

What We Heard Report

Vehicle for Hire Enhanced Training

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Public Engagement Summary and Results

Project Overview

Vehicles for Hire in Edmonton transport passengers from one destination to another for a fee. These vehicles include but are not limited to (accessible) taxis and rideshare companies such as Uber, limousines, and shuttles. The City of Edmonton's [Vehicle for Hire Bylaw 17400](#) regulates vehicles for hire in alignment with the City's commitment to public safety and The City Plan's direction that Edmonton's mobility system should be safe, secure, accessible and responsive.

In March 2022, at the Community and Public Services Committee (CPSC) meeting, Council made two motions which directed Administration to:

1. Prepare amendments to Vehicle for Hire Bylaw 17400 to expand accessibility driver training for all Vehicle for Hire drivers, and
2. Engage with the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE), the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Vehicle for Hire industry to review the workplan for Vehicle for Hire Program in 2022 and 2023 and explore priorities based on the feedback.

The motions were based on a number of factors, including concerns voiced by vehicle for hire passengers and advocacy groups regarding accessibility, safety and security. Administration committed to return to Committee with holistic training options both in support of furthering accessibility experiences as well as in support of enhanced customer service, equity, and safety for drivers and passengers.

During fall 2022 and winter 2023, Administration engaged with the Vehicle for Hire industry in Edmonton, drivers, passengers, advocacy groups (e.g. WAVE and AAC), training providers and other Canadian municipalities. A GBA+ approach was used to consider the impacts of the final options on the different stakeholder groups and balance their interest and priorities.

This report summarizes the feedback from engagements and how the information was used to inform the options proposed to Council.

What We Heard Overall

Several stakeholder groups and the public were asked to provide feedback for the development of accessibility driver training and workplan priorities using multiple engagement methods. These included an online survey of both passengers and drivers, and virtual focus groups and workshops with additional key stakeholder groups. Below is a summary of what was heard by participants overall with the detailed results later in the report.

- 1) Public survey participants generally feel more safe in taxis and accessible taxis compared to rideshare vehicles. Long waits, unsafe driving, and lack of assistance are the major concerns for users. Communication on where to file complaints and that complaints are treated seriously is a key topic for service improvement in the future.
- 2) Groups who were asked about their preference for who will design and deliver the training, such as dispatchers and United Taxi Group, were tied between “City design and dispatchers deliver”, and “dispatchers design and deliver” for both first and second preference.
- 3) Those asked about priorities for the City’s 2023/2024 work plan, such as dispatchers, United Taxi Group, Women’s Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee and Accessibility Advisory Committee, felt that “enhanced training” and “plate review” were the top two priorities.
- 4) Vehicle for Hire dispatchers and United Taxi Group (who represent drivers) are concerned about the safety of both drivers and passengers.
- 5) Vehicle for Hire dispatchers are struggling with attracting and retaining drivers within the industry.
- 6) Limousine services are of the opinion that they should no longer be regulated by The City’s Vehicle for Hire bylaw, however, they would also like permanent subsidies from The City to support the increased costs of business.
- 7) Vehicle for Hire drivers would like the flexibility to complete the enhanced training online, with a number of options for dates and times offered for in-person training. Drivers would also like up to six months to complete the training, and prefer that it cost less than \$100 per driver. Drivers would also like the City to limit the loss of driver income for attending the training.

What We Did

The table below outlines how feedback gathered from participants has influenced the Vehicle for Hire Enhanced Training proposal as well as recommendations for the 2023/2024 work plan priorities.

What we asked	What we heard	What we are doing
Who should design and deliver the training?	Preference was "City design and dispatchers deliver", and "dispatchers design deliver."	Recommendation from Administration is that the City mandates content requirements and develops the training program and industry delivers the training.
What should the 2023/2024 Vehicle for Hire program priorities be?	"Enhanced training" and "plate review" were the top two priorities for the 2023/2024 work plan.	These top priorities have been included in the CPSC report UPE01189 (May 2023) for Council's consideration.
What Impact will accessibility training have on the industry?	Limousine services should no longer be included as a Vehicle for Hire.	Administration will explore the possibility of limousine operators being regulated by the Business Licence Bylaw 20002 instead of the Vehicle for Hire Bylaw 17800.
	English language requirements could be discriminatory to drivers.	The training curriculum will be stewarded by experts in training, development and adult learning who may incorporate English language proficiency conditions and supports where necessary as part of the content development process.
	Training to be online and have a number of different options for the days and	The finalization of training content will include at least one round of content

	<p>times it is offered, if it is in-person. Have up to six months to complete the training and that it costs less than \$100 per driver.</p>	<p>engagement with dispatchers and drivers to continue to explore how best to meet the training program's desired outcomes while mitigating impacts to this increased requirement to drivers and dispatchers.</p>
	<p>Challenges with attracting and retaining drivers.</p>	<p>This topic will be explored once the vehicle for hire program mandate is established in 2023/2024.</p>
<p>How safe do you feel and what can be done to improve safety?</p>	<p>Passengers feel generally safe in vehicles for hire, but more safe overall in taxis compared to rideshares. Clear vehicle markings, recording devices, location sharing, and driver and vehicle information were equally important features for safety enhancements.</p>	<p>Feedback is informing future safety enhancements to Vehicles for Hire, such as mandating in-car dash cameras in vehicles.</p>
<p>What is your experience as a passenger and in filing complaints?</p>	<p>Long waits, unsafe driving, and lack of assistance are the major concerns for users.</p>	<p>Feedback will be used to inform public education campaigns as well as possible future changes to the bylaw.</p>

Public Engagement Approach

How We Engaged and What We Asked

To assist in the development of enhancements for the Vehicle for Hire industry, the project team asked participants to help refine the proposed training program and the 2023/2024 Vehicle for Hire work plan. Engagement was at the **REFINE** level on the City's Public Engagement Spectrum.



An engagement process was designed with activities and questions that were tailored to each specific stakeholder group. The following engagement activities were conducted and questions asked to gather feedback.

Audience	What Was Asked	Engagement Activity and Date	Number of Participants
General public and members of the Edmonton Insight Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety sentiment and enhancements to improve safety Passenger experience Satisfaction and complaint reporting 	Online, Insight Community Mixed Topic Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 15-22, 2022 	3,494
United Taxi Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts the accessibility training program would have on drivers Thoughts on who should design and deliver the training 	Online Stakeholder Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 1, 2023 	1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thoughts on the proposed 2023/2024 Vehicle for Hire work plan and priorities 		
Vehicle for Hire industry dispatchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts the accessibility training program would have on the industry Thoughts on who should design and deliver the training Thoughts on the proposed 2023/2024 Vehicle for Hire work plan and priorities 	<p>Online Stakeholder Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 14 & 15, 2023 	16 total
Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee (WAVE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft driver training topics and draft delivery options Thoughts on the proposed 2023/2024 Vehicle for Hire work plan and priorities. 	<p>Online Stakeholder Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 6, 2022 December 1, 2022 February 2, 2023 	7 each time
Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft driver training topics and draft delivery options Thoughts on the proposed 2023/2024 Vehicle for Hire work plan and priorities. 	<p>Online Stakeholder Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 6, 2022 January 4, 2023 March 6, 2023 	8 members (+ 2 City staff) for each meeting
Active or recent VFH drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts the accessibility training program would have on drivers 	<p>Google Form Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 22, 2023 to March 5, 2023 	27

Who Was Engaged

The project team sought to gather input from the Vehicle for Hire industry, members of the general public who have been passengers in vehicles for hire, and advisory groups involved in accessibility, equity, and safety.

