

ACCESSIBLE TAXI REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Administration, with the support of the Livery Transport Advisory Committee (LTAC), has undertaken a two-phased Accessible Taxi Review which seeks to improve customer service for individuals using on-demand wheelchair-accessible taxis and to reduce the financial burden for Accessible Taxi Plate Licence (ATPL) owners and drivers. Phase 1 included a best practice review and current state data analysis for the industry. This was received by Council for information on 2016 February 22 and is provided in Attachment 1. Phase 2 includes a detailed options analysis and significant engagement with accessible taxi users and the taxi industry. In addition to the options presented in this report, internal discussions have been initiated between Calgary Transit Access (CTA) and Livery Transport Services (LTS) to explore all accessible transportation options and opportunities to collaborate. On 2016 November 18, LTAC received Phase 2 of the Accessible Taxi Review and endorsed Administration's recommendations contained in this report.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SPC on Community and Protective Services recommends that Council:

1. Endorse Accessible Taxi Review Option 1 in Attachment 2 and direct Administration to bring forward amendments to the Livery Transport Bylaw 6M2007 based on this option in 2017 Q2; and
2. Direct Administration to undertake an accessible transportation policy review between Calgary Transit Access and Livery Transport Services to explore opportunities to collaborate on service delivery for the accessible taxi community.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2016 February 22, C2016-0144 (Transportation Network Company Amendments) included Phase 1 of the Accessible Taxi Review, which Council received for information.

On 2015 December 02, Council approved the 2016 Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee work plan, which included Phase 1 of the Accessible Taxi Review in 2016 Q1 and Phase 2 in 2016 Q4.

BACKGROUND

In 2010, the Livery Transport Advisory Committee (LTAC) selected Hara Associates to undertake an assessment of services at that time and make recommendations on Taxi Supply Demand Ratio and accessible vehicle ratios. At that time the industry included 100 wheelchair accessible taxis, which was 7.1 per cent of the total taxi fleet. Hara's "Taxi Supply Demand Ratio" report for The City of Calgary recommended Calgary achieve a target percentage of wheelchair accessible taxis of 11 per cent. This was anticipated to achieve "Reasonable Comparability," meaning all trip requests would be served and most trips would be served within a similar timeframe to regular taxi requests.

In 2011, The City of Calgary worked with J. Hoad Consulting to look further into accessibility in the taxi industry and determine whether further recommendations were required to improve service in the city. Several recommendations were adopted and implemented, including: increased training requirements for accessible taxi drivers; the inclusion of questions on

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accessible service in the annual customer satisfaction survey; and establishing a standard of accessible taxi service for persons who use mobility devices. The report also suggested that a portion of accessible taxi plates be provided to brokers to afford them with more control over the provision of service. Currently all ATPLs are held by individual drivers.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of the accessible taxi review is to improve customer service for accessible taxis and reduce the financial burden on accessible taxi owners and drivers. In addition, the review considers the evolving taxi industry and the effects of TNC operations, where there is no limit on the number of TNC vehicles. The sustainability of on-demand accessible service may be eroded by an open system that could draw accessible drivers from the taxi industry.

The City has a significant role to play in ensuring that its regulation of the livery industry does not create barriers which effectively deny service to or discriminate against persons with disabilities who require accessible transportation. To this end, it is important that service providers are given the tools they require to accommodate passengers with disabilities, which they are required to do by law to the point of undue hardship.

In 2016 February, Administration provided Council with Phase 1 of the Accessible Taxi Review which included a best practices review and current state livery data findings for Calgary. Several key themes emerged from Phase 1, including:

- Costs to run accessible taxis are higher than those of regular taxis
- Technology upgrades are enhancing ease of accessible taxi access by giving customers additional booking options
- Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) are influencing accessible taxi service

Subsequent to the completion of Phase 1, Administration has performed significant analysis of costs, dispatch response times and customer service levels. Engagement with accessible taxi users has been carried out and several options have been developed based on analysis and feedback. Findings are provided below:

Accessible Taxi Customer Service

Customer service for accessible taxi service was assessed through the analysis of Dispatch Response Time data and qualitative research with accessible taxi users. Dispatch Response Times are measured from the time a driver receives a dispatched call to the time the taximeter is turned on. Target dispatch response times were established through recommendations from Hara Associates in their 2010 Taxi Supply Demand Ratio report. For 2016 Q3, 91 per cent of regular trips and 58 per cent of accessible trips met the 15 minute target. The discrepancy in response times is not only attributed to the geographical spread of accessible taxis, but also the additional time required for accessible customers to reach the taxi from their pickup location, and for loading and securing the passenger, which should occur before the taximeter is turned on. By factoring in load time, accessible taxi response moves to 82 per cent within 15 minutes on average.

