

Stakeholder Engagement: What We Heard

Over the course of 2020, Administration held several discussions with vehicle for hire stakeholders regarding issues affecting the industry. Stakeholders included taxi, limousine and TNC dispatchers, drivers' representatives under the United Taxi Group, and the accessibility advisory committee. Below is the feedback received from these discussions; which Administration will apply to inform future work operations and communication with industry.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Vehicle for Hire Industry

Many industry stakeholders experienced declining trips and revenues due to stay at home strategies in place to manage COVID-19. Conversely, stakeholders also incurred increasing operating costs to comply with public health guidelines. These factors have resulted in economic hardship to industry stakeholders.

Licence Fee Waivers

Council's waiver of 2020 vehicle and dispatch licence fees by 50 percent for taxis and 100 percent for limousines was helpful to industry; however, industry is requesting licence fee waivers to be extended to 2021 as economic hardships still persist.

Bylaw Enforcement

Industry pointed out areas for bylaw enforcement attention and observed that there may be unlicensed vehicles providing illegal transportation services. Industry acknowledged that some enforcement action has been taken against these unlicensed vehicles; however, they continue operating once enforcement is over. Industry also stated that some TNC drivers accept fares outside of the company's app. Industry noted lack of updates on enforcement action and lack of follow up or timely follow up on complaints.

Potential Bylaw Amendments

The accessibility advisory committee and industry identified various areas of the bylaw where change is required. These include:

- Reviewing the requirement for company dispatch licences;
- Licensing customer service vehicles operated by hotels and autobody shops under the bylaw;
- Regulating safety features within vehicles under the bylaw;
- Decreasing the threshold for definition of luxury vehicles (applicable to limousines);
- Changing the display of limousine licence plates to the back of the vehicle;
- Reviewing limits on accessible vehicle licences;

- Creating mandatory training requirements for all drivers and not only accessible vehicle drivers.

Administration will review these areas to determine which changes are feasible, and whether some can be implemented without bylaw amendments. Those that require a bylaw amendment will be brought forward as part of the next annual update.

Communication and Relationship

Industry noted the tone and timing of City correspondence, for example notices regarding licence fees, during COVID-19 lacked sensitivity to the prevailing economic situation. Industry also felt that 311 operators lack an understanding of industry concerns and struggle to direct complaints to the relevant service area. Industry requested a clear point of contact in face of staff changes.