General Public/Vehicle for Hire Passengers

Respondents were asked to fill out an online survey that was on the City of Edmonton's website. Members of the Edmonton Insight Community, which is an inclusive and accessible online panel made up of diverse Edmontonians who provide feedback on City policies, initiatives and issues, were asked to fill out the same survey through a mixed topic email sent to them.

Vehicle for Hire Industry - Dispatchers and Drivers

Dispatchers from the Vehicle for Hire industry that represents taxis, limousine services, rideshare services such as Uber participated in the engagement. As well as Vehicle for Hire drivers who are currently active members and the driver advocacy group United Taxi Group.

Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee (WAVE)

The Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE) Committee provides Council with advice on women's gender-based issues resolutions and opportunities related to City policies, priorities and decisions. The Committee was asked to provide input because they have insight into the experiences women have on vehicles for hire. Their feedback gained to understand their experience and apply a GBA+ approach to the vehicle for hire work.

Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) provides advice and recommendations to Council about City facilities and other infrastructure, programs, services, activities and policies. The aim is to improve the City's livability, inclusiveness and accessibility for individuals with disabilities. AAC was asked to provide input because they represent the interests of persons with disabilities and can provide insight into their lived experience, needs, challenges and priorities related to vehicles for hire. Their feedback gained to understand their experience and apply a GBA+ approach to the vehicle for hire work.

What We Heard Detailed

What we heard: Online public survey

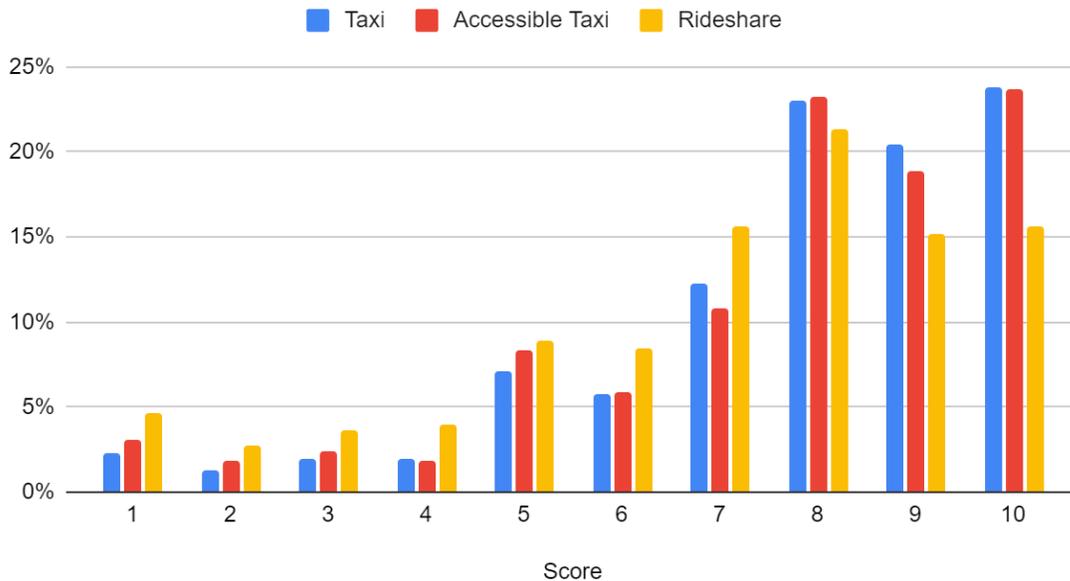
Vehicle for hire passengers/members of the public were asked for input on:

- Safety
- Passenger experiences
- Complaints and reporting

Safety

Users generally feel safe (Score > 5) in taxis (85.3%) and accessible taxis (82.5%) and less safe using rideshare (76.2%). Meanwhile, a larger number of users feel unsafe (Score < 5) in rideshare (23.8%) compared to taxis (14.7%) and accessible taxis (17.5%)

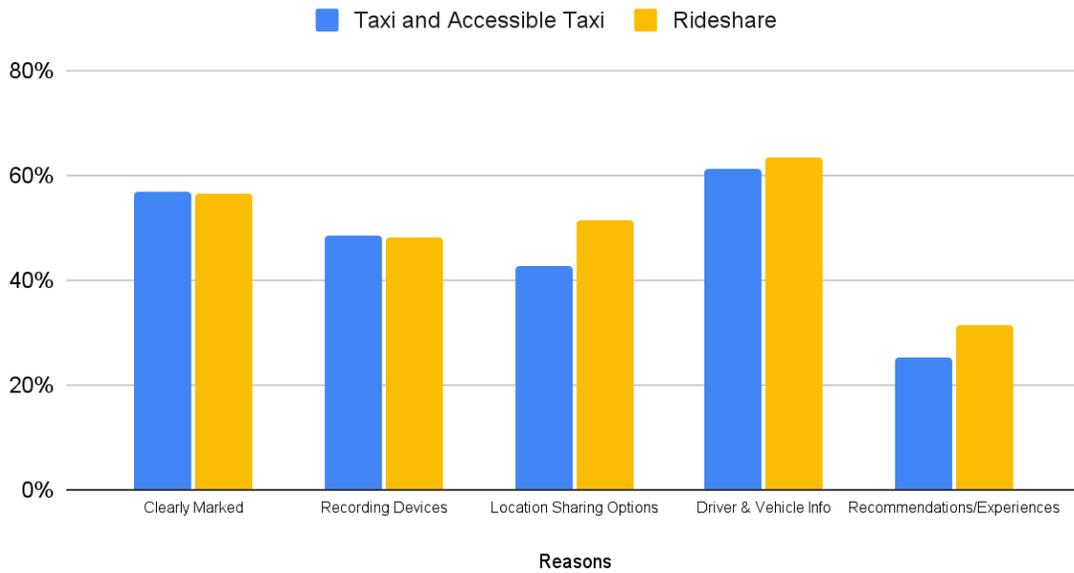
User's Safety Rating on Vehicle for Hire



The top two improvements Edmontonians would look for in the future are:

- 1) Driver and vehicle information (taxi: 61.3% and rideshare: 63.4%)
- 2) Clear markings (taxi: 56.8% and rideshare: 56.5%)

What features would make you feel safer in Vehicles for Hire?

