

# Public Consultation Summary

## Review of Chapter 546, Licensing of Vehicles-for-Hire

### Contents

- Note to Readers..... 1
- Overview..... 1
- Summary ..... 2
- Questions and Responses ..... 4
  - 1. What has your experience been since the new vehicle-for-hire bylaw was implemented?.. 4
  - 2. How can the City improve the licensing process?..... 4
  - 3. How can safety be improved for operators, customers, and other users of the road? ..... 5
  - 4. What changes are required in order to provide better accessible service? ..... 7
  - 5. Are the current vehicle and equipment requirements reasonable? ..... 9
  - 6. General Comments .....10
- Next Steps .....11

### Note to Readers

The following document summarizes the feedback heard during the first phase of public consultations (September 17 to October 3, 2018). It is intended to inform the ongoing research and analysis in the review of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 546, Licensing of Vehicles-for-Hire. Feedback has not been attributed to individuals, or specific companies in the vehicle-for-hire industries. The feedback may not be representative of the wider Toronto population or all stakeholders within an industry.

Public consultations will continue throughout the duration of the review, with a final report expected in Q2 2019. Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) will continue to accept comments and feedback at [VehicleForHireReview@toronto.ca](mailto:VehicleForHireReview@toronto.ca) as the review progresses.

### Overview

Between September 17 and October 3, MLS staff hosted nine public consultation meetings. The meetings were held at Metro Hall, North York Civic Centre, and Toronto City Hall in an effort to provide central locations that are accessible via public transit. Meetings were promoted through the City's Get Involved public consultation website, the City's internet site, social media (Twitter), a news release, and an email to those who have signed up for updates on the City's [e-Updates webpage](#). The meeting dates and topics were as follow:

1. September 17, 2018: Toronto Taxicab Licences (TTL)
2. September 18, 2018: Private Transportation Company (PTC) Drivers

3. September 19, 2018: Private Transportation Companies (PTC)
4. September 20, 2018: Accessibility
5. September 24, 2018: Brokerages, Fleets, and Garages
6. September 25, 2018: Standard Taxicab Owners
7. September 26, 2018: General Public
8. October 1, 2018: Limousine Industry
9. October 3, 2018: Taxicab Drivers

Staff estimate that approximately 210 people attended these meetings; the TTL and Standard Taxicab Owners meetings were the highest attended. Attendees included members of the public, members of the taxicab and limousine industries, accessibility advocates, university students, as well as private transportation companies (PTCs) and their drivers.

The purpose of these meetings was to better understand the vehicle-for-hire industry, determine what issues exist, and identify areas for further research. The style of meetings included open-house, roundtable, and small group discussion. In each meeting, the same questions were posed to attendees and their feedback was recorded by staff. Attendees could also provide written comments if they preferred. The following questions were asked at each consultation meeting:

1. What has your experience been since the new vehicle-for-hire bylaw was implemented?
2. How can the City improve the licensing process?
3. How can safety be improved for operators, customers, and other users of the road?
4. What changes are required in order to provide better accessible service?
5. Are the current vehicle and equipment requirements reasonable?
6. General Comments:
  - a. What other issues exist with the current regulations for the ground transportation industry?
  - b. How do we fix these issues? What would you like to see changed in the bylaw?

In addition to the in-person meetings, feedback was accepted at the dedicated MLS email ([VehicleForHireReview@toronto.ca](mailto:VehicleForHireReview@toronto.ca)). This document only contains what was heard in the consultations meetings and does not include comments received via email. These comments will be summarized and incorporated into the final consultation document.

## Summary

There were several general topics of discussion that were brought up throughout the consultation meetings, including accessibility, congestion, licensing, and training.

