# Transcript for the City of Ohio State Podcast Season 2 Episode 9: Ridesharing with Tom Holman and Cassi Shaffer

The City of Ohio State podcast takes a deep dive into the support services that keep OSU's Columbus campus running 24/7. Hear from industry experts in facilities, construction, real estate, public safety, transportation and more. The City of Ohio State podcast is brought to you by the Office of Administration and Planning. Go bucks. Hello and welcome to the City of Ohio State podcast. I'm your host Dan Hedman. Before winter break we spoke with OSUPD Deputy Chief Dennis Jeffrey about how to secure your home before traveling and other safety tips. We keep that safety theme going in our first edition of 2024 by taking a look at ride sharing. In a moment, we'll welcome in another OSUPD officer to discuss how to book and use ride sharing safely. But first, I want to introduce Tom Holman, director of Transportation and Traffic Management at Ohio State. Tom, thanks for being with us. Thanks for having me, Dan. Of course. So you oversee all campus transportation and that includes busses, shuttles, paratransit, among other things. But our focus today is on ride sharing. There are two main programs I want to ask you about. The first one CABS On-Demand. It's a free shuttle service that operates day and night on the Columbus campus. When did CABS On-Demand start and who can use it? We launched CABS On-Demand in the fall of 2021. The service is open to any current student, faculty or staff. All they need to do is download the Trip Shot app and they sign in with their university login and they're ready to go. And that's run by the university, not a third party service. That's correct. That is run by our office, Transportation and Traffic Management. Okay. So we'll link to the Cavs on Demand Web page. But for our listeners, can you explain the hours and services? I know daytime is more regimented because full bus service runs at that same time, but then after 9 p.m., it's much more of a door to door option, right? That's correct. The daytime service runs from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. and that connects many locations west of the Olentangy River to several stops on central campus. And then from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.. The service provides door to door transportation between all campus buildings. So, you know, if you're at the library or are parked late and need to get back to a residence hall, this is the service for you. And I know a couple extra stops got added. And so as you're opening buildings, especially on High Street, always open to adding some additional stops. And that happened recently, right? Correct. We recently added a stop at the South Campus Gateway and at University Square 15th and High. Okay. So this is a service that runs on campus, but what does that mean exactly? I say I live in a residence hall. This services for me. But what about students at University Village or University District, which is off campus or even graduate students? Can they use this program and then if so, in what ways? Daytime service can really be helpful to anyone regardless of where they live. If students studies take them to places like Waterman, say the Center for Automotive Research, Wetlands Research, or perhaps they have a student job at the Central Production Kitchen on Kenny Road. Or know CABS On-Demand is the best way to get there. CABS On-Demand also provides nighttime service to a remote parking lot. So if a commuter student is on campus late in the evening and so they need to get back to their car after the busses stop running, cabs on demand also provides that service as well So basically, if you're on campus, it could be an option for you, but off campus or for those living off campus like the University District. I know the East residential bus route is an option, but so too is Lyft ride smart at Ohio State, it offers students discounted rides from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. inside the designated service area, and that includes all the way down to the short north. So how successful has that program been over the last couple of years and why do you think that is? The Lyft Ride Smart program at Ohio State has been very successful. Ridership has grown tenfold in the last three years, from about 58,000 in the 20 2021 school year to nearly 600,000 rides provided last school year. The program is easy to use. Many students already use, ride, share and have a Lyft account, so once they add this pass to their profile, the discount automatically applies to any qualifying rides So as you mentioned, anything within that service area and also between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. and the the service area encompasses the neighborhoods surrounding campus in all directions as well as the short north. So it's a really convenient option for students that need to travel in those areas. Thanks, Tom. I appreciate your time. I want to bring in OSUPD officer Cassie Shaffer now to take a deeper dove on ride sharing in general and how to use it safely. Officer Shaffer, thanks for being here. Thanks for having me down. Of course. So why is using transportation like a bus or a rideshare service a better option than walking, especially at night? Well, it offers you a lot of safety, protection. You know, you're in an a vehicle or in a vehicle that has a specific route. There's a driver. There's usually other people around. So it just offers you a little bit more safety. And I think that when we're walking alone at night, you know, there are other distractions that can come into play. So this offers you the ability to do those things. If you need to make a phone call or something