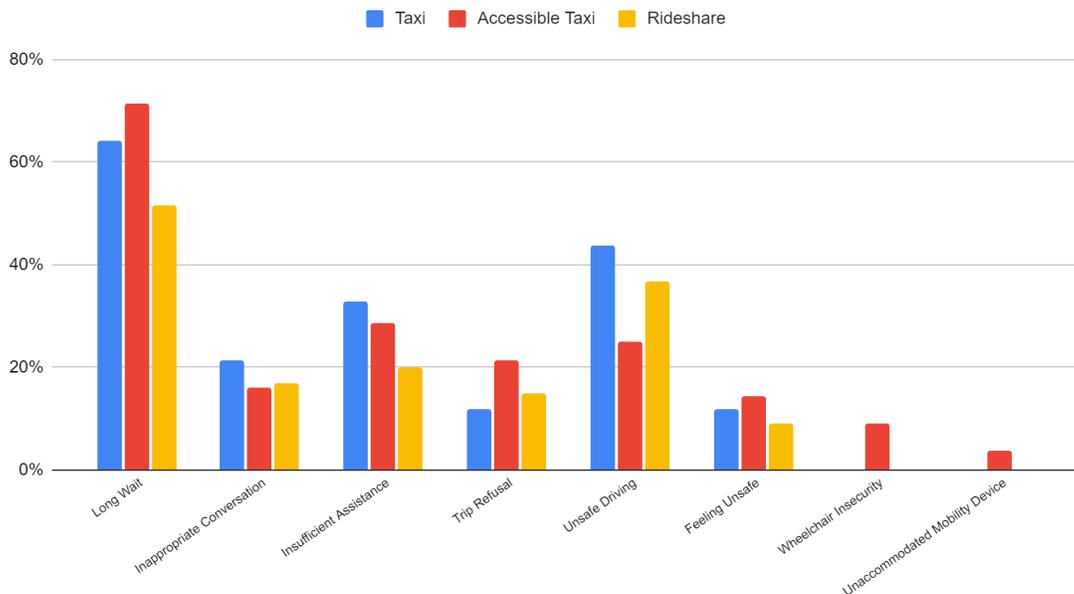


Passenger Experiences

Over 60% of users reported that they experienced long wait times while using a taxi or an accessible taxi. Rideshare users experienced fewer long waits, but still over half (51.5%) reported longer wait times. Users also experienced unsafe driving (taxi: 43.7% vs rideshare: 36.7%), while fewer had those experiences in accessible taxis (25%). Other notable gaps between types of vehicles for hire include:

- Inappropriate conversation (taxi > others)
- Insufficient assistance (rideshare < others)
- Trip refusal (accessible taxis > others)

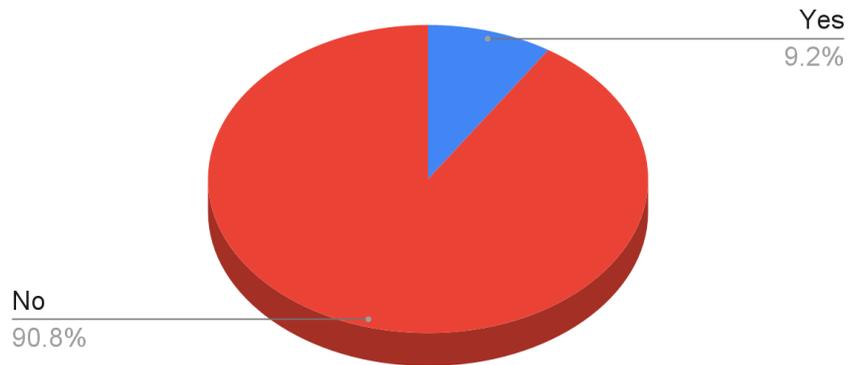
Passenger Experiences



Complaints and reporting

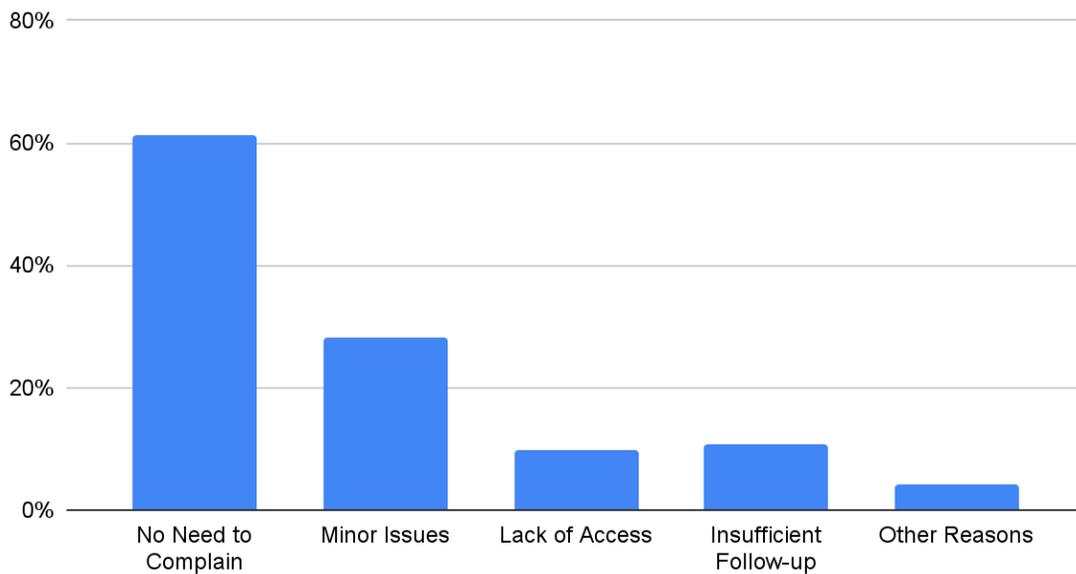
Over 90% of the surveyees have never filed a complaint on vehicles for hire.

Have you filed a complaint before?



