



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: June 2, 2006
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Meeting Date: June 27, 2006

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Chief License Inspector

SUBJECT: Resolution on Advanced Taxicab Driver Training and Progress on Other Taxi-Related Issues and Opportunities

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve an amendment to the Vehicles for Hire By-law which replaces the advanced training requirement for taxicab drivers with a phased training program based on the driver's years of experience generally as set out in Appendix A.
- B. THAT the Director of Legal Services be requested to prepare the necessary By-Law amendments to the Vehicles for Hire By-Law to reflect the new phased advanced driver training requirement generally as set out in Appendix A.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of the above recommendations.

COUNCIL POLICY

The Vehicles for Hire By-Law licenses and regulates the owners and drivers of vehicles for hire in the City of Vancouver. Section 6(3)(b) requires all taxicab drivers to complete at least 18 hours of advanced training designed to develop the driver's ability to transport people using mobility aids including loading and unloading, driver safety including assault avoidance and awareness, collision prevention and advanced geography, through the Taxihost Program Level 2 course for drivers provided by the Justice Institute of B.C., or other course approved by the Inspector, except that subsection (b) does not take effect until June 30, 2006.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the current issues and opportunities facing the Vancouver taxi industry and to seek Council's approval for an amendment to the Vehicles for Hire By-Law which replaces the advanced training requirement for taxicab drivers with a phased training program based on the driver's years of experience. All current drivers in the City of Vancouver will be required to complete the training by December 31, 2006.

BACKGROUND

On March 1, 2005, Council instructed staff to amend the Vehicles for Hire By-Law to require all taxicab drivers to successfully complete an additional 18 hours of advanced training on transporting people with mobility aids including loading and unloading, driver safety including assault avoidance and awareness, collision prevention and advanced geography. This training was to be taken through the TaxiHost Program Level 2 course provided by the Justice Institute of B.C. by January 1, 2006.

At a meeting in October 2005 with taxi industry representatives, opposition to the TaxiHost Level II advanced training requirement was expressed. However, staff recommended that Council continue to support the advanced training requirement as the program would establish a higher standard for taxicab drivers and would allow long-time drivers to keep current with existing techniques and practices.

On November 3, 2005, Council resolved that City of Vancouver staff call the interested parties back together to find a compromise to the issue of taxi drivers being required to take Level II training and that the implementation of the requirement to have Level II before being granted a taxi license [chauffeur's permit] be suspended until March 31, 2006.

In response to Council's instructions, a Taxi Roundtable meeting process was established wherein representatives of the taxi industry, Tourism Vancouver and the City of Vancouver are brought together on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual importance with the aim of addressing taxi-related issues, improving taxi service levels throughout Vancouver and exploring business development opportunities. To date, six taxi roundtable meetings have been held and a commitment to a long-term roundtable process has been clearly demonstrated.

In light of the current commitment of all interested parties to work together at the roundtable towards compromise solutions, in March 2006, Council approved an extension of the March 31, 2006 implementation date for the advanced training requirement to June 30, 2006. The intention of this extension was to allow the roundtable group sufficient time to resolve the training issues and enable staff to report back to Council with a compromise solution benefiting all interested parties.

DISCUSSION

The Vancouver Taxi Roundtable has proven to be an effective process for refining the advanced taxi driver training requirement and securing commitments to move forward on

business development opportunities. There has been a demonstrated willingness around the table to further enhance both the level of service to the community as well as the overall professionalism of Vancouver's taxi sector.

Current issues and opportunities discussed at the Vancouver Taxi Roundtable meetings to date are as follows:

Taxi Business Development via a Tourism Vancouver Taxi Levy Program

Tourism Vancouver is responsible for the sales and marketing of the city as a tourism destination. At the present time, marketing funds are generated primarily from the provincial 2% hotel tax. The taxi sector benefits directly from Tourism Vancouver's initiatives.

In the coming years, the convention centre expansion and 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will bring additional opportunities to build business within the tourism industry, including the taxi sector. To take full advantage of these opportunities, Tourism Vancouver is seeking additional marketing funds from a variety of sectors within the local tourism industry.