### **Accessibility**

Staff heard concerns about how accessible service is provided in Toronto, the financial cost of providing accessible service (due to the purchase price, replacement cost and maintenance required for accessible vehicles). Staff also heard from users and operators that the City's aim of metered, on-demand wheelchair accessible service is not being consistently met. Suggestions heard included exploring a dispatch service for accessible vehicles, considering a dedicated accessibility fund to subsidize the cost and maintenance of TTL vehicles, and providing training for TTL operators.

### **Congestion**

Members from the public and the taxicab industry raised concerns about congestion in Toronto, particularly on arterial roads and in the downtown core. Suggestions included exploring a cap on the number of PTC driver licences, considering and limiting the number of PTC vehicles that can be on the road at any given time, alternating between permitting odd/even licence holders to drive each day, and examining the rates of ground transportation vehicles to encourage use of public transportation.

### **Licensing**

Staff heard from the taxicab industry that they are frustrated by the different licencing requirements of taxicabs and PTC vehicles; however, the regulations reflect the differentiated businesses of street-hails/cabstands and booked trips. Topics of discussion included exploring mandatory equipment, training, the amount of enforcement, and expectations for driver behaviour and vehicle maintenance for all vehicles governed by the bylaw.

### **Limousine Industry**

From the limousine industry, staff were asked to consider more options for luxury vehicles, as the limousine industry is largely driven by consumer preference. Representatives also told staff that the ratio requirements for stretch limousines are too restrictive, and that they would like them to be removed. The limousine industry also would like licencing to be more efficient, and for the City to increase public and driver education.

### **Training**

Training for all providers of ground transportation services in Toronto was mentioned by attendees throughout the consultations. Members of the taxicab industry and the public generally expressed support for exploring training for PTC drivers, taxicab drivers, and TTL operators. However, there were differences in opinion regarding how this training could be delivered. Some examples included online training courses, mandating the completion of a college-run program and considering City-run classroom training.

Suggestions regarding the content of this training also varied. Members of the taxicab industry generally felt that training should include Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) general knowledge, knowledge of landmarks and hospitals, navigation, downtown driving, methods of preventing dooring, service animals, and

defensive driving. Members of the public also suggested training or additional education on rules around hails, payment types, and fare refusals. Staff heard from both users and providers of accessible service that there is a need for training around the provision of accessible service. Other suggestions related to training included increased awareness of the role of the ground transportation in tourism and diversity/anti-racism training.

## Questions and Responses

### 1. What has your experience been since the new vehicle-for-hire bylaw was implemented?

#### *Public*

Staff heard considerable variation in the responses to this question. Some attendees from the public stated that they were pleased to have PTCs brought under a licensing bylaw, as consumers have greater access to ground transportation options, and that this flexibility has improved their quality of life. Some attendees told staff that short-fare refusals by taxi drivers are common. Suggestions to improve this included looking at options to increase accountability, exploring training options for all members of the vehicle-for-hire industry, and increasing enforcement. Public attendees also raised concerns about congestion and the income of drivers in the ground transportation industry (both PTC and taxicab).

#### *Industry*

Taxicab drivers in attendance told staff that they were negatively affected by the new vehicle-for-hire bylaw. Some taxicab industry attendees noted financial changes, including trip reductions and temporarily returning taxi plates to the City. Other taxicab industry attendees suggested that taxicabs are targeted by enforcement officers more than PTCs due to their distinct markings.

PTC companies told staff that their experience with licensing has been positive overall and that it has allowed them to extend economic opportunities to more drivers.

### 2. How can the City improve the licensing process?

#### *Online vs. In-Office Licensing – Industry Only*

Staff heard that licensees were generally satisfied with the licencing process. Currently, PTC drivers may obtain a licence online while vehicle-for-hire drivers must obtain a licence in person at the Licensing & Permit Issuing Office. Some vehicle-for-hire licensees told staff that they would like the City to look at expediting the process at the Licensing & Permit Issuing Office, including creating a line specifically for the vehicle-for-hire industry. Other vehicle-for-hire drivers stated that they did not like coming into the office and would like the City to look at options to license online. PTC drivers told staff that they would like to receive updates as their licence is processed.