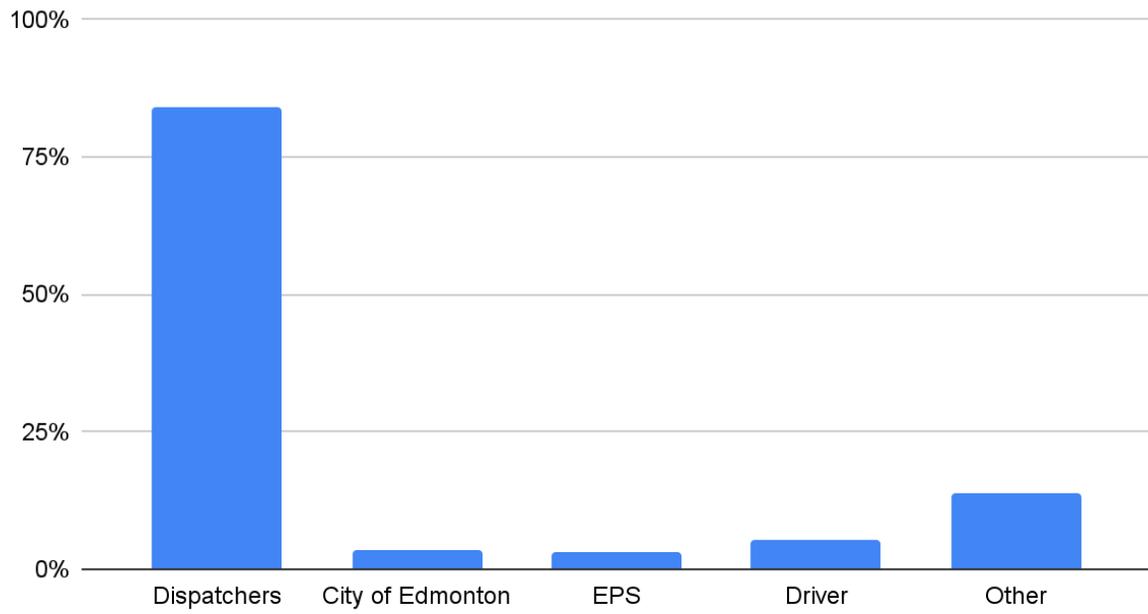
The majority (61.2%) did not file a complaint because they did not have a negative experience. Most often, dissatisfied passengers did not file a complaint because they felt that the issue was not serious enough or worth their time to submit a complaint (28%), followed by not knowing where to file a complaint (10%) and not feeling that their complaint would be taken seriously (11%).

Reasons for not filing complaints:



Notably, of the passengers who had filed a complaint, 84% reported it directly to dispatchers, while only 4% made a report through the City of Edmonton.

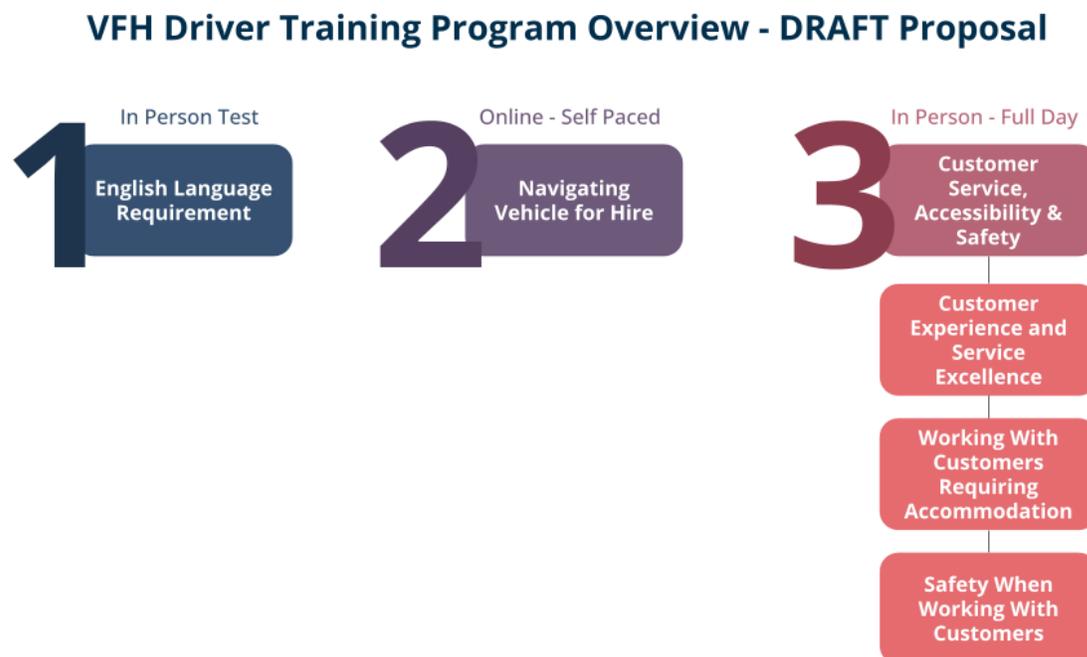
Of those who filed a complaint, where did you go?



What we heard: Online Stakeholder workshop with dispatchers

Two online workshops were held with Vehicle for Hire dispatchers to gather their input on the proposed training program as well as the 2023/2024 work plan.

Proposed training program impacts



Vehicle for Hire dispatchers were asked how the proposed training program (illustrated above) would impact the industry, and provided the following feedback in relation to the proposed driver training content:

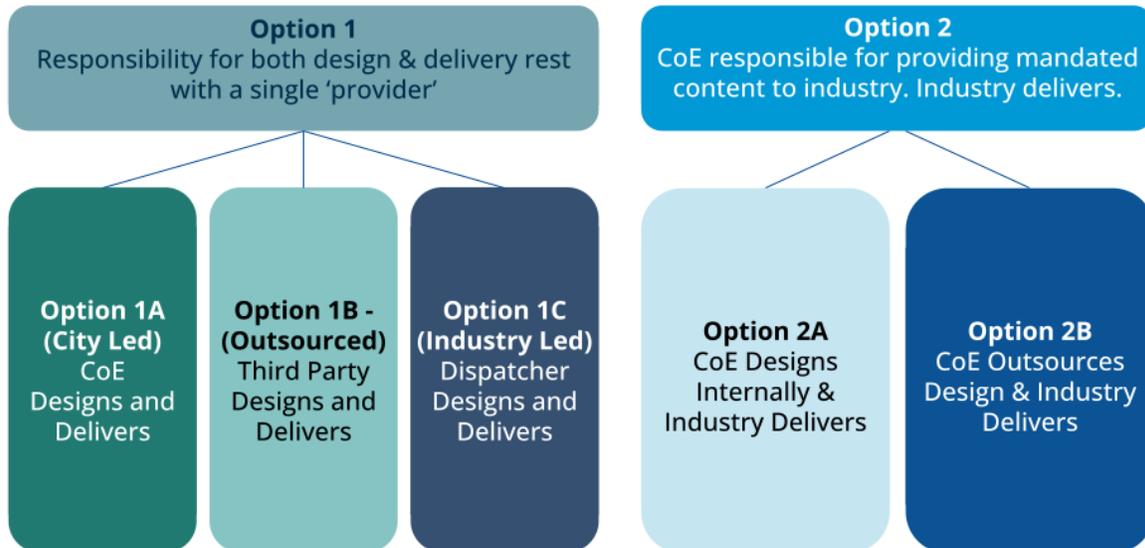
- A recommendation to expand the “safety when working with customers” content to include driver safety considerations, and proactive communication to the public regarding the importance of driver safety.
- Concerns that the english competency requirement may be discriminatory or impact retention.
- A recommendation that the modules be split up so that drivers have more time flexibility to work while completing the training.
- Concerns that training requirements may impact the attraction and retention of drivers.
- A recommendation that the focus of training should be for new drivers, and sentiment that drivers who have been in the industry a long time already know the content in the training.
- That limousines should not be a part of the training, as the service is very different from taxi and rideshare - particularly that limousines are not on-demand services as taxis and rideshare are.

