

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-3
October 22, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Parking Director, Kevin Kinney

Public Speaker(s)

Javier Correoso

Agenda Item G-3 [9:40 a.m.]

A discussion regarding ridesharing drivers stationed near the Cocoplum Circle and the existing conditions surrounding the Cocoplum Circle.

(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, we will take G-3 now, Cocoplum Circle.

Vice Mayor Lago: Good morning. Thank you, Mayor. This is an item that I'm sponsoring. And we should have had Commissioner Fors' name also on this because he's been involved in regards to this issue also, when you talk about ridesharing. I'd like to invite and say thank you to Mr.

Correoso, who this is not his first time here in the City Commission or his involvement with this Commission and this city in regards to rideshare. He represents Uber. So, I want to welcome you to the City Beautiful again. Thank you for being here. The purpose of this discussion today -- and it's more of an educational discussion and really bringing Mr. Correoso, which I know Commissioner Fors will have some comments in regards to. We met on site, and we've had several meetings subsequent on the phone. And we -- we're trying to address the issue of ridesharing at Cocoplum. Now I want to be very, very clear. This is a delicate balance. I met with a lot of residents that are in favor of rideshare and I met with residents who are opposed to the rideshare issue, especially on how congested Cocoplum Circle is already. I am a big proponent, I think, of rideshare. I think rideshare can be done appropriately, as long as we consider the neighborhood. So, after our meeting that we had on site with the Chief of Police, who's here, City Manager -- I'm not sure the ACM was there -- Mr. Correoso, and also, Kevin Kenny, our director, who is not here today, we were able to acknowledge and witness that there was some obviously significant parking on the Cocoplum Circle. And there were some issues with litter. Obviously, we couldn't blame the litter or acknowledge that the litter was as a result of the ridesharing. But there was also issues and complaints that we've been having for residents in regards to litter and in regards to the fact that down the embankment you're having some issues that we need to address. So, I wanted to invite Mr. Correoso to talk a little bit about the progress that we've made and how his company can help us strike that delicate balance.

Javier Correoso: Thank you, Vice Mayor, Javier Correoso, Uber Technologies, 80 Southwest 80th -- sorry, 80 Southwest 8th Street, Suite 1830, Miami, Florida 33130. It's a pleasure to be here today to discuss this. We -- as the Vice Mayor mentioned, we've had some very productive conversations with City staff throughout the last few months. We were able to take a look at some of the metrics of the driver partners that are staging at the Cocoplum Circle. There are about 100 driver partners that have started a trip from the Circle the last three months. That's a very, very small percentage of the number of drivers that operate on the Uber platform in the Miami market. About half of those take trips pretty frequently. So, historically, we've found that raising awareness to the driver partners goes a long ways into improving the behavior. We've taken a

look at what's been going on here at the Circle and what we've decided to do is to put an in-app message so that when an Uber driver partner stages in the Cocoplum Circle, they get a pop-up in the app. And that message, which should be popping up here any second now, is the following. Obviously, we ask all of our driver partners to please respect all local laws and regulations. We have a set of community guidelines that driver partners need to abide by. And we've also given the situation -- and as the Vice Mayor mentioned our meeting on site -- we've decided to put some messaging that details the fact that there have been driver partners that have been littering and loitering while waiting for trips. We've asked them to please not stay for an extended period of time. And I think more importantly, if they are found to be violating any local laws and regulations, they could face citations. So, we think that this message, will show a lot of improvement. We've seen this at airports and in other busy venues when we -- we're very proactive and drivers have in front of them this messaging. I'd also like to say that it's not only the messaging that's important as well. We have a law enforcement response team of retired and former law enforcement officials that work for the company. And in the coming weeks, they will be meeting with the City's Police Department to establish a clear line of communication so that as partners continue or improve, one or the other, to exhibit this type of behavior in the staging lot, we can be getting information from the police department so that we can handle it as a company directly with the driver partners. And we're going to set up a process with the City's Police Department so that not only when it comes to the drive -- to the Cocoplum Circle, but any other issues in the City, they have a direct contact that they can reach out to; email address, phone number, an individual who will be responsible for the City of Coral Gables. With that, I'm happy to take any questions. Again, I really appreciate the opportunity. Like the Vice Mayor mentioned, I think this is a two-way street. We have to be very proactive in messaging with our driver partners. But there are also a large number of residents, whether they're in Cocoplum or in surrounding neighborhoods that value the ability to be able to tap a button and get a ride within minutes. And I'd also say that the time that drivers are staging is not significant. We're seeing anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes. And what that tells us is that these drivers are busy. They're going in and out, they're going in and out. There's a lot of demand in the area. But again, that doesn't mean that they have -- that, you know, that we can't be proactive in making sure that we protect the park,

