



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: May 13, 2013
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Meeting Date: May 29, 2013

TO: Standing Committee on Planning, Transportation and Environment
FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services
SUBJECT: Report Back on Taxis in Bus Lanes

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT, pursuant to section 124.2 (1) of the Motor Vehicle Act, Council expressly permit taxis to travel but not stop in bus lanes.
- B. THAT, pursuant to Section 124.2 (2), the Mayor write to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, requesting approval to permit taxis to travel but not stop in that portion of the bus lanes that are within 800m of an arterial highway.

REPORT SUMMARY

On March 1, 2012, the City began a trial project permitting taxis to travel but not stop in bus lanes. The trial was to be in place for at least one year before considering a permanent change, to determine if there was a benefit to taxis without significant impacts to transit operations.

Coast Mountain Bus Company, the Vancouver Taxi Association and the City met regularly throughout the trial period to monitor and address any issues associated with taxis travelling in bus lanes. While there were high numbers of taxis observed to be stopping in the bus lanes at the onset of the trial, the numbers dropped dramatically with the penalty structure implemented by the Vancouver Taxi Association. Data collected during the trial showed up to a 32 percent travel time savings in the bus lane versus the regular traffic lane, and public feedback was generally positive as a result of reduced taxi fares and travel times.

TransLink and Coast Mountain Bus Company have no concerns with making this trial permanent, as long as taxis continue to respect the "no stopping in bus lanes" provision. Staff recommend that the taxis in bus lanes trial be made permanent.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On October 18, 2011, Council directed staff to implement a pilot program, in consultation with the Taxi Roundtable and TransLink, to allow taxis to travel in bus lanes within the city of Vancouver as soon as practicable and report to Council by way of a memorandum as to what the trial will entail.

On January 17, 2012, staff reported to Council by way of an Administrative Report and Council adopted a resolution as required under sections 124.2(2) and 124.2 (3) of the Motor Vehicle Act, expressly permitting taxis to travel but not stop in bus lanes for the purposes of a trial project.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager supports this report.

TRANSLINK AND COAST MOUNTAIN BUS COMPANY COMMENTS

Translink submitted the following comments:

“TransLink and Coast Mountain Bus Company’s primary concern is maintaining unimpeded travel for the buses in the bus lanes. With taxis sharing the bus lanes, TransLink has no concerns regarding people moving capacity on the major road network as long as the taxis continue to respect the “no stopping in the bus lanes” provision. TransLink and Coast Mountain Bus Company would be strongly opposed to allowing taxis to stop for any reason in the bus lanes, as stopping could have serious safety impacts to both employees and customers, and would introduce unpredictable delays that could significantly compromise bus travel times and therefore the people moving capacity of the road.”

VANCOUVER TAXI ASSOCIATION'S COMMENTS

The Vancouver Taxi Association submitted the following comments:

“The Vancouver Taxi companies want to thank Mayor and Council, TransLink, Coast Mountain Bus Company and City Staff for working with us on this Bus Lane / Taxi “pilot project.” Allowing the taxis to operate in the bus lanes saved time and money to the consumer and increased efficiency in our overall service.

We were faced with a few challenges at the beginning of this Pilot Project; it was a learning curve for drivers of both Coast Mountain Bus Company and the Vancouver taxis. Things have calmed dramatically. We will continue to educate all taxi drivers on the importance of SAFETY when using the bus lanes.

Taxis are an important part of the transportation system with each taxi carrying a bus load of passengers every day 24 hours per day. We are hopeful that this project will become permanent.”

REPORT

Background/Context

Taxis are a vital part of the City's transportation system. They provide a flexible travel choice, serve as an extension of transit and walking trips, and provide mobility for people with permanent or temporary disabilities. It was anticipated that allowing taxis to travel in bus lanes would enable them to operate more efficiently, particularly in congested areas.

On January 17, 2012, Council adopted a resolution expressly permitting taxis to travel but not stop in bus lanes for the purposes of a trial project. It was determined that the trial would be in place for at least one year before making any decisions for a permanent change. Due to the cost of changing signage on all of the bus lanes, it was proposed that signage not be changed for the initial trial, but be implemented at a later date if necessary. A letter was distributed to the Vancouver Taxi Association and the Suburban Taxi Association, advising them of the rules of the trial.