- An interest in compensation being provided for the training to accommodate lost wages drivers may incur for taking the training.

Training program delivery options

Dispatchers were also asked their opinions regarding who should be responsible for the design and delivery of the training, as shown in the diagram below.

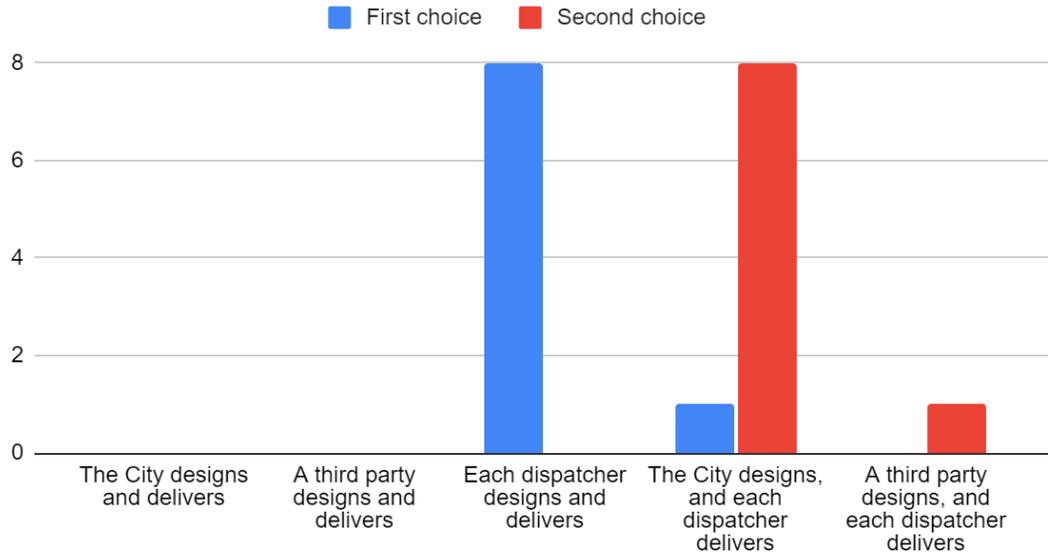
VFH Training Program Proposed Delivery Options



Dispatchers provided the following feedback regarding roles and responsibility of driver training:

- Dispatchers feel that they are well equipped to deliver the training based on their level of expertise, experience with the industry as well as the training facilities already available.
- Dispatchers wanted the City to consider its capacity to lead the training, as well as the consistency of training quality standards.
- Ensuring enough time to properly design and deliver the training, regardless of roles and responsibilities, was important to participants.
- Limousine participants reiterated that their services should not be included in the training, design or delivery - and that they should not be regulated under the Vehicle for Hire bylaw.
- Of the training delivery options presented above, dispatchers' first choice was that individual dispatchers design and deliver the training. Their second choice was that the City designs and dispatchers deliver training.

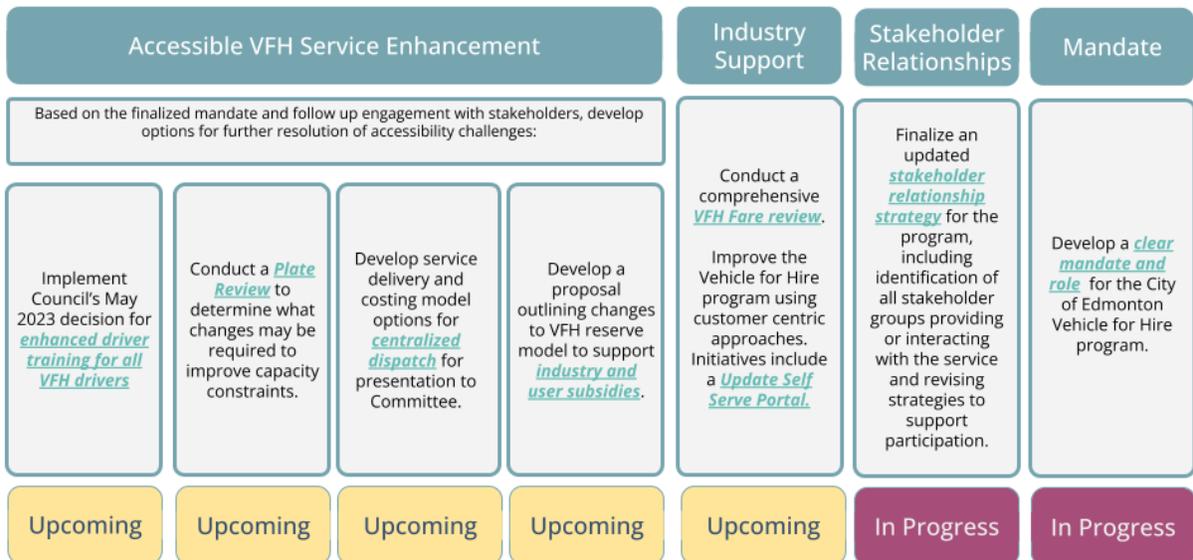
What is your choice for who will design and deliver the training?



Priorities for 2023/2024 Work Plan

Dispatchers were asked what they thought of the proposed 2023/2024 work plan priorities and if they had any other ideas for the work plan - illustrated by the chart below.