protect private property and make sure that if there's anyone that's caught loitering, that they are not only cited, but warned and could potentially lose access to the platform as well. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Javi, I just want to bring up a few things that we discussed and we looked at as options. One of them was potentially having designated parking spaces adjacent to the walkway on the waterway on the other side of the Cocoplum Circle, where actually Cocoplum -- the entrance is. Potentially, maybe having just designated parking spaces for either Uber, Lyft and just making it for ridesharing. And also, installation of cameras on these -- on the Circle. I mean, obviously that brings accountability and that obviously sends a message that someone is watching and ensuring that if something occurs -- it also brings a sense of public safety, which I think is critical. I know that it's County controlled in that area, except for a small portion of it. Have you seen this -- have you seen incidents similar to what we're facing in Cocoplum in other areas of Miami-Dade County or maybe outside of Miami-Dade County, and how has it been dealt with?

Mr. Correoso: It's pretty rare. For the most part, drivers just want to be moving. They prefer not to be staging in a given spot. Obviously, the location of the Cocoplum Circle is -- stands out, right? Because you have -- it's a pretty dense residential neighborhood, but it's also a pretty affluent area. And if you look at a lot of the -- if you drive by and look at a lot of the partners that are staged there, they tend to be...

Commissioner Keon: Luxury.

Mr. Correoso: Our luxury product, right?

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Mr. Correoso: They tend to be black cars or SUV. So, you know, and like I said, they're not staging for long periods of time. So, there's a lot of demand for services there. Where we do see something similar across the country is during busy times, Thursday nights through Saturday nights, you know, 8:00 PM to 2:00 AM, which tends to be the busiest hours.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me ask you a question. Are they parking in parking spaces or are they parking where they shouldn't be parking?

Mr. Correoso: They're parking in public parking spaces...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, but...

Mr. Correoso: Right now.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Then somebody else would be parking there anyway.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No?

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: So, I don't see the issue these cars would be, if they're respectful. That's a very, very important issue. But if they're respectful and they treat people with respect, which I'm sure they do because that's their business, I mean, the public service. And they're parking in assigned parking spaces, I don't see the issue. They will be driving around the city aimlessly, basically, until they're called, which would increase the problems with our traffic and our traffic density in Sunset and Le Jeune and Old Cutler. These are -- I'm very much for their parking in assigned parking spaces temporarily. I mean, there are a lot of calls from Cocoplum and South or in the Sunset area. And I am grateful that you brought this up because it's been an issue, I think. And I would like for this to continue.

Vice Mayor Lago: I think one of the points that the Mayor's mentioning right now is important to bring up. And I was happy that you were present, along with staff, so we got to witness it firsthand. Nobody wants to get ride -- wants to get rid of ridesharing. That's not even in the discussion today. Uber brings a lot of value, like the Mayor was mentioning, especially people who want to get out of cars. And you're seeing younger people nowadays not driving. And they're not getting their licenses until maybe they're 18 or 19 years old when they go away to college. So -- but a prime example of what we saw was the fact that there was five or six vehicles that were stationed. The individuals were out of their cars, sitting in lawn chairs waiting to receive a call. As a result of that -- we have photos of it. The City Manager was present. An individual who was going to enjoy our waterway had to park on the grass on Sunset and to remove his canoe and then walk down the embankment, where before that individual would have parked in a designated parking space. And now they're parking in between the two large banyan trees. Again, we don't want anybody to park there. I mean, that's, you know, an area which it's not meant -- if it was meant to have parking, it would have parking, designated parking spaces. So, my whole idea by bringing this up is to, number one, reinforce the importance of shared ridership. I think it's critical, but also to find some sort of solution. Maybe we can put a camera. Again, the education platform is incredibly important. And I think also maybe to discuss six designated parking spaces. Maybe they don't park near the embankment where people are using that to work out, to enjoy the waterway, to launch their kayaks. Maybe we move those parking spaces on the other side adjacent to the Cocoplum entrance. Most of the residents that I've spoken to in Cocoplum, I can't -- I don't think I can name one that I know -- is in favor of rideshare. So, I think that we need to just -- I just wanted to have this discussion. And I will recommend that my colleagues get in contact with you to see how we can find a solution where we don't have people parking in between the banyan trees. And that happened that morning, as you saw, to try to get access to the embankment.

Mr. Correoso: Yeah. I'm happy to do so. And the messaging that you just saw will be going live effective tomorrow morning. So, every driver that parks in the Cocoplum Circle will now receive that message as soon as they stage.

Vice Mayor Lago: Are you interested?

Commissioner Fors: Yeah. Mr. Correoso, first of all, thank you for coming. What interests me the most is things that we can do in app, and I think it's a great step forward to have the educational notification in the app. But are there other things that the company has done before, for instance, limiting the time that they're allowed to stage there? Although from what you're telling me, the metrics are showing that they're not staging there that long to begin with. But what about, for instance, limiting the amount of drivers that can stage there. So, if there's four drivers staged there -- and I don't remember off the top of my head how many parking spaces we have there -- but if there's four staged there...