The trial project allowing taxis to travel in bus lanes officially began on March 1, 2012. Prior to the official launch, Coast Mountain Bus Company notified all of their bus drivers of the change in use of the bus lanes, and the Vancouver Taxi Association held mandatory training sessions to ensure that their taxi drivers were aware of and understood the rules.

To deter taxis from stopping in bus lanes, the Vancouver Taxi Association imposed an escalating penalty structure for any taxi drivers from one of the four Vancouver taxi companies (Blacktop & Checker Cabs, MacLure's Cabs, Vancouver Taxi and Yellow Cab) who were observed to be stopping in bus lanes. Taxi drivers were to be given a 4 hour driving suspension for the first offence, which would escalate to 1 day, 3 days and 5 days for subsequent infractions. To deter other taxi drivers from offending, any driving suspensions would be immediately broadcast to all taxi drivers via their in-vehicle messaging systems.

TransLink, Coast Mountain Bus Company, the Vancouver Taxi Association and the City agreed to jointly monitor the bus lanes during the period of the trial to assess if taxi travel time savings could be achieved without causing significant delay to transit operations.

Strategic Analysis

Bus Lane Travel Times

At three, six and twelve months into the trial, the City and the Vancouver Taxi Association conducted travel time studies to assess the difference in travel times between the bus lane and the regular traffic lane. With the use of taxis supplied by the Vancouver Taxi Association, the travel time studies were conducted concurrently, with one taxi travelling in the bus lane and the other in the regular traffic lane. These side-by-side comparisons showed that the bus lane provided up to 21 percent in travel time savings during the AM peak period and up to 32 percent during the PM peak period. On some corridors, this translated into travel time savings of over 2 minutes. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below, with additional details included in Appendix A.

Table 1 - AM Travel Time Comparison between Bus and Regular Lanes

AM (7:00 - 9:30 AM)	Average Travel Times (minutes)		Travel Time Savings for Bus versus Regular Lane	
	Location	Bus Lane	Regular Lane	Minutes
Hastings @ Boundary to Hastings @ Seymour	12:31	14:25	01:54	13%
Broadway @ Commercial to Broadway @ Arbutus	12:47	14:17	01:30	11%
Broadway @ Arbutus to Broadway @ Cambie	06:26	06:35	00:09	2%
Burrard @ Pacific to Burrard @ Pender	04:16	05:26	01:09	21%
Average Savings (all routes)			01:11	12%

Table 2 - PM Travel Time Comparison between Bus and Regular Lanes

PM (3:00 - 6:00 PM)	Average Travel Times (minutes)		Travel Time Savings for Bus versus Regular Lane	
	Location	Bus Lane	Regular Lane	Minutes
Hastings @ Seymour to Hastings @ Boundary	13:04	15:19	02:15	15%
Broadway @ Cambie to Broadway @ Arbutus	06:41	07:43	01:02	13%
Broadway @ Arbutus to Broadway @ Commercial	14:21	16:52	02:31	15%
Burrard @ Pender to Burrard @ Pacific	04:27	04:50	00:23	8%
Georgia @ Richards to Georgia @ Denman	05:38	08:19	02:41	32%
Average Savings (all routes)			01:46	17%

Taxi Use of Bus Lanes

One month before the start of the trial and at three, six and twelve months into the trial, the City conducted counts of taxis along each bus lane corridor to better understand the number of taxis using these routes as well as the proportion of taxis using the bus lane versus the regular traffic lanes. On average, 190 more taxis were observed using bus lane corridors during the trial as compared to before the trial, representing an increase of 25 percent. This suggests that travel time savings influenced taxi route selection. In addition, up to 68 percent of taxis on bus lane corridors opted to travel in the bus lane versus the regular traffic lanes. On average, 38 percent of taxis opted to travel in the bus lane. Additional details are provided in Appendix A.

Impacts to Transit

Prior to and at the onset of the trial, the primary concern pertaining to transit was about taxis stopping in the bus lanes, due to potential impacts to bus travel times and schedule reliability. During the first month of the trial, Coast Mountain Bus Company raised concerns about the high number of taxis observed stopping in bus lanes, as well as taxis exhibiting dangerous driving behaviour as they used the bus lanes. Concerns included taxis weaving in and out of bus lanes, taxis cutting in front of buses, and taxis stopping in the bus lanes such that a bus would need to brake abruptly. As a result of these concerns, Coast Mountain Bus Company and the Vancouver Taxi Association worked together to identify the offending drivers and to issue suspensions. These efforts proved successful as the number of offences dropped significantly, with the suspensions serving as a reminder to taxi drivers of the rules of the trial.

