

VEHICLE FOR HIRE PROGRAM'S 2022 AND 2023 WORKPLAN OVERVIEW

RECOMMENDATION

That the May 1, 2023, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE01190, be received for information.

Requested Council Action	Information Only		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Healthy City		
City Plan Values	ACCESS		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	A Community of Communities	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Mobility Network
Corporate Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serving Edmontonians 		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bylaw 17400 - Vehicle for Hire 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UPE01189 Bylaw 20388 - Amendments to Vehicle for Hire Bylaw 17400 (May 1, 2023 Community and Public Services Committee) 		

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the March 7, 2022, Community and Public Services Committee, the following motion was passed:

- That Administration engage with Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee (WAVE), Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and Vehicle for Hire Industry, to review the workplan for Vehicle for Hire Program's 2022 and 2023, and explore priorities based on the feedback and report back to Committee.

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Report Summary

- The Bylaw 17400 Vehicle for Hire 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.
- This report includes an update on the status of the Vehicle for Hire Program's 2022/2023 priority projects, as well as the newly identified priorities for the work plan (Attachment 1).
- Analysis has identified the resourcing needed to undertake the work plan and additional staffing is being advanced. The work plan will be adjusted according to the resourcing available, with an initial focus on key priority areas.
- Engagement was undertaken from April 2022 to March 2023 with user groups and industry stakeholders (Attachment 2).

REPORT

Bylaw 17400 Vehicle for Hire Bylaw defines a 'vehicle for hire' as: "...a motor vehicle used or offered for the transportation of at least one passenger in return for compensation from any place within the city to a destination either within or outside of the city...".

The Vehicle for Hire program oversees diverse and integrated features including user accessibility and safety, the Vehicle for Hire Bylaw and bylaw enforcement, licensing, and public education. The program works closely with other City services, such as transit, to help deliver a comprehensive mobility network for Edmontonians. These aspects combine to support The City Plan's direction that Edmonton deliver a mobility system that should be safe, secure, accessible and responsive.

Status of 2022/2023 Priority Projects

At the March 7, 2022 Community and Public Services Committee, Committee members and public speakers identified key priorities from the Vehicle for Hire Program's 2022/2023 work plan:

1. The expansion of vehicle for hire driver training
2. Accessibility enhancements
3. Safety enhancements
4. Further analysis of the impact of provincial insurance changes
5. The development of an updated stakeholder relationship strategy

Updates on each of these priority areas are found below, with progress and next steps outlined in Attachment 1.

The Expansion of Vehicle for Hire Driver Training

At the same (March 7, 2022) Community and Public Services Committee, the following motion was also passed:

' That Administration prepare amendments to Vehicle for Hire Bylaw 17400 to expand accessibility driver training requirements to all Vehicle for Hire drivers.'

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Administration has developed a proposed vehicle for hire driver training program along with several options for training design and delivery. Further information about the proposed training program is in the May 1, 2023 Community and Public Services Committee report UPE01189 Bylaw 20388 - Amendments to Vehicle for Hire Bylaw 17400.

Accessibility Enhancements - Centralized Dispatch

In 2021, Administration collaborated with the Accessibility Advisory Committee to commission an Accessible Vehicle for Hire Program Needs Assessment. The subsequent 2021 report from the assessment recommended creation of a centralized dispatch system for accessible taxis as an important tool to improve trip bookings, reduce wait times and provide data that can be used to enhance services to accessible vehicle users. Administration is exploring options for centralized dispatch and will continue this work throughout 2023 and 2024.

Safety Enhancements - Increased Safety and Complaint Reporting Awareness

The City's vehicle for hire website is being refreshed to reflect stakeholder feedback regarding safety, accessibility, complaints and investigations, and user friendliness. A Bill of Passenger and Driver Rights and Responsibilities decal is also being designed to be placed in vehicles for hire. In addition, a public education campaign is being undertaken to improve passengers' awareness about their options for vehicles for hire, safety tips and how complaints may be filed for the City to investigate. This work is anticipated to be completed in Q2 2023.

Further Analysis of the Impact of Provincial Insurance Changes

During the discussion of the March 7, 2022, Vehicle for Hire Annual Report - 2021 Program Update at Community and Public Services Committee, Committee asked for a memo summarizing the recent changes to the Alberta Insurance Act as they relate to compensation available to vehicle owners involved in collisions. This memo was distributed to City Council in April 2022, and detailed changes resulting from Bill 41, *Insurance (Enhancing Driver Affordability and Care) Amendment Act, 2020*, to update the Province of Alberta's *Insurance Act*.

Administration is monitoring license renewal volumes for accessible taxi licensees and subsequent impacts to service levels. Accessible taxis are generally more expensive vehicles - and industry has indicated that a shift to no-fault insurance could result in higher insurance costs for these vehicles.

2023/2024 Work Plan Priorities

In addition to furthering priorities previously identified in the 2022/2023 Vehicle for Hire Work Plan, Administration has also completed or commenced work on emerging priorities identified by stakeholders since the March 7, 2022 Community and Public Services Committee.

Fuel Surcharge, Comprehensive Fare and Taxi Licence Review

Shortly after the March 7, 2022 Community and Public Services Committee meeting, the taxi industry dispatchers and drivers raised formal concerns to Administration regarding significant increases in operating costs due to rising fuel costs and presented Administration with a joint taxi fare proposal. With Bylaw 17400 regulating fares for taxis, and as a result of the significant

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increase in retail gasoline prices, Administration recognized a critical short-term requirement to support the vehicle for hire industry in the provision of critical mobility options to Edmontonians.

