

Public Consultation Summary

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

OVERVIEW

MLS staff hosted two rounds of public consultations for a total of 18 meetings on the following topics:

- Toronto Taxicab Licences;
- Taxicab Drivers;
- Private Transportation Companies;
- Private Transportation Company Drivers;
- Accessibility;
- Brokerages, Fleets, and Garages;
- Standard Taxicab Owners;
- General Public; and
- Limousine Industry.

Attendance at the meetings ranged from 12 to 66 participants: the Toronto taxicab licence (TTL) and standard taxicab owner meetings were the highest attended. Individuals who attended more than one meeting were counted for each attendance. Despite additional paid advertising in the second round of consultations, interest in the public consultation meetings was low.

This document provides a summary of what was heard in the public consultation meetings. Staff also received over 250 written feedback submissions throughout the review process. The written feedback is consistent with feedback heard by staff throughout the Vehicle-for-Hire By-law Review and has been considered as part of this summary.

Feedback has not been attributed to individuals, or specific groups or companies in the vehicle-for-hire industries. The feedback may not be representative of the wider Toronto population or all stakeholders within an industry.

ROUND ONE - PUBLIC CONSULTATION SUMMARY

September 17 - October 3, 2018

The purpose of these meetings was to gather general input about the vehicle-for-hire industry since the introduction of the City of Toronto's Municipal Code Chapter 546, Licensing of Vehicles-for-Hire in 2016. The style of meetings included open-house, roundtable, and small group discussion.

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 cost to providing accessible service (due to the purchase price, replacement cost and maintenance required for accessible vehicles). Staff heard from users and operators that the City's aim of metered, on-demand wheelchair accessible service is not being consistently met. Suggestions 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.
- **Licensing:** staff heard from the taxicab industry that they are frustrated by the different licensing 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:** staff were asked to consider more options for luxury vehicles, as the limousine industry is largely driven by consumer preference. Representatives told staff that the ratio requirements for stretch limousines are too restrictive and should be removed. The limousine industry would also like licensing to be more efficient and for the City to increase public and driver education.
- **Training:** there were differences in opinion regarding how training could be delivered and the content of training. Members of the taxicab industry generally felt that training should include Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act general knowledge, knowledge of landmarks and hospitals, navigation, downtown driving, methods of preventing dooring, service animals, safe pick-up and drop-off and defensive driving. Members of the public also suggested training or additional education on rules around distracted driving, 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.

ROUND TWO - PUBLIC CONSULTATION SUMMARY

March 4 to March 19, 2019

In the second round of public consultations, MLS provided an update of work completed to date as well as presented and sought feedback on approaches and considerations for accessibility, public safety and vehicle requirements. During the public consultation meetings with the limousine industry and standard taxicab and TTL owners, the discussion focused on concerns specific to these licensing categories in addition to accessibility, public safety and vehicle requirements.

Accessibility

For the meeting on accessibility, members of the public and stakeholders had the option of attending in-person or watching on the City's Get Involved YouTube channel live-stream. During the accessibility meeting, staff received the following feedback:

- **Accessible Service:** users of accessible service told staff that wheelchair accessible service is not always readily available, that there is sometimes inconsistent quality of service, and that the accessibility strategy should focus on better understanding supply and demand for accessible vehicles-for-hire. Members of the industry told staff that the higher cost of owning and operating vehicles is a major barrier to delivering the service and that there are enough wheelchair accessible taxicabs to meet current demand.
- **Subsidies:** in general, members of the public and industry were supportive of a program to provide grants/incentives to owners and drivers of accessible taxicabs in order to improve service. Staff heard that the higher ownership and operating costs associated with accessible service delivery should be addressed and that the fund should be used to keep accessible vehicles on the road and offering service.
- **Non-Mobility Disabilities:** staff heard from members of the public that the accessibility strategy should include increased public education and awareness, improved training, and a consideration for individuals with non-mobility disabilities, such as those who are deaf, blind, use a service animal, or have other visible and non-visible disabilities. Staff heard that fare refusals and issues around service animals continue, despite being prohibited in the By-law.
- **Side-Entry Conversion:** staff heard strong support from accessible users for requiring side-entry conversions on wheelchair accessible vehicles. Members of the industry cautioned that the cost of side-entry conversion is higher than rear-entry conversion and that currently-licensed owners should be permitted to continue using their rear-entry vehicles.
- **Training:** staff heard from users of accessible service that there is sometimes inconsistent quality of service and that the City should review the current training requirements to ensure that topics such as service animals, sensitivity, the proper use of restraints, and diverse medical needs are reflected.