2023/2024 Work Plan Proposal

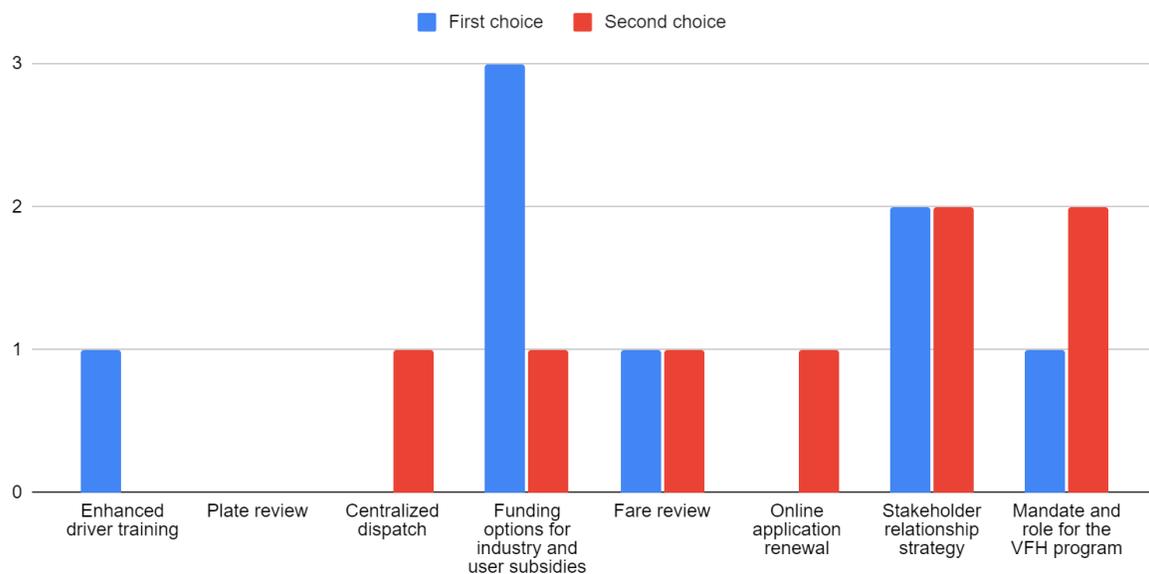


Participants provided additional priorities that they wanted added to the work plan, as outlined below:

- A City-led driver attraction strategy, as dispatchers are having challenges attracting and retaining drivers in the industry.
- A subsidy plan for industry to address the increased costs of operation - such as increased vehicle and insurance
- Work to make the fuel surcharge a permanent initiative.

Dispatchers preferred that the City focus on “funding options for industry and user subsidies” in the 2023/2024 work plan with “stakeholder relationship strategy” and “mandate and role of the Vehicle for Hire program” tying for second priority.

What is your first and second priority for the 2023/2024 work plan?



Other Comments

During the discussion with dispatchers, additional feedback was provided that did not directly relate to the questions being asked but are important to note:

- Dispatchers would like the City to put together an educational booklet or pamphlet with all requirements from the bylaw that can be provided to drivers.
- Dispatchers are seeing a decrease in wheelchair accessible vehicles within the Vehicle for Hire fleet. This is due to the costs of converting vehicles into wheelchair accessible vehicles as well as wheelchair accessible service is more work for the drivers. Due to these barriers, dispatchers believe an incentive program needs to be put in place to attract drivers to the service.

What we heard: Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE) workshop

The project team met with the City's Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee (WAVE), who provided the following feedback on the Vehicle for Hire program's 2023/2024 work plan:

Priorities for 2023/2024 work plan

The committee provided some general thoughts and feedback regarding the proposed 2023/2024 work plan:

- A recommendation that Fleet Manager Analytics be used as a tool for the plate review work.
- That if DATS is using accessible taxis as a contracted resource to support their services then the City should also want to help accessible taxi drivers outfit the vehicles to provide such service, rather than expect drivers to take on the entire cost.
- That the City has done a thorough and comprehensive job of filling in all the previously-identified gaps with industry training.

When asked what their preference for the top two priorities of the 2023/2024 work plan, WAVE unanimously chose the following:

1. Enhanced driver training as first priority
2. Plate review for second priority

What we heard: Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) workshop

The project team met with the City of Edmonton's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), that provided the following feedback on the Vehicle for Hire program's 2023/2024 work plan:

- Support of the plate review and a desire to explore if an increase in accessible plates could address the issue of accessible passengers not having a guaranteed ride when pre-booking rides.
- A reminder that not every wheelchair passenger needs a wheelchair accessible vehicle - and that some wheelchairs are foldable and can be put in the trunk.
- There needs to be a willingness from industry to transport users with wheelchairs - and that message needs to get to drivers.
- A request to add mandatory two-way cameras to all vehicle for hire vehicles

When asked what their preference for the top two priorities would be:

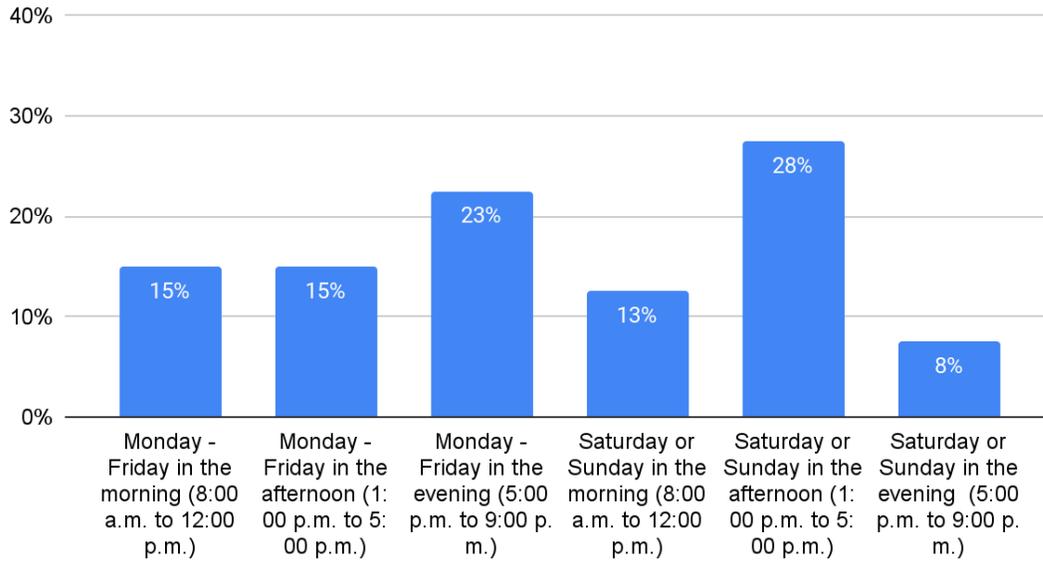
- "Plate review" and "enhanced training" were tied for first priority.
- "Plate review" was the second priority.

What we heard: Driver training impacts survey

Current and recent Vehicle for Hire Drivers were asked for input on:

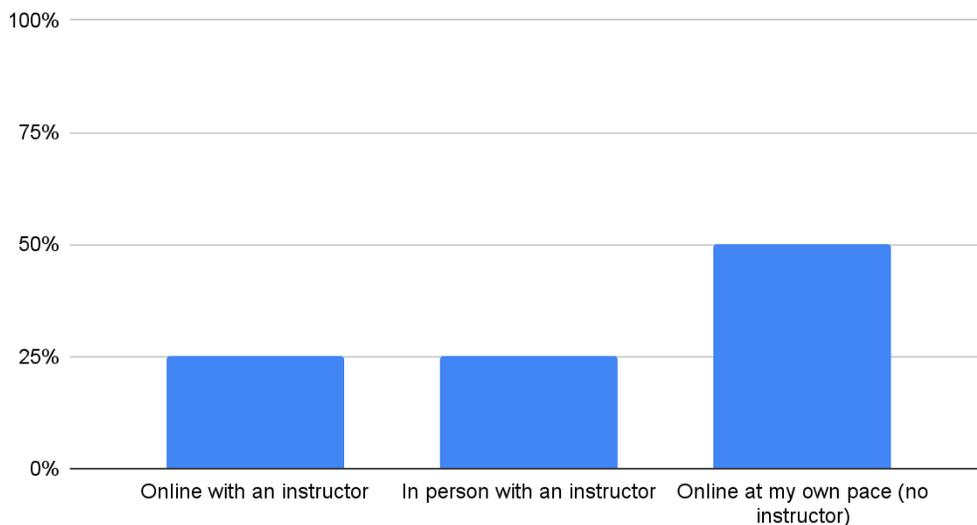
- Training scheduling
- Preference on delivery of training
- Time needed to complete training
- Training cost
- Training impacts and mitigation

When would you typically be available for training?