Administration reviewed the relevant Statistics Canada data on unleaded gasoline prices, engaged with drivers and recommended a temporary 13.29 per cent increase in taxi base fares to Council in the July 4, 2022 City Council report UPE01273rev - Bylaw 20186 - Vehicle for Hire Bylaw Amendment. Council approved this increase and it is currently in effect. Administration is continuing to monitor retail gasoline prices, and will return to Council for further direction if rates return to, or fall below, the March 2021 to February 2022 average price of 129.9 cents per liter for two consecutive quarters.

While the fuel surcharge amendment addressed one aspect of the submitted fare proposal, further engagement with industry on this topic has identified a need to include a comprehensive and permanent revision of the fare structure in the Vehicle for Hire Bylaw. Administration will also be reviewing existing caps on vehicle licences to determine if the caps correspond with existing and future demand for services. Bylaw 17400 currently limits the number of taxi and accessible taxi licences that can be issued - at 1,235 and 95 respectively.

Vehicle for Hire Program Mandate Development

In developing the 2023/2024 work plan, it became evident that there is a need to formally establish a Vehicle for Hire Program Mandate. The Vehicle for Hire program operates in a unique manner, i.e. where a critical piece of the City's mobility network is delivered through partnership with private business. Identifying roles, responsibilities and expectations is critical to advancing a number of the other work plan priorities. The mandate development involves:

- Developing guiding principles for the Vehicle for Hire program aligned with ConnectEdmonton, The City Plan and Council's Strategic Priorities.
- Developing and implementing a governance and operating model for the program.
- Conducting a current state and gap analysis of internal business areas providing mobility services, and their relationship to vehicle for hire program operations and stakeholder groups.
- Defining Administration's role and level of intervention in the vehicle for hire industry, including:
 - Establishing to what degree Administration should regulate, incentivize, subsidize and/or operate or contract out vehicle for hire services where users experience gaps in service.
 - Reviewing and amending where necessary transportation operators governed under Bylaw 17400 (e.g. limousines, shuttles, etc.).

Once the program's mandate is determined, it will serve as direction for emerging priorities identified by stakeholders, in addition to the following existing work plan items:

- Accessibility Enhancements
 - Centralized Dispatch.
 - Subsidies for industry and user stakeholder groups to improve accessibility.
- Further Safety Enhancements
 - Expansion of complaint intake and investigation mechanisms, including establishment of ombuds service.

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- Expansion of mandatory safety enhancements to vehicles, including installation of inwards and outwards facing recording devices in all vehicles.

Service Design & User Experience Improvements

In engagement with industry and user groups conducted between March 2022 and February 2023, stakeholders have identified an overarching need for modernization of the Vehicle for Hire program's approach to service design and user experience. In response, Administration has:

- Distributed the first user-specific Insight survey in Q4 2022.
- Implemented interim user-centric updates to the vehicle for hire website to enhance functionality and ease of access to information in Q2 2023.
- Begun development of a 'Bill of Rights and Responsibilities' for passengers and drivers.
- Begun development of stakeholder user personas to better understand their activities, needs, motivations and pain points.

Additional service design and user experience priorities for further development in Q4 2023 and 2024 include:

- The finalization of industry and user personas to guide program design and delivery.
- Full redevelopment of the website to user-centric design, including updates to web content accessibility standards.
- Development of a Self Serve Portal option for online licence applications and renewals.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Administration has developed an evolved stakeholder relationship strategy with the goal of identifying and understanding key stakeholders of vehicle for hire services, and connecting purposefully with those stakeholders regarding ongoing Vehicle for Hire program operations and project-based initiatives. Since March 2022, these efforts have included:

1. Conducting stakeholder mapping and undertaking user persona development to:
 - Ensure thorough identification of all user and industry stakeholder groups.
 - Identify stakeholder interests and key pain points experienced within the service.
 - Identify the most effective modes of engagement with stakeholder groups - including their desired level of participation and frequency of engagement.
2. Engaging and communicating with key stakeholders regarding ongoing program operations:
 - Distribution of quarterly Vehicle for Hire newsletter to industry stakeholders.
 - Passenger Experience Insight Survey of Vehicle for Hire Users.
 - Relationship building and introductory meetings with new stakeholders identified in the stakeholder mapping exercise.
3. Engaging with key stakeholders in the development of projects and new initiatives:
 - Engagement with industry and user groups on a proposed driver training program (see cross-referenced UPE01189 Bylaw 20388 - Amendments to Vehicle for Hire Bylaw 17400, May 1, 2023, Community and Public Services Committee).

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- Engagement with taxi dispatchers and drivers regarding fares and the implementation of the temporary fuel surcharge (UPE01273rev, Bylaw 20186 Vehicle for Hire Bylaw Amendment, July 4, 2022, City Council).

Administration is committed to ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and will continue to meet regularly with these stakeholders. Additional details regarding stakeholder relationship strategy and engagement touchpoints are in Attachment 3.

GBA+

The Vehicle for Hire program's work plan is informed by a GBA+ lens as demonstrated by:

- Formal stakeholder mapping - challenging perspectives and assumptions regarding stakeholder groups that Administration is accountable to, and identifying those who may not historically have been engaged in program design and delivery.
- Continuous communication and meaningful engagement with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton.
- The development of user personas - an exercise that prompts the identification of inclusion and diversity perspectives and ensures program development is informed by those perspectives.
- Administration's emphasis on engaging with industry drivers, who themselves represent a broad spectrum of Edmontonians and experiences, and have historically been absent or under-represented in decision making and program development.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vehicle for Hire Program 2023/2024 Work Plan - Key Priorities
2. Summary of Research and Stakeholder Engagement Inputs for Vehicle for Hire Program Activities (April 2022- March 2023)