



Orlando, Florida's Rideshare Hubs

Efficient Egress at Closing Time in Downtown Orlando



Downtown Orlando launched a Rideshare Hub Pilot program to coordinate safe rides home at closing time. Prior to the pilot, people wandered at closing time, unaware of where to best grab a late-night bite, where they could use the restroom and where the best place was to pick-up their rideshare. Two rideshare hubs are now in operation on Fridays and Saturdays from midnight to 3:00 a.m. The six-month pilot program received a six-month extension, resulting in operation between May 2019 - May 2020.

The hubs are strategically located and designed for easy ingress and egress of vehicles as well as walkable from anywhere downtown. The hubs not only centralize where nightlife patrons pick up their Lyft or Uber ride, but also include food trucks, public restrooms and dedicated security. The creation of the hubs have addressed closing time issues like crowd surge, disorganization of various modes of transport and pedestrian safety.

OVERVIEW

After bars closed at 2:00 a.m. in Orlando's downtown, approximately 20,000 people flooded into the streets—all seeking a safe ride home. Closing time mobility was characterized by disorganization among various modes of transport.

One-way streets were closed to car traffic for 3-4 hours to accommodate the crowd surge, which surpassed sidewalk capacity. People inundated the streets or had to wait in traffic, waiting for the traffic jams to clear on side streets. They wandered, unaware of where to best grab a late-night bite, where they could use the restroom and where the best place was to pick-up their rideshare.

Meanwhile, taxis and e-hail services stopped in the middle of the road (on side streets that were open to car traffic) to pick up passengers, who crossed into traffic to access rides. Street closures were not listed on Google Maps or Waze Apps, making it difficult for e-hail services to find and pick up passengers.



The city's downtown Orlando visioning effort, Project DTO, identified the creation of "highly connected neighborhoods and districts" as a key vision for the future of downtown, yet closing time lacked connectivity and order.

[Check out the City of Orlando's Rideshare Hub information page.](#)

APPROACH

The Downtown Orlando Rideshare Hub Pilot program began on May 3rd, 2019 and will run for approximately one year (the six-month pilot program received a six-month extension). The pilot program currently includes two Rideshare Hubs, which operate on the busiest nights downtown, Fridays and Saturdays, from midnight to 3:00 a.m. The two hubs are strategically located and designed for easy ingress and egress of vehicles as well as walkable from anywhere downtown.

The new hubs make Orlando one of the first municipalities in the nation to launch a transportation concept of this type; utilizing city streets for inclusive vehicle queuing (rideshare, taxis, personal vehicles, pedicabs, etc.).

Features of the Rideshare Hubs include:



- Dedicated pick-up lanes for rideshare drivers to help move people out of downtown during late-night hours
- Public restrooms
- Enhanced lighting
- Dedicated security
- Dedicated cleaning crews and extra trash receptacles
- Dedicated food truck zones nearby

How it Works

How much room is dedicated for the pick-up lanes?

Magnolia Hub has 3 lanes:

1. The far-left lane is the designated pick-up lane for the rideshare hub users. Passengers get into the vehicle on the driver's side. Note: this secondary use was added to this lane so that between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. it is used as a northbound lane for rideshare queuing. The lane is usually a dedicated southbound bus lane for the downtown free circulator service, which runs 7 days/week. Circulator operations now end at 11:00 p.m.
2. The second lane is a transition lane for cars to pass parked rideshare vehicles.
3. The third lane in the back is open to the normal flow of traffic.

Gertrude Hub has 2 lanes:

1. The left lane is the designated pick-up lane for rideshare hub users. Passengers get into the vehicle on the driver's side.
2. The right lane allows cars to pass vehicles that are pulled over in the left lane.

Are public facilities available to nightlife patrons?

A fixed restroom, which had hardly before been used at night, is now being used for nightlife patrons near the Magnolia Hub. The facility is located in a city park called Heritage Square Plaza built into the Orange County History Center building. They are opened for special events and field trips to the History Center, but they were not staffed at night nor open to the public. The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) of downtown Orlando brokered a city/county partnership on a pilot basis to allow public use of this restroom. The CRA supplies both janitorial services and security staff for the restrooms. Temporary signage is stationed at the restroom, as well as near the food trucks. It is currently used at night on

average by 30-50 women and 30-50 men. A portapotty may be set up at the Gertrude Hub in the near future. There is also a public restroom pilot (using trailer-style restrooms) that will start at the end of 2019 and will be located proximate to Gertrude Rideshare Hub.