Public Safety

At the brokerages, fleets, and garages, general public, taxicab drivers, PTCs, and PTC drivers meetings, staff consulted on four key topics related to public safety: driver requirements, training, cameras, and reducing dooring incidents.

- **Driving Experience:** members of the taxicab industry were generally supportive of changes to increase the age limit of for-hire drivers and/or increase the years of driving experience required. However, there was disagreement on what the parameters should be. Some members of the public questioned whether the evidence supports that increasing the age limit of drivers and/or increasing the years of driving experience required will increase public safety. Some PTC drivers argued that the current requirements are working and that the two-way rating system on PTC apps help ensure driver accountability.
- **Criminal Record Checks:** staff heard widespread misunderstanding of the current requirements for criminal record checks. Many individuals, including those from the taxicab industry and members of the public were not aware that all applicants are required to undergo a Criminal Record and Judicial Matters Check. The taxicab industry and some members of the public said that the City should consider requiring vulnerable sector checks as well.
- **Training:** members of the taxicab industry were predominantly in favour of City-mandated training for the vehicle-for-hire industry. When asked about what components should be included, responses varied. Components mentioned included defensive driving, navigation, geography/landmarks, health and disabilities, CPR, customer service and communication, by-laws, *Highway Traffic Act*, safely navigating bike lanes, human rights, AODA, and accessibility. Staff heard from members of the public that the City should consider implementing training to support public safety. In addition, some questioned whether the training components for taxicab drivers needed to be the same as PTC drivers, as the business models differ. Staff also heard that that the City should require PTC drivers to be better trained on safe drop-off and pick-up, particularly in bike lanes and high-traffic locations.
- **Cameras:** the taxicab industry generally supported the use of cameras in taxicabs and suggested that the City should require them in PTC vehicles as well. Members of the taxicab industry were generally in favour of the City updating the requirements for taxicab cameras to be more modern and to better assist Toronto Police Service staff. Members of the public had mixed opinions on the use of cameras. Members of the public tended to agree that cameras in taxicabs are important for safety because of the anonymous nature of street hails. However, most PTC drivers were of the opinion that the City should not mandate cameras and that it should be up to each individual driver to decide whether or not they want to install a camera.
- **Reducing Dooring Incidents:** in each of the meetings, the general consensus was that no single effort will adequately reduce dooring incidents. There was widespread agreement that any future training program should include safe passenger drop-off and pick-up for every driver in the vehicle-for-hire industry, with a specific focus on cyclist and pedestrian safety. Some suggested that there should be more education on dooring-related offences under the *Highway Traffic Act*.

Vehicle Requirements

Consultations on vehicle requirements included discussions on incentive programs to reduce emissions and general comments about vehicle requirements such as the replacement vehicle provisions for taxicabs

Emissions Reductions

- **Cost:** many drivers expressed concern that the hybrid and electric vehicles are significantly more expensive than conventional vehicles (some prohibitively so), and do not feel as though they are in a position to be able to make the investment. Some believed that providing financial assistance to those who drive "green" for-hire vehicles, such as rebates and subsidies, or extending the age limit for for-hire vehicles that are green would be beneficial.
- **Vehicle Options:** staff heard that there is a lack of options for "green" (i.e. hybrid or fully electric) vehicles in the market, especially for the limousine industry which provides services in luxury vehicles.
- **Limitations of Current Technology:** staff heard about technology limitations that restrict use of more efficient vehicles, particularly for taxicabs. Namely, that some hybrids may not be as efficient as intended if used for long periods of time and that EVs cannot hit their full range in Toronto's winter weather and will face maintenance difficulty because of the cold.
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** staff heard that there is a lack of infrastructure to support those who drive EVs – specifically charging infrastructure.
- **Other Considerations:** participants offered other suggestions such as limiting the number of for-hire vehicles on the road, implementing an approved list of vehicles for all licensees, and encouraging shared trips for consumers.

Other Vehicle Requirements

- **Approved Vehicle List:** some participants argued that the list helps to reduce emissions and that it provides a reasonable amount of choice to owners. Other participants noted that the list acts as a barrier to the taxicab industry and that vans and other high-occupancy vehicles are not available on the list, providing PTCs with a competitive advantage.
- **Mechanical Inspections:** from the taxicab industry, staff heard concerns about the current inspection process to receive Safety Standard Certificates. Some attendees said that the current inspection centres are not adequately inspecting vehicles. Suggestions included having the City specify which inspection centers can be used and bringing back the City-run inspection centre. Most attendees tended to agree that the limit of seven model years is reasonable. Taxicab owners tended to disagree, arguing that a vehicle that has been maintained should be allowed to be up to ten model years old.