*Licence Requirements - Public*

Non-industry attendees also took this opportunity to provide feedback on licence requirements. Among members of the public, several ideas were put forward, including reviewing whether PTC drivers should be permitted to be licensed for more than one PTC, considering whether PTC companies should only allow low-emission vehicles from an approved list to operate on their platforms, or whether there should be a cap on the number of PTC licences issued by the City.

*Licence Requirements - Industry*

The taxicab industry generally felt that PTCs should have more restrictions, including low-emission vehicle requirements. The taxicab industry also told staff that training should be a mandatory licence requirement for all for-hire vehicles, and that the licensing fees related to taxicabs should be reduced. Some taxicab drivers also stated that reasonably efficient vans and other 7-passenger vehicles should be added to the approved list of taxicabs, as consumers often request this to accommodate larger families.

Staff also heard that there is confusion surrounding the process by which PTCs obtain police record checks. Suggestions include making the details of this process more transparent, requiring all PTC drivers to deliver an original police record check to the Licensing & Permit Issuing Office, and implementing a process at the office where City staff can apply for a police record check on behalf of applicants.

**3. How can safety be improved for operators, customers, and other users of the road?**

Throughout the consultations, staff heard concerns about road safety. Cyclists, customers, pedestrians, and other drivers voiced concerns about safety. Staff heard that the City should consider additional public education campaigns, mandatory training for members of the vehicle-for-hire industry, and an increased use of technology to improve safety.

*Public*

With regard to cycling, staff heard from attendees that it is often difficult for cyclists to determine whether a vehicle is a PTC or not. According to attendees, this is particularly problematic during pick-up and drop-off, as a customer may enter onto the road or bike lane unexpectedly. Staff heard that this leads to an increase in dooring incidents. Suggestions include considering designated pick-up and drop-off locations in busy downtown areas, requiring more branding/identification for PTC vehicles and increasing enforcement. One suggestion included having an illuminated sign at the rear that would light up one minute before any pick-up or drop-off, informing road users that the vehicle will be stopping and passengers may be approaching/exiting. There was also a suggestion for mandatory training for for-hire drivers on cyclists and safety.

Staff also consulted on the use of rear passenger mirrors in an effort to reduce the number of dooring incidents. Some attendees told staff that the issue of dooring extends beyond the vehicle-for-hire industry, but that there are steps MLS could take to reduce dooring events, including exploring the use of rear passenger mirrors or promoting the "Dutch Reach", a practice of using your further hand to open a vehicle door, in an effort to reduce accidents.

Staff also heard from attendees that the City should consider additional training requirements for members of the vehicle-for-hire industry, including knowledge of landmarks and hospitals, general navigation in Toronto, training on the bylaw requirements (e.g. short fare refusal), defensive driving, and AODA and diversity training, including service animals. Thoughts on how this should be delivered ranged widely and included online-only courses, a few days of classroom instruction, or intensive in-class and in-car training. Some attendees felt as though this should be offered by the City, some told staff it should be offered by colleges as a program, and others said that it should be championed by the industry (i.e. associations, brokerages, PTCs, etc.).

### *Industry*

There were a variety of opinions on the use of cameras in for-hire vehicles. Some attendees from the taxicab industry told staff that cameras are an essential part of public safety and should be mandated in every for-hire vehicle, including PTC vehicles. Others disagreed, including members of the public and PTCs and their drivers, and voiced privacy concerns, particularly because these vehicles are operated as both personal and for-hire vehicles. Those supporting cameras often felt as though the police should be the only ones to have access to the footage. Still, some questioned how the camera could be turned on and off, and whether cameras are the most appropriate tool to improve safety.