Coast Mountain Bus Company and the Vancouver Taxi Association have continued to collaborate to keep the number of offences low, and the introduction of taxis in bus lanes does not appear to have negatively impacted transit operations. As long as taxis continue to respect the “no stopping in the bus lanes” provision, TransLink has no concerns about taxis sharing the bus lanes.

Public Feedback

Comments from the public have generally been positive. The Vancouver Taxi Association noted that customers have expressed appreciation for the shorter travel times and reduced fares.

A letter was received from the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities describing difficulties experienced by seniors and people with disabilities as a result of taxis not being able to stop in bus lanes to pick up or drop off such passengers at their exact location. It was requested that wheelchair accessible taxis and taxis carrying seniors and people with disabilities be allowed to stop in bus lanes, to minimize the distance that the passenger would need to traverse between the taxi and the destination.

Should Council proceed with making the taxis in bus lanes trial permanent, it is recommended that this request be examined in collaboration with TransLink, Coast Mountain Bus Company and the taxi industry to identify how to better serve these populations while maintaining the function of the bus lanes.

Bus Lane Signage

As the trial functioned well without any changes to bus lane signs, it is proposed that the taxi symbol be added as and when the signs require replacement, instead of a wholesale change of the signs, which would cost \$170,000.

Implications/Related Issues/Risk (if applicable)

Financial

There are no financial implications.

Environmental

Allowing taxis to travel in bus lanes provides a greater incentive for taxi use, encouraging more sustainable transportation choices and lower car use.

Legal

As per Section 124.2 (2) of the Motor Vehicle Act, approval is required from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for regulating the use of traffic lanes within 800 m of an arterial highway, including Highway 1 and the Stanley Park Causeway. This includes the bus lanes on:

- McGill Street;
- East Hastings Street between Renfrew Street and Boundary Road; and
- West Georgia Street between Gilford Street and Jervis Street.

Staff are currently in discussions with Ministry staff on the process for this approval.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommend that the trial project permitting taxis to travel but not stop in bus lanes be made permanent.

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APPENDIX A - Additional Data

Table 1 - AM Travel Times by Day and Route

AM (7:00 - 9:30 AM)	Travel Times (minutes)											
	21-Jun-2012				27-Sep-2012				27-Feb-2013			
	Bus Lane		Regular Lane		Bus Lane		Regular Lane		Bus Lane		Regular Lane	
Location	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2
Hastings @ Boundary to Hastings @ Seymour	11:23	13:42	11:01	14:46	11:42	14:56	12:51	17:51	11:14	12:10	12:20	17:41
Broadway @ Commercial to Broadway @ Arbutus	12:06	10:34	12:36	13:26	12:25	14:28	13:33		12:18	14:50	13:48	18:01
Broadway @ Arbutus to Broadway @ Cambie	07:47	06:58	04:05	07:04	05:27	05:30	06:47		06:22	06:34	06:56	08:04
Burrard @ Pacific to Burrard @ Pender	03:09	05:32	04:10	05:26	03:48		04:43		03:35	05:18	07:24	

Note: Grey cells indicate that the hours of operation for the bus lanes ended before the run could be completed.

Table 2 - PM Travel Times by Day and Route

PM (3:00 - 6:00 PM)	Travel Times (minutes)											
	10-Jul-2012				27-Sep-2012				27-Feb-2013			
	Bus Lane		Regular Lane		Bus Lane		Regular Lane		Bus Lane		Regular Lane	
Location	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2
Hastings @ Seymour to Hastings @ Boundary	12:40	12:46	13:55	14:15	14:34	13:45	17:17		11:17	13:25	14:17	16:51
Broadway @ Cambie to Broadway @ Arbutus	06:14	07:01	06:28	08:26	05:36	07:23	08:01	09:22	07:17	06:36	07:13	06:49
Broadway @ Arbutus to Broadway @ Commercial	15:47	15:46	17:23	18:26	13:29	14:37	16:02	16:13	11:29	14:55	15:28	17:38
Burrard @ Pender to Burrard @ Pacific	04:48	03:38	05:07	05:03	04:57	04:53	04:21	05:28	04:12	04:16	04:38	04:25
Georgia @ Richards to Georgia @ Denman	04:39	04:02	04:40	05:29	12:17	05:37	24:01	06:34	03:35	03:36	04:24	04:45

Note: Grey cells indicate that the hours of operation for the bus lanes ended before the run could be completed.