and do it safely and still get to your destination. But we're not saying you have to use ride sharing, right? Like if you're going to walk, then it's probably good to use a buddy system. Yeah, I think, you know, it depends on your comfort level. Everybody has a different threshold of what they're comfortable with. So if you choose to walk, that is absolutely something you can do. It's just planning ahead a little bit. Yeah, using the buddy system, walking with friends or group. And if that's not available to you, maybe making some accommodations beforehand where you communicate to somebody where you're going to be and where you're going and the basic route and or using the rave guardian app that allows you to have a timer set while you're walking. And it would alert somebody if something occurred. Yeah. Good advice. So back to ridesharing. So whether it's Lyft or Uber or another rideshare service. What are some tips you'd give users to ensure they are keeping safety in mind? I think first and foremost is follow it on the app, make sure that the vehicle matches what's described in the app. The license plate matches either ask the driver who they're supposed to pick up or ask them for their name, but don't offer them any information. And look for the placards that signify that this is a rideshare program for Uber, Lyft, or whatever company. That should be prominently displayed in their windows. So like getting in the wrong car. Have you heard of that happening before with folks? I mean, like you just listed some ways to avoid that, but is that an issue sometimes or no? What do you think? Yeah, I mean, it's happened before. People get distracted or make mistakes and they get into the wrong vehicle. And, you know, that's what we're trying to help you avoid. We're trying to help you think ahead, have a plan so that if something seems off, you're alerted to it right away. Okay. So if something does feel off, you say trust your instincts. What do you do in that situation? I think you just say no, thank you. If if there's a person that comes to pick you up, something feels off in the vehicle. If there's another passenger that shouldn't be there. Any of those signals to you? You know, trust your gut instinct. And if something tells you something's not right by saying no, thank you, and then calling for another ride service to come pick you up. So I've had the fortune of working with you for a few years now. And I know I've heard students ask you this question before when we're out about on campus. So I figured our listeners could benefit from this. But what about sitting in the front seat as opposed to the back seat in one of these ride sharing vehicles? What's the recommendation there? So our advice is always sit in the back seat unless all of the seats are taken, and then somebody has to sit up front to accommodate the number of riders. You know, if the driver offers or asks you to sit up front, you can politely say, no, thank you. I'd rather sit in the back. And that's perfectly acceptable. And typically it's going to be policy with those ride share programs. This affords you the ability to see where you're driving, pay attention. It's not distracting to the driver. And then if there's any other intentions there, you're in a safer position. So you mentioned the Rave Guardian app earlier. It's a basically a virtual Guardian app that's free to students, faculty and staff on campus. How may this be paired not just when walking on campus, but even in a ride share as another layer of safety? Yeah, you can utilize that app at any time. So if you're in a vehicle that's supposed to take you, let's say from, you know, this building at 2500 Kenny Road all the way to the Ohio Union, you can not only use the application for that rideshare program to follow your route, but also turn on the Rave Guardian app so that somebody else is aware that you are in transit and they can follow that and be another source of safety for you. That's great. Hey, one last question before we go, and I'll kind of keep this open ended and you can take it wherever you want. But I know you've you've taught self-defense classes before. You're always out and about on campus. You're hearing from students. What's the biggest piece of advice? Just as general safety. Not even talking about ride sharing here that that you would pass along to students or parents that would ask what are the most important things to keep in mind I think what we're thinking about, what's the most important tools I have for safety? The first one is going to be awareness, being aware of your surroundings and aware of who is in your area. And I know that that sounds kind of elementary, but really honestly, we're so distracted nowadays that other folks with other intentions may take advantage of that. So simply being aware and minimizing distractions can not only help you safety for safety when it comes to dealing with other people, but also who and what's around you. So that, you know, if somebody does have an intention to, let's say, take your bike, you're aware of the fact that, hey, I made sure I locked it. I locked it. Well, I put it in a great spot. You know, even that kind of awareness removes opportunity from people. There's lots of different things we can do to remove opportunity from individuals, everything from being aware of our surroundings to just simply picking up our property and keeping it with us. All of those things go into making a safer environment for all Buckeyes. Officer Shaffer, thanks for taking the time to share these important safety tips. Thank you for having me. The City of Ohio State podcast is brought to you by the Office of Administration and Planning. Until next time, be kind and go Bucks.

[music]