PTCs and their drivers told staff that cameras are not necessary, as their platforms have two-way rating systems, the design of the application reduces any anonymity of driver and passenger, the applications all have GPS tracking, and PTCs have 24/7 support to respond immediately to any concerns about their drivers' conduct. PTCs told staff that mandating cameras would be expensive for drivers and exclude many drivers from working on the platform. They reiterated that they are not permitted to take street hails and therefore both the driver and customer in each transaction can be determined.

Staff heard from some attendees concerns over the vehicle inspection process, including the perceived rise in unclean and taxicabs that have not been well maintained. Suggestions include having City-approved garages, re-opening the City-run inspection centre, or increasing enforcement. Staff heard from one PTC that they would be willing to have PTC drivers go to a specific inspection centre as a licensing requirement.

To ensure safety, staff heard from some members of the taxicab industry that there should be more testing for drivers, including drug testing and biometrics, in addition to

knowledge-based assessments. Members of the taxicab industry also stated that they believe PTC drivers should be required to display a City-issued photo ID card to ensure that the driver is the same driver that is logged into the app. Attendees told staff that they were concerned about the amount of time that a PTC driver can be on the app. Suggestions included reviewing the amount of time that a driver can be logged in, exploring whether additional training for drivers who work more than a set number of hours is necessary, and considering more frequent vehicle inspections.

Staff also heard feedback from the taxicab industry about how frequently vehicles in the vehicle-for-hire industry should be replaced; however, there was no consensus on the maximum age of a vehicle. Some attendees stated that the vehicles should be no more than 5 years old, whereas others advocated for 10 years. Some suggested that the City should look at kilometers driven rather than years of age. Staff also heard that if the maximum age of vehicles is not reduced, then there should be a more robust vehicle inspection process.

#### **4. What changes are required in order to provide better accessible service?**

##### *Industry – Providers of Accessible Service*

Staff heard from providers of accessible service that it is difficult to earn a consistent incomes with a TTL licence and that the purchasing and operation of TTL vehicles is expensive. Attendees told staff that there is a high capital cost and low return associated with operating TTL vehicles, that these vehicles are often used for delivery of goods, and that there is low ridership due to the following factors:

- The vehicle is too large for most customers;
- Potential customers believe that the ride will be more expensive because it is a larger vehicle;
- Potential customers think that the vehicles are only for people who use wheelchairs; and
- Potential customers do not want to take wheelchair accessible service away from someone who may require it.

Staff also heard that from providers of this service that operating a TTL vehicle for a user with accessibility needs often takes a longer length of time to get to the location, load and unload the passenger(s), operate the ramp, and find a spot to park. This contributes to the higher operating cost. In addition, the vehicles have higher maintenance and repair costs. For example, staff heard that they use more gas and require repairs more frequently. Staff also heard that some TTL owners have chosen to provide very few accessible rides because of the higher operating cost.

Operators expressed concern that after the vehicles have reached their maximum age, TTL owners will not replace their vehicles and will not operate because it is not profitable. Policy suggestions were made to address this, including mandating that brokerages provide the TTL vehicles to offset the high cost, that the City reduce the

number of wheelchair accessible vehicles to increase profits, and that the City purchase the vehicles and then provide them to operators through a lease or subsidy. Staff also heard that the City should operate their own dispatch service and have all TTL vehicles registered with that dispatch; attendees told staff that this would ensure on-demand metered service and would give the City more oversight over wheelchair accessible transit. Related to this, staff also heard that the City could explore procuring a third-party to operate this dispatch or have a licensed brokerage do it on the City's behalf. Staff heard that other accessible vehicles – such as sedans that can better accommodate people who are blind or cannot climb into large vans – could be included under this dispatch model. One attendee told staff that they would like to see the City develop an app that would connect users with wheelchair accessible vehicles.

#### *Users of Accessible Service*

Users of wheelchair accessible transit told staff that the ride is noisy and bumpy, that they do not feel safe in "chop shop" converted D409-compliant vehicles, and that the City should mandate side-entry TTL vehicles only, as Wheel-Trans does.

