

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION REPORT NO.

MEETING DATE: May 8, 2007

SUBJECT: WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE DISTANCE BASED TAXI SERVICE
– INFORMATION REPORT

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Commission receive this report for information on the status of the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the provision of Wheelchair Accessible Distance Based Taxi services.

BACKGROUND

In an effort to improve the quality of accessible taxi service, the TTC will be issuing a new RFP for the provision of these services, with a specific focus on quality assurance. Accessible taxi complaints are double that of the Wheel-Trans bus service with customer concerns focusing on drivers not picking up customers, being discourteous to customers, poor driving, not following the escort and securement procedures, and picking-up customers late. Customers are hesitant to complain for fear of losing their service privileges. To address this, we are expanding the Customer Outreach Program to encourage feedback from the customers regarding all aspects of the service. In addition, an independent Quality Assurance program is being established in order to more accurately assess the quality of this contracted service.

In the first five years of the current accessible taxi contract, the TTC held formal reviews with the accessible taxi contractors to address customer complaints such as late pick-ups and driver performance. This resulted in some improvement in their quality of service. In late 2005, the accessible taxi contractors formed the Accessible Transportation Association of Ontario (ATAO). Recognizing that systemic issues must be addressed in order to achieve further service improvements, several meetings were held with the ATAO.

Quality of service issues remained a concern and, as such, the ATAO hired a Field Inspector (in late 2006) to monitor and conduct comprehensive audits of driver performance and vehicle condition. However, there has been no substantive improvement in the quality of service based on recent customer complaints received.

The current contracts have a provision for poor performance penalties. In 2006, the total penalties imposed on the accessible contractors totalled approximately \$110,000. Over the same period, contract violations have resulted in sanctions against the accessible contract drivers ranging from 1 to 16 days. Very serious safety infractions have resulted in the permanent removal of drivers from performing work under this contract.

DISCUSSION

Staff is currently working on an RFP for the provision of Wheelchair Accessible Distance Based Taxi Service to replace our current contracts which were awarded June 1, 2000 and are currently scheduled to expire December 31, 2007.

The objective of this RFP and its subsequent contract(s) is to:

- Provide a consistent High Quality Transportation Service to the disabled community.

This will be achieved by a service provider(s):

- whose core business is providing a consistent high quality of service to the disabled,
- whose proactive management is sensitive to the disabled community with demonstrated expertise in hiring and training service providers.

The RFP documents include specific requirements for:

- Door-to-door accessible taxi service encompassing securing, escorting, and safely transporting Wheel-Trans customers
- A Quality Assurance program
- Detailed requirements for drivers including:
 - that the owner of the vehicle MUST be the only driver, and
 - that the driver must be dedicated to providing service only to the TTC during the hours of service assigned for the term of the contract.
- Comprehensive hiring and training criteria:
 - The contractor is responsible to ensure that processes are in place to hire drivers that have a good knowledge of the location of streets, are polite and considerate of the public, and dress in specific business attire.
 - Minimum payment to drivers of \$2.40.
- Quantifiable performance measurables for monitoring and managing on-time service through the implementation of vehicle location devices, and timely response to customer concerns.

- Service limited to low-floor side door entry accessible licensed taxis meeting the Commission's requirements.
- Reallocating contractor service for unacceptable performance as well as the right to remove drivers from providing service for serious infractions.

The proponents will be required to submit information including but not limited to the following:

- The number of years that the proponent has provided services to the disabled community.
- A brief description of the services provided by the proponent including specific services to the disabled, experience providing transportation, and managing a call centre.
- Demonstrate that their service area is the entire City of Toronto.
- Quantify the services currently provided to their customers.
- Evidence of demonstrated experience in providing high quality service to persons with disabilities
- References for services provided.
- A completed performance review form provided by the Commission.
- A current organizational structure chart including key positions with descriptions of duties for critical areas such as human resources management, training, supervision and quality assurance programs.
- Current copies of their policies and procedures for human resources management including training plans, hiring criteria, sensitivity awareness programs, etc.
- A detailed overview of how the proposed work will be integrated into their existing organizational structure.
- A detailed work plan of how the proponent plans to implement this service, including:
 - Goals and objectives
 - Hiring criteria
 - Training plan
 - Details of the quality assurance plan
 - On-street supervision
 - Listing of performance measurement reports, and

- Audits proposed
- A copy of their current financial statements.

The target schedule for this new RFP is as follows:

Issue RFP	:	April, 2007
RFP Close	:	June, 2007
Contract Award	:	July, 2007

In the event that an extension to the proposal date is required, the schedule will be adjusted accordingly.

Commission approval is required no later than August 2007 in order to support the service requirement commencing January 2008.

At least four months are required from Notification of Award for the contractor(s) to demonstrate that the management structure, processes, call centre, and drivers are in place and functional prior to the commencement of service.

JUSTIFICATION

The report is provided for information purposes to report on the status of the RFP for Wheelchair Accessible Distance Based Taxi Service.

April 5, 2007
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