Tourism Vancouver is currently in the process of negotiating agreements with the following business sectors as part of a phased approach to raise additional funding for sales and marketing initiatives: hotels, attractions, private rail operators and taxis. Tourism Vancouver has brought this program to the Vancouver Taxi Roundtable where the four Vancouver-based taxi companies have indicated a desire to participate. The specific details of such a program (ie. amount, means of collection, implementation, and monitoring and report processes) are still under negotiation.

Chauffeur's Permit Issuance Process

As chauffeur's permits currently expire on February 28th, the amount of work required to process such a large volume of permits places a heavy burden on the Vancouver Police Taxi Unit and Records Clearances and unnecessary delays for drivers. Expiration dates staggered throughout the year would alleviate pressure on the processing staff and improve the permit issuance process for the applicants. A new issuance system where chauffeur's permit expiration dates are staggered to coincide with the applicant/holder's month of birth, similar to the process for a regular driver's license, is being developed in conjunction with the VPD and legal services.

Communication Proposal for Taxi Industry

Various mechanisms to improve communication amongst the taxi industry, including individual drivers, have been discussed. The modes of communication currently used include e-mails, telephone, written, computers and meetings. All members agreed that the distribution of a quarterly newsletter from the Taxi Roundtable to all taxi industry members (shareholders and drivers) was an excellent form of communication. The newsletter is to include up-to-date information on taxi-related issues being addressed by the City; Tourism Vancouver's taxi business development initiatives; updates on driver training from the Justice Institute; feedback from customers and miscellaneous contributions from individual drivers.

The City is prepared to assist with the launch of the newsletter in the first year and all members of the Roundtable are required to provide regular information ensuring sufficient on-going content for the newsletter. Tourism Vancouver has also indicated its willingness to contribute resources to the newsletter.

Parking Tickets in No-Stop Zones and Opening Bus Lanes for Taxis

The taxi industry objects to the fact that taxi drivers waiting for customers in no-stop zones are being ticketed by the Parking Enforcement Officers. They also believe that existing bus lanes in the City should be open for taxi cabs. A number of potential solutions to these issues have been discussed and the City is prepared to come back to the table with more information for the taxi industry after consulting with Engineering.

Advanced TaxiHost II Driver Training Requirement

Currently, the Vehicles for Hire By-Law requires all taxicab drivers to complete at least 18 hours of advanced training designed to develop the driver's ability to transport people using mobility aids including loading and unloading, driver safety including assault avoidance and awareness, collision prevention and advanced geography, through the Taxihost Program Level 2 course for drivers provided by the Justice Institute of B.C., or other course approved by the Inspector by June 30, 2006.

The advanced driver training requirement has been discussed at all six Taxi Roundtable meetings to date. Initially, the taxi industry cited the following concerns with the required TaxiHost Level II training:

- Some portions of the courses are redundant and unnecessary.
- Geography portion of course should place greater focus on the tools required to do the job (ie. GPS).
- Cost of training is excessive and serves as a disincentive to attracting new drivers into the industry.
- Requirement for experienced drivers to complete the program should be reconsidered.
- TaxiHost Level I and II should be combined into a single course.
- Drivers need more practical, hands-on training in the disability portion of the course.

In consideration of the above concerns, the Justice Institute returned to the table with the following proposal for the TaxiHost Level II program:

- The "Assault Avoidance Awareness" course module would be offered free of charge to current drivers in the City for a limited time. This would reduce the course tuition fee by \$50 for current drivers.
- Current senior drivers could challenge the Advanced Geography Exam through a 15-30 minute interview with staff of the Justice Institute. This process would allow senior drivers to be recognized for their long-term service and the Justice Institute to maintain the integrity and standard for Level 2.
- Additional hands-on training will be provided to drivers who operate wheelchair accessible vehicles.

- Once all current drivers have completed the required advanced driver training, the TaxiHost Level I and TaxiHost Level II would be combined into a single program with the same curriculum for all Vancouver drivers.
- There is an agreement to establish a subcommittee of the Taxi Roundtable to provide input into the relevance of the TaxiHost program course content.

