

Date June 19, 2006

To: Planning and Transportation Committee

From: Lenna Bradburn, Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards

Subject: Taxicab Driver Protective Shield Program

Purpose:

To report on a methodology to determine the feasibility of mandatory taxicab driver protective shield programme, including consulting with taxicab drivers, the possibility of conducting a poll and possible models for the financing of the installation of protective shields through a taxicab fare surcharge or other viable financing options without direct costs to the City of Toronto.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

The cost of conducting an independent, statistically valid survey of taxi-users to determine their views regarding taxi cab safety shields is estimated to be \$10,000.00. Funding for such a survey is not contained within the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division 2006 budget and requires approval by Council.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Executive Director of Municipal Licensing and Standards Division conduct a feasibility study regarding a mandatory taxi shield program and report to Planning and Transportation Committee by March 2007; and
- (2) the Executive Director of Municipal Licensing and Standards Division to undertake an independent, statistically valid survey of Toronto citizens who are taxicab users to determine their views on the implementation of a mandatory taxi cab shield program.

Background:

At its meeting of May 23, 24, and 25, 2006, City Council adopted a motion that the City of Toronto take urgent action to improve the safety of taxi drivers in Toronto and requested the Executive Director of Municipal Licensing and Standards to report to the July 4, 2006 meeting of the Planning and Transportation Committee on a mandatory taxi driver protective shield program, such a report to include:

- (1) a consultation process with taxi drivers, including the possibility of conducting a poll; and
- (2) models for financing the installation of protective shields through a taxi fare surcharge or other viable financing options without direct costs to the City of Toronto.

Comments:

Taxicab Safety Shields

The City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 545, Licensing, currently allows taxicab owners, lessees and drivers to install taxicab safety shields in their vehicles as long as the shield does not obstruct the view from the taxicab camera system of passengers in the rear seat, and allows proper circulation of heating and air conditioning in the taxicab.

Taxicab safety shields are viewed as a preventive safety measure. Thefts and attacks may be reduced by separating the taxicab driver from possible attackers in the rear seat. The driver's sense of security may be enhanced and the shield may allow the driver more time to activate his two-way radio, cellular phone or any other safety device available to him.

Taxicab shields are produced in a number of styles, such as full shields extending from the roof to the floor of the vehicle with bullet resistant clear plastic material above the front seat and metal extending to the floor of the vehicle, or half shields fashioned from bullet resistant clear plastic material extending from the roof to the base of the front seat of the vehicle. Shields can be configured a number of other ways which incorporate openings and coin slots. Some models can be easily removed and stored in the trunk depending on the owner or drivers' wishes. These shields are currently manufactured for a number of vehicle makes and models, and can be customized to suit other purchasers' requirements or vehicles.

Methodology to Conduct a Feasibility Study

In order to determine the feasibility of mandating taxi safety shields in Toronto, Municipal Licensing and Standards Division (ML&S) proposes to undertake a feasibility study. This study will define the scope of the problem, including determining the nature of crimes committed against taxi drivers and where these crimes occur in relation to the driver sitting area; a literature review; the experience of other regulated jurisdictions that have considered this issue, including those which have introduced mandatory programs; examining other safety initiatives that may address the problem(s) identified; and, conduct field tests of various safety shields to determine the impacts on drivers, passengers, vehicle operations and other safety equipment already mandated in Toronto taxi cabs.

Further, the Toronto taxi industry, users and other stakeholders will be consulted using a variety of tools, including polling. ML&S has the capacity to poll taxi owners, drivers and brokerages using its database and staff support. In anticipation of the work deriving from this report, ML&S commenced an in-person polling process of the taxi industry on June 13, 2006. Depending on the participation rate of this process, other consultative strategies may be required.

It is proposed that a poll of the taxi-using public using a statistically valid survey methodology be conducted by a polling company to obtain the views of taxi users on this matter. The cost of such a survey is estimated to be \$10,000.00.

Taxicab Safety Shield Pricing

The taxicab safety shield suppliers identified in Appendix "A", advised ML&S regarding the pricing of the various taxicab safety shields available. The price of a half shield ranges from approximately \$700.00 to \$1,000.00 including installation, and prices for a full shield range from approximately \$1,000.00 to \$3,000.00

Financing Taxicab Safety Shield Installation

ML&S was also directed by Council to explore models for financing the installation of protective taxicab shields through a taxi fare surcharge or other viable financing options, without direct costs to the City of Toronto. The experience of other jurisdictions will be explored with the intent of developing funding options.

Conclusions:

Municipal Licensing and Standards Division will undertake a study to explore the feasibility of a mandatory taxi shield program, including financing options, reporting to Council by March 2007. The study will include consultation with the taxi industry and users.

Contact:

Mark Dimuantes, Senior Policy Research Officer
Municipal Licensing and Standards
City Hall, East Tower, 17th Floor
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2
Telephone: (416) 392-8794
Fax: (416) 392-0797
E-mail: mdimuant@toronto.ca

Lenna Bradburn
Executive Director
Municipal Licensing and Standards

Appendix "A"

1. Chinook Plastics
Calgary, AL
Rupalfen
Phone: (403) 250-7484
2. Okan Industries
Brampton, ON
Steve Okopny
Phone: (905) 799-9790
3. Pather Plastics
370 Alden Road
Markham, ON
Neville Pather
Phone: (905) 475-6549
4. Taxicab Benefits Association
Toronto, ON
John McIntyre
Phone: (416) 821-9035