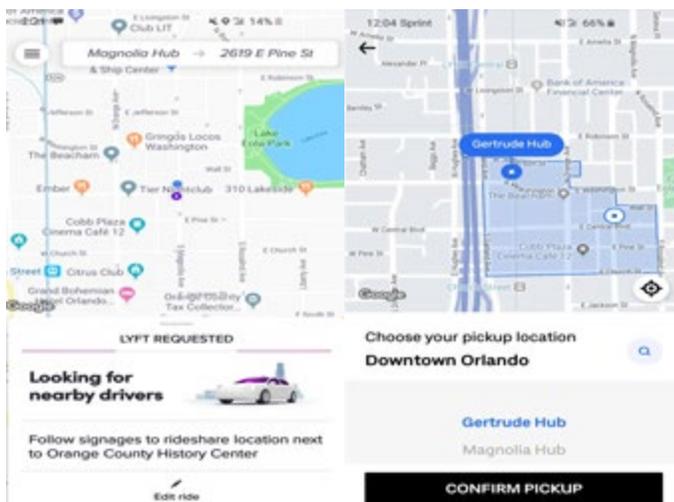
TIMELINE

- Jan 2018 – April 2019: Collaboration and planning
- May 2019 – Oct 2019: Pilot phase 1
- Nov 2019 – May 2020: Pilot phase 2

STAKEHOLDERS

The following stakeholder groups are involved in this project:

- City of Orlando Transportation Department: Parking, Traffic Operations, Transportation Planning and Transportation Engineering divisions
- City of Orlando Planning Division
- Orlando Police Department
- City of Orlando Chief Administrator's Office
- Downtown Development Board/Community Redevelopment Agency including the Nighttime Economy Manager
- Rideshare service providers: Uber, Lyft
- Local taxi companies



OUTCOMES

The pilot, thus far, has shown results such as:

- Improved efficiency moving downtown patrons to their night's final destination

- Significant decrease in average actual time of arrival (ATA) between the time of requesting a ride and getting in the vehicle
- Lower number of rideshare cancellations
- Restroom use at the fixed facility near Magnolia Hub has seen 60-100 uses per night
- Consistent patronage at food trucks
- General positive feedback from the community

Stay tuned for data-driven updates as we continue to measure the success of this pilot!

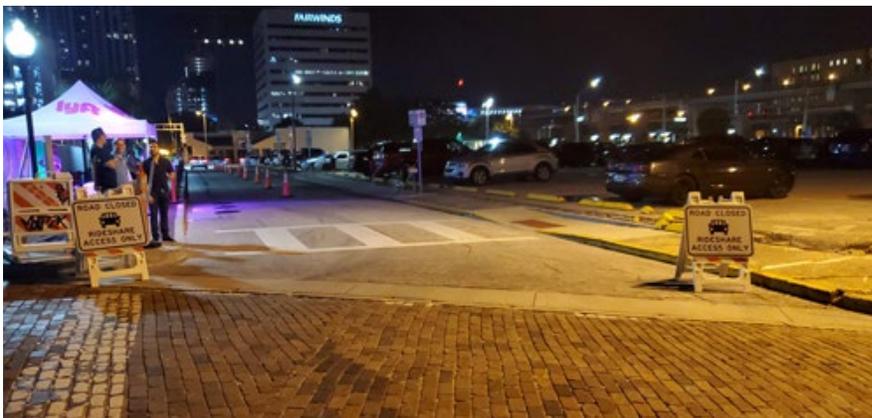
CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

A public education plan is underway and will include signage, branding and marketing. While the city promoted the Rideshare Hub Pilot Program, it has been determined that additional efforts are needed to assist in increasing education to riders as well as wayfinding to enhance the experience. We are looking into paid media to support phase two communications.

(Lesson Learned: Go ahead and invest in marketing up-front, regardless of whether you start your rideshare hub program as a pilot. It's worth it!)

Currently, temporary signage is used at night to direct people to hubs and restrooms, however they are cumbersome to set up and can potentially be moved or kicked over by rowdy passersby. Permanent and more strategic installation of signage is planned.

Directing drivers to the Rideshare Hubs on the preferred routes has been a challenge due to the reporting functionality of GPS applications like Google Maps. Collaboration between the city's transportation department and the city's transportation management contractor identified these preferred routes, however the barrier in communicating this specific information has caused traffic congestion at times. If a driver is using the in-app GPS (via Uber or Lyft), then these preferred routes are acknowledged. However, many drivers prefer to use Google Maps and Waze, where the preferred routes may not always be shown.



FUTURE UPDATES

Using something similar to a standard airport model, the vision is for passengers to go to various locations (e.g. Magnolia Hub) to be picked up by their rideshare driver. A waiting lot

area may be established off-site but nearby, where e-hail vehicles can wait for passenger requests (instead of cruising).

There is also a possibility that a new technology utilizing a PIN feature could further benefit the Rideshare Hubs. The PIN feature would ultimately eliminate the need for a rider to wait for their assigned driver and allows riders to enter the available TNC vehicle, enter the PIN, then match in-app.

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