

Uber expands ride service opportunities for students

Popularity of shared rides increases as wait times drop

By Emily Gersema

Carrie Scherder knows exactly how long she usually waits when taking Uber or a Campus Cruiser — a safe campus ride service — from the University Park Campus to Greek Row.

“Two minutes,” said Scherder, a sophomore from New Jersey who is studying health promotion and disease prevention. “It’s definitely made my life easier. I probably use it three or four times a week.”

With the fall semester in full swing, Scherder is one of many Trojans who have come to depend on Uber and Campus Cruiser for rides in the evenings and at night. Weekly ridership was 17,488 rides for the week ending Sept. 13.

Up goes Uber

Uber, a USC-hosted option since January, provided 75 percent of the rides. USC Transportation numbers indicate Uber’s addition may have raised awareness of both services; the combined average weekly ridership for Uber and Campus Cruiser has skyrocketed.

“Last year, USC was at capacity in providing safe and convenient rides to students through our Campus Cruiser program, so we doubled down



Weekly ridership of the two services more than tripled in a few weeks this semester. *Illustration/istock*

on an investment in Uber, which allowed us to go from providing 2,000 rides per week to more than 17,000 rides per week this year,” said USC Senior Vice President for Administration Todd Dickey. “Our students love the Uber service.”

Waiting 15 minutes or more for Campus Cruiser used to be a common problem and concern

for students and administrators. But recent improvements in Campus Cruiser’s dispatch technology, with the addition of Uber’s USC service, have whittled average wait times to just three to nine minutes.

Uber picks up USC riders who contacted Campus Cruiser but whose waits may exceed 15 minutes.

“As a result of the partnership with Uber to supplement the Campus Cruiser program, we have been able to utilize the technology they’ve developed and the resources they use in the Los Angeles area as a way to ensure students are provided the fastest and safest ride home every night until 2 a.m. within the boundaries of the program,” said USC Transportation Director Tony Mazza.

“The Campus Cruiser program has implemented similar technology, available through the students’ smartphone or Web browser, to optimize our internal resources,” Mazza said. “We now have an automated dispatch system that we use to dispatch student drivers to the point of pickup for faster service and reduced wait times.”

Safe ride service

The USC Department of Public Safety started Campus Cruiser in 1978 as a safe campus ride service.

The university covers the cost of the rides for students, staff and faculty if they are traveling within the Campus Cruiser’s service boundaries. Riders must pay if they wish to use Uber outside of the boundaries.

Campus Cruiser and Uber operate on the University Park Campus from 6 p.m. to 2:45 a.m. every day.

STUDENT RIDES

Since USC began supplementing its nighttime Campus Cruiser program with Uber, the number of rides provided to students has soared.

University-provided rides in sample week (Sept. 7-13)

6,001

2014

17,488

2015

UBER AT USC

Most Uber trips for USC students are short. Wait times are brief, increasing student safety at night.

1
MILE

Average trip length

Average wait time

2:12
MINUTES