Survey results show that a wide range of available days and times for training is required. In particular, Saturday or Sunday in the afternoon (1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.) and Monday - Friday in the evening (5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) is preferred among drivers.

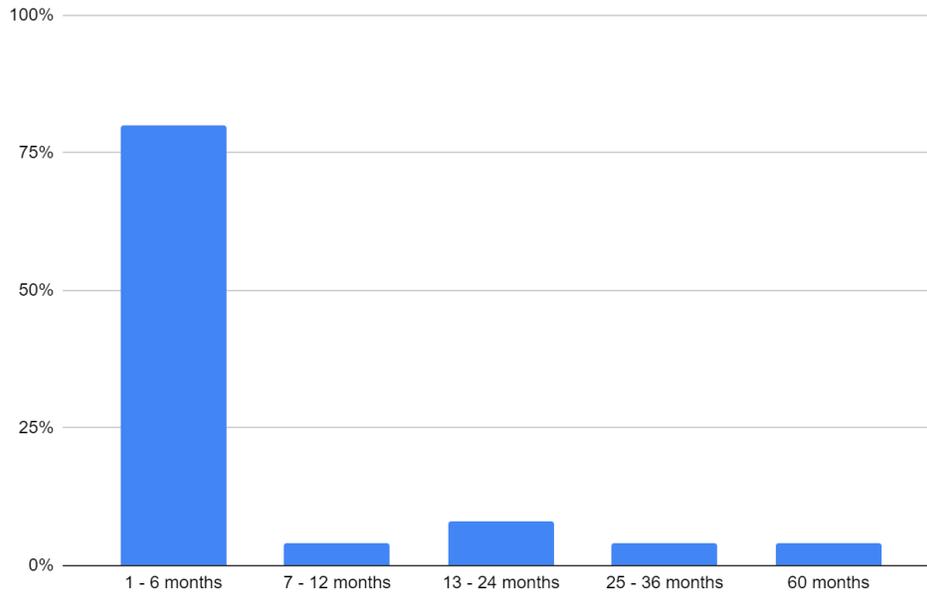
How do you prefer to learn? (Please select all that apply)



The majority of drivers surveyed preferred training online at their own pace (50%). Online with an instructor (25%) and in person with an instructor (25%) were equally preferred. All

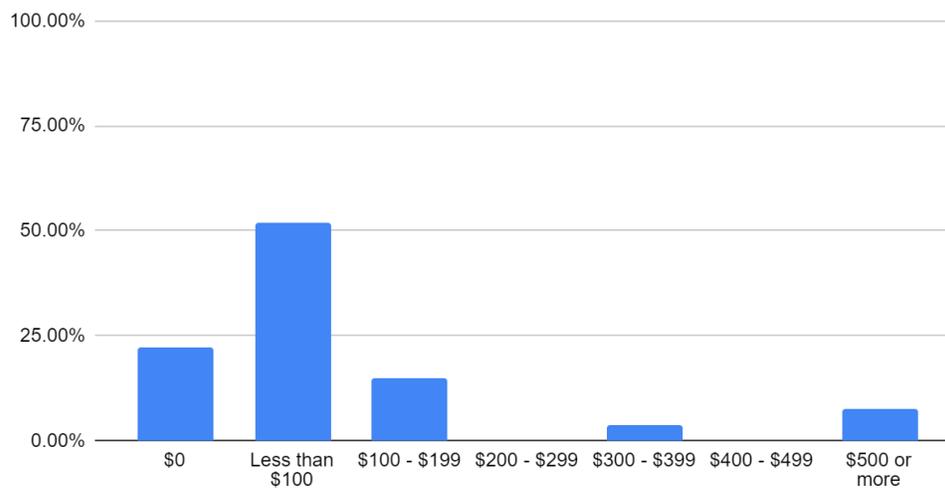
respondents indicated that they have access to a computer with reliable internet that could be used for training.

The Vehicle for Hire Program is proposing to start the training program in 2024. Assuming a total time commitment of 2 full days (or 16 hours), how much time do you think would be enough for you to complete all 3 parts of the training?



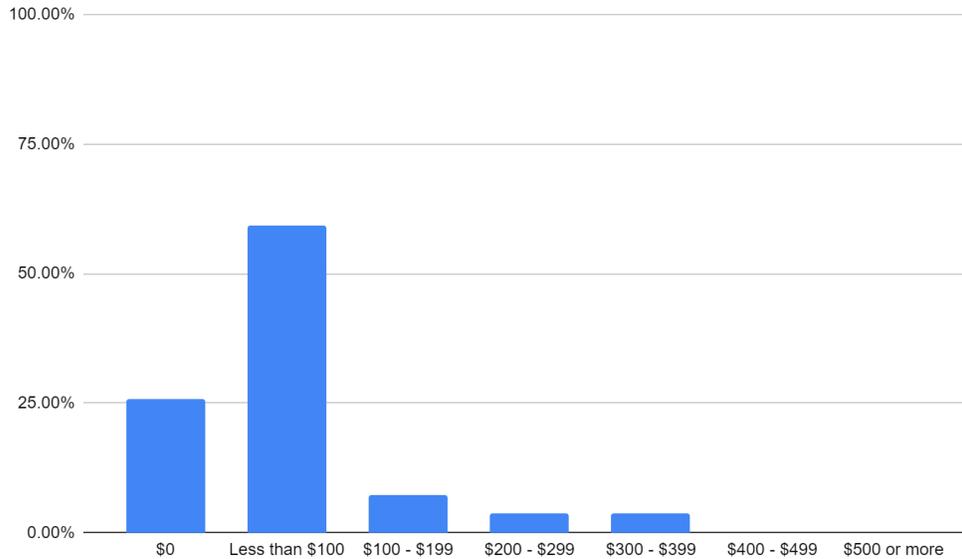
The majority of respondents indicated that 1 - 6 months (80%) would be enough time to complete all 3 parts of training.

Based on the course content described, what do you think the value of this training would be for you as a driver?



