**Business Travel: Duty of Care Versus Sharing Economy**

For business travelers, the need for transportation doesn’t end when they step off the plane at their destination. They have to get from the airport to their hotel, of course, and they may also need to get from place to place several times during their business trip.

Traditionally, that’s meant taking a taxi, renting a car or using a limousine service. But today’s sharing economy has added a new twist: ride-hailing services in which drivers use their own private vehicles to provide transportation to people who need it.

However, those services haven’t caught on among corporations. A study by the Global Business Travel Association found that 24 percent of travel managers said that their companies do not allow their employees to use ride-sharing services, while a large number have not adopted a policy on the subject at all. Rental cars are the preferred choice among travel managers, who cite as their top concerns the safety of travelers and vehicles, availability for a timely pickup and the convenience of payment methods.

The reluctance to allow employees to use ride-hailing services when they travel is understandable, both from the perspectives of duty of care and value.

When it comes to the sharing economy, duty of care is an important consideration. Mike McCormick, executive director of the GBTA, said that companies could be concerned about safety and liability if they allow employees to use ride-hailing services while they’re on company business.

Companies have a legal obligation to ensure the safety of their employees when they travel for business. And there are some questions about the standards of drivers in the sharing economy. Unlike taxi and limousine drivers, people who use their private vehicles to ferry passengers for ride-hailing services don’t fall under the same licensing requirements. Likewise, there’s no guarantee that a private passenger vehicle has been subjected to the same maintenance standards as a rental car.

Beyond duty of care issues is the question of value.

Travelers can find rental-car companies such as Enterprise, National, Avis and Budget at the vast majority of airports, as well as in many cities and towns. With a rental car from a major company, the driver has peace of mind in knowing that the vehicle is checked regularly.

In the long run, it may be more cost effective for a business traveler to have a rental car, especially if he or she will be doing a great deal of driving to plants or other facilities spread over a wide area. Ride-hailing services may not be available in some of those areas or could take a long time to arrive.

And ride-sharing companies implement surge pricing, which means that fares automatically increase when the demand is higher than the number of available drivers. That can make it difficult for business travel managers to budget the cost of a trip. With a rental car, the price is clearly stated, so there are no surprises when the bill arrives.

For help planning a business trip, contact our travel specialist.