Limousine Industry

Limousine owners, drivers, and service companies expressed support for revisiting the recommendations made by City staff in 2016, stating that their concerns remained the same. Specifically, staff heard from the industry that they are interested in removing restrictive requirements for:

- **Minimum Fares:** staff heard that the requirement for \$70 per hour for the first two hours is outdated, unfair and generally unenforceable.
- **Staging:** limousine drivers are not permitted to park their vehicles within 200 metres of a hotel, theatre, or entertainment facility unless there is a pre-arranged pick-up at that location within 20 minutes. Staff heard that the requirement that limousine trips be booked at least 20 minutes in advance is unnecessary and unfair given the prevalence of on-demand services across the rest of the industry. This is perceived by the industry as unfair considering that taxis have dedicated areas for this, such as taxi stands.
- **Stretch-to-Sedan Fleet Ratio:** staff heard that this requires investment upwards of \$100,000 for a stretch limousine to meet the established ratio, with limited demand from consumers.
- **Service Agreements:** the limousine industry also brought forward concerns about the requirement for limousine owners to enter into service agreements with limousine service companies, and obtain a letter for licensing purposes. Staff heard that these letters are issued by limousine service companies at a cost that can be prohibitive over time, without necessarily providing adequate dispatch services. Many limousine owners also have an established client base that make up a large proportion of their bookings and do not necessarily require dispatch services. Vehicle owners expressed that this requirement be removed so to allow for independent operation.

Standard Taxicab Owners

Attendees at the standard taxicab owners meeting were almost exclusively owners of standard taxicab licences. During the meeting, staff received the following feedback related to the vehicle-for-hire industry:

- **Economic Impact:** owners of standard taxicab licences told staff that a new for-hire industry has negatively impacted them economically. Staff heard that it is sometimes challenging to find a driver and that revenue from leases has decreased. Participants suggest the City consider: financial compensation to owners of standard taxicab licences, lowering the annual renewal fee, or increasing requirements for entry into the vehicle-for-hire industry.
- **Public Safety:** owners told staff that there should be a minimum 5 years driving experience and a G Licence for at least three years for all for-hire drivers. Staff also heard support for mandatory training for all drivers in the vehicle-for-hire industry and a need to review the specifications of cameras. With respect to dooring incidents, some advocated for "Watch for Bike" stickers, whereas others felt like rear-view passenger mirrors would be more effective.
- **Vehicle Requirements:** staff heard mixed feedback on the "Approved Vehicle List". Some attendees advocated for its removal altogether, arguing that it limits the

taxicab industry's ability to remain competitive. Some requested that it be modified slightly to include some vans and higher-capacity SUVs in order to compete with PTCs who are able to offer this service. Others told staff that they were satisfied with the Approved Vehicle List as it is.

Toronto Taxicab Licences (TTLs)

During the public consultation meeting on TTLs, approximately 60 TTL owners were in attendance and provided feedback on the following topics:

- **Accessible Service:** staff heard that the high cost of providing accessible service acts as a disincentive in advancing on-demand accessible service. Suggestions included allowing TTL owners to convert their licences to standard licences, reducing the amount of competition to make providing the service more profitable, and providing grants and subsidies to offset the higher operating costs.
- **Accessibility Fund Program:** in general, staff heard support for the creation of an accessibility fund program to offset higher operating costs. Those who supported the fund told staff that the costs of gas, operation, conversion, and maintenance are all higher for accessible vehicles than sedans and suggested that the fund include these aspects.
- **Service Standards:** staff heard mixed opinions on service standards, with most industry members tending to support it as long as it adequately offset the higher operating costs. Those who opposed voiced concerns about the ability for owners and drivers to continue to work as they age and that brokerages need to be giving more non-accessible trips to TTLs in order for the business to be financially viable
- **Side-Entry Conversion:** staff heard from TTL owners that there are a number of considerations to keep in mind when determining whether to have a side- or rear-entry conversion. For side-entry, staff heard that they are perceived to be safer, that they are less noisy, and that they allow owners to affiliate with Wheel-Trans. For rear-entry, staff heard that the layout better allows them to take fares from passengers with non-mobility disabilities, and that mandating only side-entry reduces the number of seats available and could impact financial viability. There was widespread support for the City reimbursing owners for the full cost of conversion, regardless of the conversion type.
- **Training:** there was widespread support in the industry for continuing to mandate training and for the City to set training requirements. Industry members voiced concerns about the cost of training, that the current rules around training are unclear, and that accessibility training should be required for all drivers in the vehicle-for-hire industry.