Some attendees told staff that the City needs to ensure that robust training is provided to TTL operators to ensure that they have the requisite knowledge related to service animals, accessibility aids, the use of seatbelts and restraints, and other aspects related to the provision of wheelchair accessible service.

Staff also heard that affordability is an issue for many people, including those with disabilities. Attendees told staff that the City should further research Taxi Script programs, similar to that in Hamilton, in an effort to reduce the cost of taxicab trips for people with mobility issues who are unable to use other transit.

Staff heard from members of the public, as well as brokerages and TTL owners, that there is a difference between an accessible vehicle and a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Some customers specifically request a sedan for accessibility reasons; for example, if they have a cane or other mobility device. Often, climbing into a wheelchair accessible vehicle is not possible for these individuals and a sedan is required. Staff also heard that an accessible vehicle may also include the following:

- a scent-free vehicle;
- a vehicle that has braille and/or text-to-speech and other upgrades to ensure that individuals who are blind are able to identify a taxicab and read the bill of rights;
- a vehicle that can accommodate a variety of other mobility devices;
- a vehicle that has been updated to include other assistive devices for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; or
- a vehicle that has more nuanced climate controls for clients in the rear of a vehicle who are sensitive to temperature changes.

Staff were told of "calm cabs" which are designed to accommodate individuals who have cognitive delays, anger issues, and anxiety about travelling. They are taxicabs that



have been modified in an effort to keep people calm, such as playing certain music and using colours, games, and interactive activities.

Staff heard that the City should consider creating an accessibility fund that could be used to offset costs to drivers of accessible vehicles, such as costs related to: purchasing/converting and maintaining TTL vehicles, training, and opportunity costs resulting from the time needed to provide accessible service. Staff heard that this fund could be created from an accessibility fee collected from each non-accessible ride provided by for-hire vehicles. On multiple occasions, staff heard from attendees that other players in the vehicle-for-hire industry should subsidize the cost of providing accessible service.

Other suggestions made throughout consultations included: that the City should work closely with Wheel -Trans in the policy development process, that TTL vehicles should be exempt from King Street Pilot Project restrictions, and that a public education campaign about TTLs should be undertaken.

### **5. Are the current vehicle and equipment requirements reasonable?**

Attendees had the opportunity to discuss the current vehicle and equipment requirements and provide feedback. Staff heard about low emission vehicle requirements, concerns about the point of sale machines, cameras, exterior rear passenger mirrors, safety certificates, vehicle age, the approved vehicle list, taxicab meters, and signage.

#### *Industry*

Staff heard from attendees, particularly those from the taxicab industry, that low emission vehicle standards, mandated for the taxicab industry, should also apply to PTC vehicles. There was concern raised about this being an unfair advantage for PTC companies being permitted to use less environmentally friendly vehicles when taxicabs are not permitted to do so. A concern was also raised that vans are no longer on the taxicab approved vehicle list, so vans are not being replaced in brokerage fleets. Attendees told staff that there is demand for these vans from people needing to transport larger items, families, as well as for users with mobility issues.

#### *Public*

Staff heard from members of the public that point of sale machines used in taxicabs are not always reliable, with some taxicab drivers driving their passengers to an ATM in order to get paid. Suggestions included updating the taxicab bill of rights, increasing enforcement, and updating the bylaw to mandate availability and access to working point of sale machines.

Staff also heard about the requirements related to taxicab meters, with some attendees wanting the City to bring back the sealed meter in order to ensure consistent service delivery. Others thought that the City should increase meter enforcement. Staff also

heard that unsealing the meter has allowed for technology innovation, including digital meters and that this rule should not be reverted.