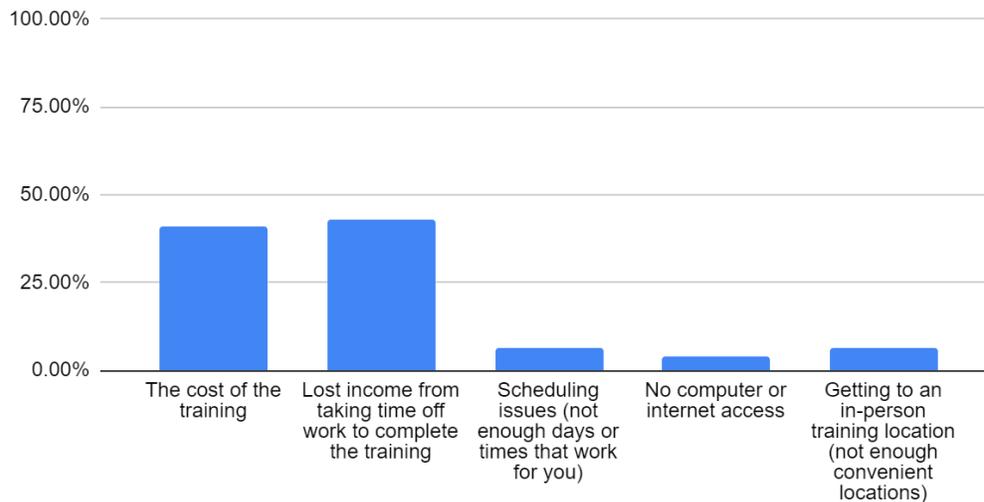
The majority of respondents indicated that they found the value of the course to be less than \$100 (51.85%).

In the event that there is a cost to drivers for taking the training, how much would you be willing to pay for a well-designed training program that teaches drivers skills for dealing with customer service challenges, helping customers with disabilities and accessibility needs, and driver and passenger safety?



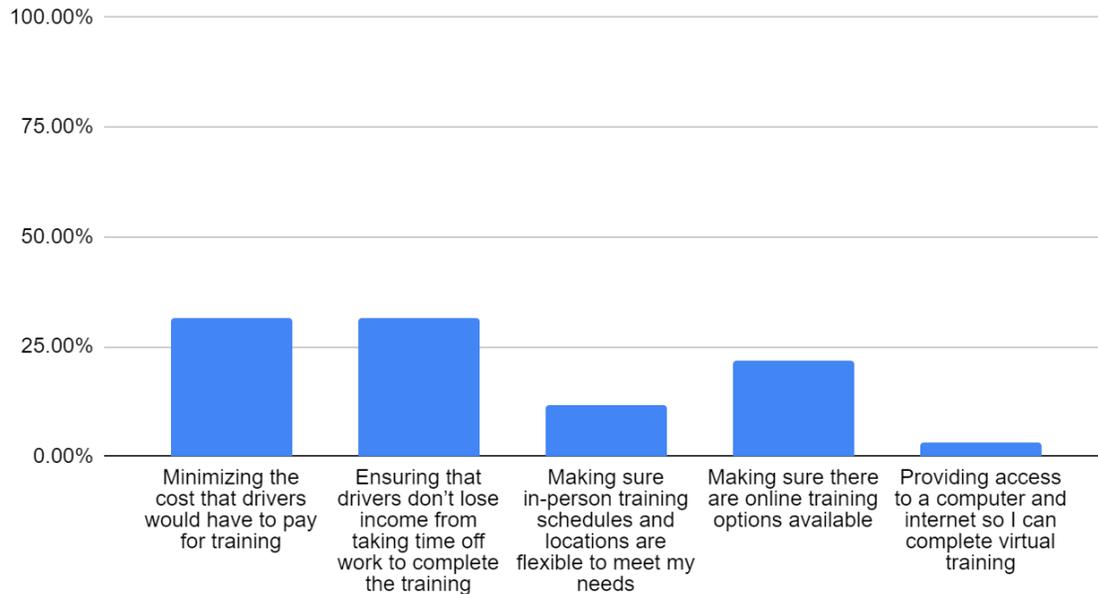
Drivers indicated that the lower cost is preferable. 59.26% indicated that they preferred less than \$100. 25.6% indicated that the training should be free.

What impacts should the Vehicle for Hire Program be aware of that a driver may face when taking the driver training program?



Drivers indicated that the main impacts a driver may face when taking the driver training program are the lost income from taking time off work to complete the training (42.86%) and the cost of training (40.82%).

What would support you in taking and completing the training?



Drivers indicated that the main supports to mitigate the impacts of training would be:

- minimizing the cost that drivers would have to pay for the training (31.67%)
- ensuring that drivers don't lose income from taking time off work to complete the training (31.67%)
- making sure there are online training options available

Some respondents also indicated that they feel they should not require training if they have been working for a long time or if they have previously completed training.

What we heard: Online stakeholder workshop with United Taxi Group

One online workshop was held with United Taxi Group, who represent drivers, to gather their input on the proposed training program as well as the 2023/2024 work plan.

Proposed training program impacts

- Participants had concerns regarding pulling drivers off the road to do training.
- Participants find training to be valuable but understand that training takes the driver away from their work.
- Concerns raised regarding the cost of the training program and possibility of drivers leaving the industry.
- Participants believed that training should be free for drivers.
- A recommendation that training focuses more on customer interaction.

Training program delivery options

- Dispatchers should deliver the training.
- Most drivers would prefer taking online training.
- A recommendation that the City and dispatchers could work together to design the training.
- A preference that “the City design and each dispatcher deliver” as a first choice, followed by “the Dispatcher design and each dispatcher deliver” as a second choice

Priorities for 2023/2024 work plan

- Participants agreed that a comprehensive fare review is needed resulting in a new permanent fare structure.
- In relation to “funding options for industry and user subsidies” priority, participants feel that vehicle owners need support from the City to replace their vehicles - that there are less taxis on the road right now as vehicle owners cannot afford to replace their vehicles.
- A preference that The City focus on the “fare review” in the 2023/2024 work plan with “funding options for industry and user subsidies” as second priority.

Other Comments

During the discussion with United Taxi Group, safety concerns were raised related to drivers being unable to receive payment at the end of a ride from aggressive passengers - sometimes resulting in altercations - with the belief that if drivers do not take payment upfront, there is a chance they will not be paid by the passenger and resulting an unsafe situations between both parties.

What Happens Next?

Based on the results from engagement, feedback from speakers at Council, market and needs assessment research and jurisdictional reviews, options for the delivery of enhanced driver training are being proposed in the upcoming Council report UPE01189 Amendments of Vehicle for Hire Bylaw. Work plan progress and stakeholder informed priorities will be shared in the report UPE01190 Amendments of Vehicle for Hire Bylaw. Both reports will be presented to Council in May 2023.