Administration worked with Leger Research on a survey for accessible taxi users. The response rate was low; however, some qualitative feedback was received. In general, the results showed

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that users surveyed were generally satisfied with accessible taxis; however, they noted that improvements could be made in terms of wait times for taxis, more certainty from dispatch about expected wait times and easing the financial burden on taxi drivers to ensure that the service continues. Administration also met with several accessible taxi users to hear first-hand accounts of their experiences with accessible taxis. The most common concern raised by users was the reliability of accessible service – several people had experienced instances where they called for an accessible taxi and were told that there were none available, or that the wait time would be very long. Other concerns raised included: safety and comfort issues related to being in the rear of the vehicle, proper securing of the wheelchair and passenger in the vehicle and drivers starting the meter before the passenger is loaded in the vehicle or keeping the meter on while unloading the passenger. Some individuals indicated that they no longer use on-demand accessible taxis because of their dissatisfaction with the service.

Financial Burden on Accessible Taxi Owners and Drivers

In addition to customer service considerations in the Accessible Taxi Review, Administration and LTAC also considered the additional financial burden experienced by ATPL owners and drivers (compared to regular taxis). The initial capital cost to install a wheelchair ramp is approximately \$15,000, and the work must be done out-of-Province as there are no wheelchair ramp installers in Alberta. ATPL holders do not have the option to purchase smaller, more inexpensive or fuel-efficient vehicles. The van required as an accessible taxi costs \$5,000 to \$10,000 more than a smaller vehicle that can be used as a regular taxi. In addition to the increased initial costs, there are several increased operating costs associated with larger, heavier accessible taxis, including: increased fuel costs; more frequent suspension, brake and tire replacement; and servicing of the ramp. Administration has made efforts to reduce the financial burden on ATPL holders by reducing annual licence fees from \$877 to \$220 (2016 fees); however, it is anticipated that ATPL owners and drivers pay approximately \$8,000 more than Taxi Plate Licence (TPL) owners and drivers, per year. Many accessible drivers expressed frustration with the increased costs associated with their vehicles and have requested that LTAC and The City provide financial compensation. Several non-transferable ATPLs have been surrendered to LTS, with drivers citing that they cannot make enough revenue to cover the additional costs associated with operating an accessible vehicle. A comparison of costs between regular and accessible taxis can be found in Attachment 3.

Transportation Network Company Influence on Accessible Service

The livery industry is evolving with the introduction of TNCs into the Calgary transportation system. TNCs operate in an open-entry system where there is no limit on the number of TNC vehicles. This can impact the accessible taxi system if accessible taxi drivers choose to stop providing accessible service and instead drive their personal vehicle for a TNC. The development of a new regulatory structure that includes rules for all transportation providers to accommodate passengers requiring accessible service is more important than ever, to ensure that customers are served by all types of service providers.

Accessible Taxi Trip Volumes

Accessible service is a very small part of the overall taxi trips provided in Calgary. In 2015, taxis performed approximately 7.5 million taxi trips. Of those, about 18,000 trips were for mobility-disabled passengers requiring an accessible taxi. That is about 0.25 per cent of overall trips

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provided to wheelchair passengers. Accessible taxis constitute 11 per cent of the taxi fleet, which demonstrates that the current system could be improved in terms of fleet efficiency.

Opportunity to Collaborate with Calgary Transit Access

CTA provides another transportation option for individuals who qualify. CTA is meant for those who cannot use Calgary Transit due to a disability. Eligibility is based on a person's cognitive or physical inability to use regular Calgary Transit buses or C-Trains. CTA operates on a pre-arranged service delivery model where trips are typically booked a minimum of four days in advance. CTA provides service to individuals with all types of disabilities, not only those with mobility disabilities. In 2015, CTA provided over one million trips to nearly 15,000 Calgarians. Approximately 300,000 of those trips were for wheelchair customers. Users of the service pay the equivalent of a transit fare for trips - \$3.15 (2016 rates). Some CTA customers also qualify for the Access Calgary Extra (ACE) program, which provides a debit card that can be used to pay for on-demand taxi trips through taxi companies. LTAC and Administration have identified that there are some common areas of concern between CTA and Livery Transport Services (LTS) and would like to explore opportunities to collaborate through an accessible transportation policy review. This review would focus on ensuring appropriate service levels for all customers whether they choose transit or taxi as their mode. LTAC endorsed this approach to an accessible transportation policy review at their 2016 November 18 meeting.

Options Analysis

In addition to an accessible transportation policy review between CTA and LTS, LTAC and Administration considered several options to improve the accessible taxi system in Calgary. Engagement with drivers, brokers, and the public has resulted in three options for Council to consider to improve customer service and reduce the financial burden on accessible taxi owners and drivers. These options are detailed in Attachment 2.

Option 1: Broker Accountability Model – Administration Recommendation

The broker accountability model involves shifting the responsibility for accessible service from the individual to the taxi company. ATPLs would be provided to taxi companies, allowing them to have greater control over the provision of accessible service. Brokerages would be subject to strict service standards and dispatch response times to ensure that accessible service was equal to the regular service they provide. In order to offset some of the additional costs associated with accessible service, brokers would be offered two TPLs for each ATPL they deploy. There would be no limit to the number of ATPLs that brokers could obtain, in order to ensure brokers have the ability to ensure that equal service standards are met. Existing ATPL holders would be given the option to switch to a TPL, or could continue to provide accessible service. Through interviews with ATPL holders, several individuals expressed interest in switching from an ATPL to a regular TPL. All service providers, including Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) would be required to provide equal accessible service to regular service, and would be permitted to enter into agreements with other industry members in order to ensure that the service is provided. This option also includes amendments to the Livery Transport Bylaw that ensure customer service improvements are made, such as requiring that debit and credit card machines reach to the rear of the vehicle where a mobility disabled passenger would be located. TNCs will also be required to provide accessible service and can enter into agreements with other service providers to ensure that service standards are met.