During the consultations, concern was raised by the public about the number of decals and signs required in both taxicabs and PTC vehicles. Concerns ranged from having the signage look cluttered, to safety issues around what information is available. PTC drivers may have multiple different PTC signs on the rear, in addition to the beacon on the front, and some attendees questioned how many should be permitted. For taxicabs, attendees wondered if the signage could be cleared up, if the language could be made plainer, and if there could be a mandatory sign stating that service animals must be accepted. Other suggestions included mandating braille on taxicabs, having a City-issued PTC identifier for PTC drivers working in Toronto, and mandating photo identification cards for all for-hire drivers in Toronto.

Concerns about PTC drivers' access to smartphones was also raised as a concern, with one suggestion being that the smartphone used for PTCs should be mandated to be securely affixed to the dash so that it does not have the possibility of coming loose or falling and potentially increasing the likelihood of an accident.

Staff also heard about requirements related to cameras, exterior rear passenger mirrors, vehicle inspections, and vehicle age. Please see Section 3 for this summary.

## **6. General Comments**

In addition to the comments outlined above, attendees at the consultations provided additional feedback on topics that included the connection between the Vehicle-for-Hire Review and City initiatives such as the King Street Pilot and Vision Zero, how for-hire vehicles impact public transit usage, the business models used by PTCs and the taxicab industry, and the emergence of automated vehicles. These discussions also connected themes of accessibility, safety, and vehicle/equipment requirements.

### *Public*

Attendees told staff about the benefits and challenges associated with the business models of both PTCs and taxicabs. For PTCs, staff heard that the public likes the reliability, the user-friendly smartphone app, the accountability of the two-way rating system, the level of customer service, and the fact that they know the exact fare in advance of taking the ride. For taxicabs, attendees said that they like the availability of taxicabs (particularly downtown), the fact that their behaviour is regulated through City enforcement, and the safety measures required through licensing. Concerns were raised about the level of job security that PTC drivers have, as staff heard anecdotally that the platforms readily remove drivers for small infractions, rather than go through the tribunal process.

Cyclists and other road users told staff that they would like MLS to work more closely with City Planning to design bike lanes to be friendlier for for-hire vehicles. Similarly, some attendees would like staff to work with City Planning and Transportation Services

to review taxicab stands and to see if there is an opportunity for central pick-up and drop-off zones for all for-hire vehicles, and to have these dedicated spots at new buildings.

Attendees had questions about the scope of the studies being conducted by the City, such as the Congestion Management Study and the Economic Impact Study. Staff heard from post-secondary students in attendance who suggested that the City should require those licensed under the vehicle-for-hire bylaw to provide more data to assist with congestion analysis.

### *Industry*

Broad concerns were raised by the taxicab industry about PTCs and whether their drivers are working full-time. Attendees from the taxicab industry questioned how long PTC drivers should be permitted to be on the road (part time vs. full time) and whether there should be more training, stricter vehicle requirements, and other measures put on PTCs to ensure safety of consumers and road users. Staff also heard concerns about whether the availability of for-hire vehicles has inadvertently diverted people from transit.

Staff heard concerns about automated vehicles and the impact that the introduction of this technology may have on the vehicle-for-hire industry in the future. Attendees suggested that staff assess the impact that automated vehicles will have in the industry, including accessibility, and consider the consequences of permitting such vehicles.

Staff also heard from a few members of the taxicab industry that they would like a vehicle-for-hire advisory committee to be established. It was suggested that this committee would be able to provide input and advice regarding the vehicle-for-hire industry and would be a link between the city and the industry.

Lastly, staff heard from members of the taxicab industry that it has been difficult for the taxicab industry to compete with PTCs. Some in the taxi industry asked the City to consider developing an app that would connect residents with nearby cabs, provide a fare estimate, and allow them to track their ride, track down any forgotten items, and make a complaint to the City.

### **Next Steps**

MLS will be hosting a second round of public consultations in Q1 2019. Feedback will continue to be accepted via email ([VehicleForHireReview@toronto.ca](mailto:VehicleForHireReview@toronto.ca)) throughout the review process. MLS will also be conducting independent third-party research to assess the general public's opinion of the current vehicle-for-hire industry.