After considerable discussion of the advanced training issue, a break-through was made at the Taxi Roundtable on May 9th, 2006. The Vancouver Taxi Industry (ie. Black Top Cabs; Vancouver Taxi; Maclures Cabs; Yellow Cabs), the City of Vancouver Licence Office and Tourism Vancouver agreed upon a phased advanced driver training program through the Justice Institute of British Columbia which will meet the City's chauffeur's permit requirements. This program which is based on the driver's years of experience requires new drivers (< 2 years) to complete the full TaxiHost Level II program while drivers with 2 - <4 years experience are provided with the option of orally challenging the advanced geography component and senior drivers (>4 years) are exempted from the Advanced Geography course altogether.

The specific phased advanced driver training program agreed to by all the parties at the Taxi Roundtable is as follows:

Phased Advanced Driver Training Program:

Driving Experience	Driver Training Requirement
Less than 2 years	All drivers must complete the entire TaxiHost Level II program through the Justice Institute of BC including Advanced Geography Exam for Greater Vancouver, Transporting People with Disabilities, Assault Avoidance Awareness and Driving with Finesse.
2-4 years less a day	All drivers must complete the entire TaxiHost Level II program through the Justice Institute of BC including Advanced Geography Exam for Greater Vancouver, Transporting People with Disabilities, Assault Avoidance Awareness and Driving with Finesse, but have the option of completing the Advanced Geography exam in writing or orally via a 15-30 minute interview with JI staff.
4+ years	All drivers must complete the following three course modules of the TaxiHost Level II program through the Justice Institute of BC: Transporting People with Disabilities, Assault Avoidance Awareness, and Driving with Finesse and are exempted from the Advanced Geography exam. Drivers also have the choice of completing the Advanced Geography exam, either in writing or via an oral interview with JI staff, within 1 year of completing the course if a TaxiHost Level II certificate is desired.

A formal letter of agreement, signed by all parties, is included in Appendix B.

Section 6(3)(b) of the Vehicles for Hire By-law needs to be amended to reflect the new phased approach to advanced driver training as outlined in Appendix A.

Drivers with 4+ years experience that successfully complete all four course modules of the TaxiHost Level II program will be provided with a full certificate for the entire advanced driving course. Drivers who complete only the three required modules will be provided with a letter from the JI indicating the City's advanced driver training requirements have been satisfactorily completed.

All drivers must register for the required TaxiHost Level II courses at the Justice Institute by June 30th, 2006 to ensure that a sufficient number of courses and instructors will be available. All required courses must be completed by December 31, 2006.

Currently, the Taxihost Level 2 program is a requirement for all taxicab drivers servicing the Vancouver airport (YVR). Furthermore, Surrey, New Westminster and West Vancouver have amended their by-laws to make the Taxihost Level 2 program a requirement for all taxi drivers in their jurisdictions. However, these municipalities are currently not enforcing this requirement, largely due to opposition from the taxi industry and the fact that a large number of taxi drivers servicing the airport have already completed the Taxihost Level 2 training. As well, some municipalities are waiting to see whether the City of Vancouver will continue to support and enforce the advanced training requirement.

Staff believe that the proposed phased advanced driver training program is a good compromise for all affected parties and will serve as a good example to other Lower Mainland municipalities also considering an advanced taxi driver training requirement.

CONCLUSION

This report proposes that Council approve an amendment to the Vehicles for Hire By-Law which replaces the advanced training requirement for taxicab drivers with a phased training program based on the driver's years of experience. The proposed program is based on a phased approach which will reduce the cost, reduce course time and be more flexible for drivers with more years of driving experience.