Table 3 - Taxi Use of Bus Lanes by Day and Route during the Trial

LOCATION	Taxi Observations during Trial								
	13-Jun-12			25-Sep-12			14-Feb-13		
	# of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Regular Lanes	% of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Regular Lanes	% of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Regular Lanes	% of Taxis in Bus Lane
W. Broadway-100 BLK WB (AM)	26	26	50%	9	21	30%	33	28	54%
W. Broadway-100 BLK EB (PM)	20	26	43%	8	9	47%	16	16	50%
W. Broadway-1300 BLK WB (AM)	34	28	55%	40	18	69%	28	36	44%
W. Broadway-1300 BLK WB (PM)	38	55	41%	39	30	57%	46	41	53%
W. Broadway-1300 BLK EB (AM)	18	19	49%	7	17	29%	14	29	33%
W. Broadway-1300 BLK EB (PM)	29	49	37%	19	30	39%	25	35	42%
W. Pender-400 BLK WB (AM)	17	24	41%	39	11	78%	30	26	54%
W. Pender 400 BLK EB (PM)	22	11	67%	16	24	40%	30	16	65%
W. Georgia-800 BLK (PM)	46	36	56%	17	30	36%	40	39	51%
W. Georgia-1700 BLK (PM)	19	53	26%	23	67	26%	6	65	8%
Burrard-900 BLK NB (AM)	49	89	36%	26	60	30%	19	121	14%
Burrard-900 BLK SB (PM)	72	216	25%	51	153	25%	39	156	20%
E. Hastings-2600 BLK WB (AM)	12	4	75%	3	8	27%	8	0	100%
E. Hastings-2600 BLK EB (PM)	10	8	56%	13	5	72%	22	9	71%
Total Taxis by Lane Type	412	644	39%	310	483	39%	356	617	37%
Total Taxis Observed	1056			793			973		

Table 4 - Comparison of Taxi Use of Bus Lanes by Day and Route Before and During the Trial

LOCATION	Taxi Observations before Trial (01-Feb-12)			Average Taxi Observations during Trial			Change from before to during Trial		
	# of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Regular Lanes	% of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Regular Lanes	% of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Bus Lane	# of Taxis in Regular Lanes	% of Taxis in Bus Lane
W. Broadway-100 BLK WB (AM)	7	29	19%	23	25	48%	+16	-4	+28%
W. Broadway-100 BLK EB (PM)	7	29	19%	15	17	47%	+8	-12	+27%
W. Broadway-1300 BLK WB (AM)	1	35	3%	34	27	56%	+33	-8	+53%
W. Broadway-1300 BLK WB (PM)	8	27	23%	41	42	49%	+33	+15	+27%
W. Broadway-1300 BLK EB (AM)	1	19	5%	13	22	37%	+12	+3	+32%
W. Broadway-1300 BLK EB (PM)	0	34	0%	24	38	39%	+24	+4	+39%
W. Pender-400 BLK WB (AM)	14	19	42%	29	20	59%	+15	+1	+17%
W. Pender 400 BLK EB (PM)	17	9	65%	23	17	58%	+6	+8	-8%
W. Georgia-800 BLK (PM)	49	27	64%	34	35	49%	-15	+8	-15%
W. Georgia-1700 BLK (PM)	5	60	8%	16	62	21%	+11	+2	+13%
Burrard-900 BLK NB (AM)	23	108	18%	31	90	26%	+8	-18	+8%
Burrard-900 BLK SB (PM)	25	177	12%	54	175	24%	+29	-2	+11%
E. Hastings-2600 BLK WB (AM)	4	8	33%	8	4	67%	+4	-4	+33%
E. Hastings-2600 BLK EB (PM)	4	5	44%	15	7	68%	+11	+2	+24%
Total Taxis by Lane Type	165	586	22%	360	581	38%	+195	-5	+16%
Total Taxis Observed	751			941			+190		