a transportation company subject to regulation by the Commission, said People’s Counsel Paula Carmody.

“The Commission got it right because Uber is in the public transportation business, and it needs to play by the same rules as everyone else in Maryland that is in that business,” Ms. Carmody said.

The Commission today denied Uber’s appeal of a proposed order of the chief public utility law judge, and confirmed that Uber’s business operations meet the statutory definition of common carriers. The Commission also ordered Uber to submit within 60 days an application for a permit to operate in Maryland. The Commission said it plans to examine its current regulations for transportation services for companies like Uber. At least one other company, Lyft, Inc., operates with a similar business model in the Baltimore area.

The Office of People’s Counsel had urged the Commission to find that Uber is subject to regulation.

“These laws were passed to protect the safety of the riding public,” said Ms. Carmody. “After examining Uber’s business practices, OPC concluded that Uber is in the transportation business, and is subject to the Commission’s oversight. We understand that Uber services are well-liked. The smart app connection between drivers and passengers is great, and positions the company well against other competitors who do not offer similar passenger-friendly options. However, as the Commission’s decision today affirms, Uber is providing a transportation service to the public. Its innovative use of technology does not change that essential fact, and does not justify ignoring the laws in Maryland.”

“While technology is not a substitute for regulatory oversight, OPC agrees that regulations should not prevent transportation providers from offering innovative services, as long as the public interest and safety are protected. We look forward to participating in the Commission’s rulemaking process to help achieve the right balance,” Ms. Carmody said.

The Commission decision comes one day after OPC filed formal requests for investigations with the Commission to probe whether the drivers for uberX services provided by Uber as well as services provided by Lyft, Inc. are complying with the Commission’s license requirements for drivers providing transportation services, for pay, to members of the public. In today’s order the Commission stated that Uber is required to verify that its drivers have the required license.

For more information, see the links to OPC’s Requests for Investigation (Mail log Nos. 157189 and 157192) and the Commission Order in Case 9325 at www.psc.state.md.us.

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