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APPENDIX A

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO VEHICLES FOR HIRE BY-LAW

1. Delete Section 6(3)(b)
2. Include the requirement that prior to being issued a chauffeur's permit, the Chief Constable must be satisfied that any taxi driver in the City of Vancouver with:
 - a. less than 2 years of driving experience has completed at least 18 hours of advanced training designed to develop the driver's ability to transport people with disabilities and using mobility aids, driver safety including assault avoidance and awareness, collision prevention and advanced geography through the Taxihost Program Level 2 course for drivers provided by the Justice Institute of British Columbia, or other course approved by the Inspector, by December 31, 2006.
 - b. 2 to 4 years less one day of driving experience has completed at least 18 hours of advanced training designed to develop the driver's ability to transport people with disabilities and using mobility aids, driver safety including assault avoidance and awareness, collision prevention and advanced geography (in writing or via an oral interview with staff of the Justice Institute) through the Taxihost Program Level 2 course for drivers provided by the Justice Institute of British Columbia, or other course approved by the Inspector, by December 31, 2006.
 - c. 4 or more years of driving experience has completed at least 18 hours of advanced training designed to develop the driver's ability to transport people with disabilities and using mobility aids, driver safety including assault avoidance and awareness and collision prevention through the Taxihost Program Level 2 course for drivers provided by the Justice Institute of British Columbia, or other course approved by the Inspector, by December 31, 2006.

For drivers who hold chauffeur's permits on the date of enactment of these amendments, years of driving experience is to be calculated from the date the driver was originally issued a chauffeur's permit in the city to the date Council enacts the amendments.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

This letter constitutes an agreement between the Vancouver Taxi Industry (ie. Black Top Cabs; Vancouver Taxi; Maclures Cabs; Yellow Cabs), the City of Vancouver Licence Office and Tourism Vancouver for a phased advanced driver training program through the Justice Institute of B.C. which will meet the City’s chauffeur’s permit requirements.

The parties to this agreement agree to jointly recommend to Vancouver City Council that all existing and future taxi drivers in the City of Vancouver be required to complete the phased advanced driver training program as outlined in the table below prior to being issued a chauffeur’s permit.

Phased Advanced Driver Training Program:

Driving Experience	Driver Training Requirement
0-2 (eve of) years	All drivers must complete the entire TaxiHost Level II program through the Justice Institute of BC including Advanced Geography Exam for Greater Vancouver, Transporting People with Disabilities, Assault Avoidance Awareness and Driving with Finesse.
2-4 (eve of) years	All drivers must complete the entire TaxiHost Level II program through the Justice Institute of BC including Advanced Geography Exam for Greater Vancouver, Transporting People with Disabilities, Assault Avoidance Awareness and Driving with Finesse, but have the option of completing the Advanced Geography exam in writing or orally via a 15-30 minute interview with JI staff.
4+ years	All drivers must complete the following three course modules of the TaxiHost Level II program through the Justice Institute of BC: Transporting People with Disabilities, Assault Avoidance Awareness, and Driving with Finesse and are exempted from the Advanced Geography exam. Drivers also have the choice of completing the Advanced Geography exam, either in writing or via an oral interview with JI staff, within 1 year of completing the course if a TaxiHost Level II certificate is desired.

Note: Drivers with 4+ years experience that successfully complete all four course modules of the TaxiHost Level II program will be provided with a full certificate for the entire advanced driving course. Drivers who complete only the three required modules will be provided with a letter from the JI indicating the City’s advanced driver training requirements have been satisfactorily completed.

This agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties. Its terms can be modified only in writing by all parties. Final by-law changes and implementation must be approved by Vancouver City Council.

The parties have executed this Agreement on the date listed below:

	<u>Signature</u>	<u>Date</u>
<u>Black Top Cabs</u>		
Carolyn Bauer - Manager	_____	_____
Surjit Gill - President	_____	_____
Surinder Dhadli - Shareholder	_____	_____
<u>Vancouver Taxi</u>		
Jatinder Sumbal - Manager	_____	_____
Sukhdev Janda - President	_____	_____
Manjit Dhaliwal - Director	_____	_____
<u>Maclures Cabs</u>		
John Gordon - Manager	_____	_____
Sucha Poonia - President	_____	_____
Hardeep Atwal - Secretary	_____	_____
<u>Yellow Cabs</u>		
Charles Castonguay - Manager	_____	_____
Surjeet Pandher - President	_____	_____
Satvinder Sekhon - Director	_____	_____
<u>City of Vancouver</u>		
Paul Teichroeb Chief Licence Inspector	_____	_____
<u>Tourism Vancouver</u>		
Rick Antonson	_____	_____
Stephen Regan	_____	_____