



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: March 7, 2006
Author: Alena Straka
Phone No.: 604.871.6683
RTS No.: 05797
VanRIMS No.: 11-4600-70
Meeting Date: March 21, 2006

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Chief License Inspector
SUBJECT: Vehicles for Hire By-Law: Advanced Taxicab Driver Training

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council extend the current implementation date of March 31, 2006 for requiring all taxicab drivers to complete an additional 18 hours of advanced training to June 30, 2006.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

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

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 this subsection (b) does not take effect until January 1, 2006.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval for an extension of the implementation date of March 31, 2006 for requiring all taxicab drivers to complete an additional 18 hours of advanced training to June 30, 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 is to be taken through the TaxiHost Program Level 2 course provided by the Justice Institute of B.C. by January 1, 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.

At a meeting in October 2005 with taxi industry representatives, opposition to the current requirement for all drivers to complete the Taxihost Level 2 program was expressed. Further to reviewing the scope of the advanced training and justification for the program, staff recommended, via a memorandum dated October 25, 2005, that Council continue to support the advanced training requirement.

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.

DISCUSSION

Further to Council's instructions to find a compromise to the advanced training requirement, staff met separately with the taxi industry, Tourism Vancouver and the Justice Institute to review issues and look at potential solutions. These separate meetings revealed the need for a regular, structured forum for discussion and information sharing between all interested parties, not only to address and resolve the current TaxiHost Level II stalemate, but to deal with the many other issues and concerns facing the taxi industry on an on-going basis. These issues include business development, parking/loading, chauffeur's permits, driver recognition and regional equity issues. The taxi industry and Tourism Vancouver agreed with this conclusion.

The result was the creation of a Taxi Roundtable meeting process 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 improving the taxi business and service levels throughout Vancouver. The City has retained a facilitator to chair the roundtable meetings for the initial start-up period to ensure that the meetings represent a fair process for all participants.

All interested parties have now committed to the long-term roundtable process to deal with taxi-related issues, including the advanced training requirement. The terms of reference for the Taxi Roundtable are found in Appendix A.

To date, two taxi roundtable meetings have been held and the following key issues concerning the advanced TaxiHost level II training requirement have been identified:

1. Program cost and time required for training
2. Course content needs to be updated/refined
3. Course content will not enhance knowledge/skills of experienced, long-term drivers
4. Practical, hands-on training required for drivers transporting disabled passengers

In light of the current commitment of all interested parties to work together at the roundtable towards compromise solutions, staff support an extension of the March 31, 2006 implementation date for the advanced training requirement. A further extension to June 30, 2006 will allow the roundtable group sufficient time to solve the training issues and enable staff to report back to Council with a compromise solution benefiting all interested parties.

CONCLUSION

This report proposes that Council extend the current implementation date of March 31, 2006 for requiring all taxicab drivers to complete an additional 18 hours of advanced training to June 30, 2006. This will provide staff, the taxi industry and Tourism Vancouver sufficient time to arrive at a compromise solution for the training issue.

* * * * *

1. TAXI ROUNDTABLE

A. Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Terms of Reference ensure that those participating in the Taxi Roundtable are aware of and committed to the objectives and, specifically, are aware of the advisory nature of the Roundtable with respect to City of Vancouver jurisdiction.

Purpose

The purpose of the Taxi Roundtable is to bring representatives of the taxi industry, Tourism Vancouver and the City of Vancouver together to discuss issues of mutual importance with the aim of improving the taxi business and service levels throughout Vancouver.

B. Objectives of the Roundtable

1. That Roundtable members make a long-term commitment to the Roundtable process of discussing and resolving issues.
2. To address key issues facing the taxi industry.
3. To address changes to TaxiHost 1 & 11 training courses.
4. To address way to recognise the taxi industry's presence and importance.
5. To discuss and recommend ways to promote and attract more people into the taxi industry, including streamlining training, certification and permitting processes.
6. To address the Chauffer permit (criminal record check) issue.
7. To address illegal competition, taxi stopping in no-stopping zones, taxi use of bus lanes, out-of-town identification and other regional issues.
8. To address business development opportunities for the taxi industry including the introduction of a tourism/taxi industry levy.
9. To explore ways to improve communication throughout the taxi industry.
10. To improve taxi service levels throughout the City of Vancouver.

C. Operations

1. The venue for meetings will be determined in cooperation with the City of Vancouver. Regular meetings will be held in City of Vancouver meeting rooms.
2. The Taxi Roundtable will meet six times a year or approximately every two months. The Roundtable may agree to meet more frequently, if required to resolve issues.
3. An independent Facilitator contracted through the City of Vancouver will facilitate and chair meetings of the Roundtable. The facilitator will work with City staff to set meeting agendas and to review draft meeting notes prior to circulation to Roundtable members.
4. There will be no designated spokesperson for public or media comment regarding the work of the Roundtable. If appropriate, City staff will comment on Reports to Council dealing with Roundtable matters.
5. Information for the Roundtable agenda must be provided to City Staff one week in advance of a meeting to allow for preparation and circulation of material.
6. Within the topics identified in the above objectives, members of the Roundtable may raise issues with the facilitator for consideration on the agenda.
7. The results of Roundtable meetings will be recorded in summary notes which will contain a description of the issues addressed, action steps, responsibilities, timelines and so forth.
8. Periodically, City staff will forward a report to City Council describing the work completed by the Roundtable. Copies of the report will be circulated to Roundtable members and interested members of the public.

D. Membership

Principles

Membership on the Roundtable and terms of appointment are at the discretion of the Board of the City of Vancouver. The Roundtable will not exceed a membership of 18, plus the facilitator. Each of the four taxi companies operating in Vancouver will recommend three representatives and Tourism Vancouver and the City of Vancouver will each recommend three representatives at the Roundtable.

Selection

The City of Vancouver will appoint members to the Roundtable. City staff may select from the candidates recommended by the Working Group or may choose others, if at their discretion, they believe additional or different members will aid in meeting the above objectives.

Term of Appointment

The term of appointment to the Roundtable is for one year, and a representative will be replaced if three consecutive meetings are missed.

E. Guests

Roundtable Guests

From time to time, interested parties will be invited to attend Roundtable meetings to assist in resolving issues and meeting objectives. Representatives of the Justice Institute, for example, will be invited to attend Roundtable meetings to discuss changes to the Taxihost 1 & 11 training.