Commissioner Keon: I think there's six.

Commissioner Fors: We have six.

Commissioner Keon: There's about six.

Commissioner Fors: There's six -- that a fifth or sixth can't stage there while those four other drivers are stationary there. Is that something that the app is capable of doing, number one? Number two, I've always thought that -- and I appreciate Uber coming to the table and working with Vice Mayor Lago to offer these solutions. But at the same time, we should also -- and I'd love to hear your opinion on it. It's also essential that your competitors really sign up for it and get on board with whatever we do too. So, it's sort of a two-part question. First, what can we do in the app to possibly ensure reserved parking spaces? And secondly, you know, what do we have to be conscious of in terms of getting your competitors in line with the same thing?

Mr. Correoso: Commissioner, two great questions. The first one in-app messaging is, in a short term, the most proactive and efficient thing we can do. We do have technology that creates sort

of like a first-in, first-out type system, but that technology is only available to us at airports because you're talking about literally hundreds of drivers a day that are going in and out of the airport pickup/drop-off queue, right? We -- unfortunately, we do not have the technology to be able to do that for such a very small geofence. What will happen is it could impact surrounding parks, surrounding streets because the Cocoplum Circle is just a very, very small area. But we do have an engineering team that's looking at this. We have introduced a system where we can set aside on the pickup side for riders designated areas. So, the question for us is now how do we evolve our technology to make the same technology that we've made available to riders, for example, at like a Wynwood or a Miracle Mile, which we're also in conversations with the Administration on, on the driver's side. And we're still not there from a technology standpoint, but we're working on it. The second question is our competitors. The vast majority of our driver partners drive for both Uber and Lyft, right? They're dual apps. So, you know, I would encourage other companies to do the same. I think if you have the message popping up on both apps, again, it comes through to the driver partner. But I think that by us doing this, you should be able to message partners that drive on both platforms.

Commissioner Keon: I think the reason that they park where they park is because that's the only shaded area around the Circle. So, I'm sure when they stop and they park, even if it's only for a short period of time, it allows -- their cars don't get hot and they are in the shade. I mean, the other parking areas there are not shaded. So, I think that it -- we should reserve at least one space along there though for people wanting to access the waterway because that's the only side you can access the waterway from. You can't access the waterway from the east side of LeJeune or the Circle or whatever. So, you know, maybe you can -- to the Parking Department, maybe we can look at maybe just something that allows one space there to be reserved for whoever is loading and unloading. I don't -- you can...

Parking Director Kinney: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: You can think about...

Parking Director Kinney: The Assistant...

Commissioner Keon: You can figure that out.

Parking Director Kinney: Manager and I were just talking about that possibly...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Parking Director Kinney: Reserving that...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Parking Director Kinney: One space right at the edge...

Commissioner Keon: That one at the end.

Parking Director Kinney: For...

Commissioner Keon: For people to load and unload because you -- so they're not trying to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I...

Commissioner Keon: Cross the -- but you all can figure that out. And I'm glad you're there. I live in the neighborhood, so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I intervene here? I think that this is an ongoing process there. They all appear that they're willing to help. They have come up with solutions.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why don't we look at this issue in three months, six months, and see how it's working? You know, because they are parking in assigned parking spaces. They're not violating anything and maybe, you know, we can improve the system.

Vice Mayor Lago: There's no assigned parking spaces.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But -- huh?

Vice Mayor Lago: There's no assigned parking.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No -- I'm sorry.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, no.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I misspoke. They are parking in parking spaces, not assigned. And let's look at this issue in three months from now or six months from now...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: To see how it works past the Christmas -- you know, let's look at it at the beginning of the year.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. I think it's a great idea. I just want to, again, commend you for your efforts. You've been incredibly responsive, not only coming to meet with me on several occasions, but actually getting on the ground, and I think that's -- I can't thank you enough for that. You know, you shown that Uber is not only interested in doing business in South Florida but being a real community partner. So, thank you for that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And in Coral Gables.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: And...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Correoso: Thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: And we will work with Lyft and Uber to tweak the area and see if we can have maybe one or two assigned parking spots.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: So, we will be looking at that.

Vice Mayor Lago: You have a lot of work to do in that area. I mean, as you witnessed, the gate wasn't there. That's a hazard. The gate's been blown out. There's been...

City Manager Iglesias: The...

Vice Mayor Lago: There's garbage everywhere.

City Manager Iglesias: The gate has been fixed.

Vice Mayor Lago: The gate has been fixed? Okay, perfect. It's a little difficult to see it because you got those two banyan trees right in front of it. So -- but thank you for being here again.

Mr. Correoso: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.