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Taxi brokers are generally in support of Option 1. This option could also result in new brokerages being formed, as business owners would have the option to build up a fleet of taxis, 33 per cent of which would be accessible. This recommended option gives brokers the ability to control accessible service and places the accountability on the company, rather than on the individual ATPL holder or driver. LTAC endorsed this option at their 2016 November 18 meeting.

Option 2: Subsidization/Incentive Model

The subsidization/incentive model involves providing a financial incentive to accessible drivers to encourage timely responses to wheelchair taxi trips. An accessible per-trip fee (\$0.10) would be added to every taxi and TNC trip and collected by the driver. At licence renewal, the driver would be required to provide the accessible fee to LTS. LTS would then provide an incentive to accessible drivers based on the number of wheelchair trips they provided that year. This option reimburses drivers for some of the additional costs they incur; however, it would not cover all costs. Based on 2015 trip volumes, the anticipated incentive would be approximately \$40 per accessible trip provided. This option is administratively complex in terms of collection and redistribution of funds. Additionally, brokers and drivers are not in support of this option.

Option 3: Status Quo

This option makes no changes to the existing accessible taxi system. The results of the accessible transportation policy review between CTA and LTS may inform future changes to the accessible transportation system. This option is not recommended as it does not address the potential erosion of the accessible taxi industry when an open TNC system exists and the important need to improve the existing system for users and industry members.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

Significant stakeholder engagement occurred throughout the accessible taxi review. Accessible taxi users were engaged through focus groups and a qualitative survey (carried out by phone, mail and online). Taxi Companies and TNCs were engaged through in-person meetings to discuss potential options and ideas for implementation. Some ATPL holders participated in an in-person survey at licence renewal to discuss their perspectives on the industry and to hear ideas on how to improve the system. As options were developed, a driver Open House was held on 2016 August 11 to solicit feedback on proposed solutions. Finally, updates on the accessible taxi review have been presented to LTAC regularly throughout 2016, with opportunity for the public to provide input. Communication and engagement with users and industry will continue through the implementation of the recommendations in this report, if approved by Council.

Strategic Alignment

The proposed multi-departmental accessible transportation policy review will improve corporate, service based alignment. In addition, this report aligns with Calgary City Council Priorities from Action Plan 2015-2018, including: a city that moves; and strategic action M5: Improve the taxi system.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

LTAC and Administration are committed to providing a safe, sustainable and customer focused livery system. Accessible livery service enhances mobility and reduces social isolation for those

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with disabilities in Calgary communities. Further, the taxi, limousine and TNC industries serve to facilitate the city's economic development, while supporting the use of environmentally-friendly modes of transportation.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

There are no anticipated changes to the LTS operating budget as a result of this report; however, some of the options presented may have budget implications. Additionally, the results of the accessible transportation review could impact budgets. Budget implications will be considered carefully by Administration through implementation and presented to Council.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

There are no anticipated changes to the LTS capital budget as a result of this report; however, Administration will monitor any budget implications and report back to Council through the budget adjustment process with any necessary adjustments.

Risk Assessment

Administration has analysed several strategic options for consideration, each with their own associated risks. Option 3 presents the greatest amount of risk as it does not take any immediate action to address accessible taxi customer concerns, nor does it address the financial burden placed on accessible taxi owners and drivers. It also does not address the risks TNCs now pose on the current system. Option 2 includes the risk that drivers may not be incented enough to seek out accessible trips, and would not be adequately reimbursed for their increased costs. It is also not supported by industry. Option 1 presents the lowest amount of risk and the greatest opportunity to improve the accessible taxi system. Providing two TPLs for every one ATPLs to brokers does present some risk that there may be too many taxis on the road, however the costs associated with investing in an accessible taxi in order to receive two TPLs would reduce this risk. Administration is committed to monitoring taxi data to ensure that the taxi system remains safe and sustainable.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

Administration, with the support of the Livery Transport Advisory Committee (LTAC), has undertaken a two-phased Accessible Taxi Review which seeks to improve customer service for individuals using on-demand wheelchair-accessible taxis and to reduce the financial burden for Accessible Taxi Plate Licence (ATPL) owners and drivers. Phase 1 included a best practice review and current state data analysis for the industry. This was received by Council for information on 2016 February 22 and is provided in Attachment 1. Phase 2 includes a detailed options analysis and significant engagement with accessible taxi users and the taxi industry. In addition to the options presented in this report, internal discussions have been initiated between Calgary Transit Access (CTA) and Livery Transport Services (LTS) to explore all accessible transportation options and opportunities to collaborate.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Accessible Taxi Review – Phase 1 Findings
2. Accessible Taxi Review – Options Analysis
3. Cost Comparison – Regular and Accessible Taxis