

This was my oral presentation from Feb. 21, 2014 TLAC meeting.

1. I'm supposed to be a self employed independent contractor and pick my own hours, but LTS proposes to tell me when I have to operate due to the false public perception of a shortage of taxis in Calgary. I'm a licensed business owner, not an employee. The City of Calgary doesn't tell any other business when they have to operate. I have to assume ALL the expenses and risks of operating my business and I'm being told I will have to operate 16 hours per day from 12 noon through 4am during Stampede. I'm being told I will have to operate on holidays and during dangerous driving conditions referred to as inclement weather. Conditions like this are why we have labor standards and unions.
2. No-Trips are the main reason behind the perceived taxi shortage in Calgary because: Every No-trip takes a taxi out of service 5-25 minutes depending on how long the driver takes to get there, confirm nobody's there and get put back in the cue by dispatch. This truly frustrates drivers during peak times when they could have taken 2, 3 or more "sure thing" flag trips and make money. Drivers quickly develop a mistrust of "stale trips" and "lobby shots" that tie them up waiting for customers that are gone and make the other customers wait even longer for their taxi. When bar rush flag trips die down, the drivers go back to dispatch and frequently end up getting several stale no-trips.
3. Driver Change for cars with two drivers is another contributing factor to perception of shortage during morning and afternoon peak periods. Every car with two drivers has to come out of service for a period of time twice per day. The exact amount of time each driver-change takes varies from car to car and driver to driver, where in the city they live, whether or not they have to wash the car etc. This is especially frustrating to customers during the Christmas party season who all want taxis to go to their events around the 4-7pm time frame. This is when the majority of two-driver taxis perform shift change and also when Calgary traffic is at its' worst. Many cars end up out of position from where the most trips are waiting. By the time the taxis can get there; many of the trips have gone "stale", drivers get tied up procedurally again and customers wait longer.
4. The Calgary Board of Education, the Calgary Catholic School Board and Access Calgary place a huge demand on the taxi industry during peak periods every weekday morning and afternoon again contributing to the perception that there is a shortage of taxis. Literally hundreds of taxis are used to shuttle students and special needs clients to and from schools and other special programs all over.
5. As mentioned in the subcommittee workshop; we could have 10,000 taxis in Calgary and 15 minutes after the fireworks end during stampede people will still say we need more taxis! Lobby shots in Central/Core areas should be shifted to the lowest priority or considered only as a "flag" during peak times because those customers are going to flag the first cab they see anyhow! As long as the public demands more taxis, the brokers will continue to benefit the most because they have achieved what is

essentially a monopoly in Calgary. More Taxi plates always equates to more money for the brokers. The only real solutions will never occur under the current monopoly and real change is needed.

6. Like many Driver/Owners, I don't own my plate and will likely have it taken away unless I put a night driver on my car. Putting a second driver on my car will immediately cost me an extra \$4,000/year mostly related to insurance. I will also have to take more time off my weekday shifts to facilitate the costly extra repairs and maintenance required due to how hard lease drivers drive rental cars. I would lose my ability to personally serve the code-8 clientele I've spent 22 years building morning, noon and night. There is no incentive to put a second driver on my car, it's not worth it.
7. Veteran drivers with 15 or more years experience in Calgary, who have never owned a taxi plate, should be allowed to get a non-transferable plate, free from the proposed new requirements and at minimal cost so that they may continue their careers and serve with the broker of their choice. This would retain good veteran drivers in the industry AND allow more taxis on the road. This will also allow many career drivers to continue to strive towards the work/family balance they have already worked towards for many years.
8. More drivers would work weekend nights if there were a late night surcharge as they have in Edmonton \$3 surcharge Thursday, Friday & Saturday 11Pm-4AM.
9. Proposed solutions:
  - A) Open up the plates to initiate real competition. The good drivers and brokers will swim and the bad ones will sink. The market will fix itself.

OR

B) Centralize everything into one unified taxi service with a 311 type call centre and state of the art GPS technology to cut down on no trips. Pay drivers an honest living wage and provide proper labor standards and controlled working conditions to drive company vehicles and let the employer or the City assume the risks for forcing vehicles to drive in dangerous conditions referred to as "Inclement weather".

I will now expand upon this presentation with the following:

**With regards to item 1:** Many veteran drivers feel the proposed regulations are a direct attack on their way of life and how they make a living. Most veteran drivers have "paid their dues" working the night shift for long periods of time and have no desire to put up with poorly behaved passengers heavily impaired by drugs and alcohol. The proposed regulations cross the line between being a self employed owner/operator and being an employee. If the City wants the drivers to be employees; drivers should be paid an honest living wage with benefits and unionization such as other public

employees. Provincial Labor Standards would have to be adhered to with regards to things like statutory holidays, overtime and safety of work conditions and environment.

Many taxi owners have more than one business, personal and family circumstances that require they have an open and flexible schedule to live the life they have made for themselves. Religion also plays a large part of many drivers' lives and has not been taken into account in the proposed regulations in any way, shape or form. The proposed regulations may also contravene some human and civil rights laws.

**With regards to item 2:** People don't order food from 2, 3 or 4 different restaurants and only intend to accept the first to arrive, but that's exactly what they do to taxis when they are impatient. This type of behavior is exhibited every weekend during bar rush and during some other peak times as well. Many drivers will simply cycle their meter on and off to get put back in line instead of following the no-trip procedures that take far too long and waste far too much time. This cycling of the meters distorts the company and LTS data with regards to no-trips. There are far more no-trips going on than the company or LTS know about. Sometimes dispatch doesn't even acknowledge a drivers' voice request or no-trip request for over 10 minutes and this is simply not acceptable.

One good suggestion that I have to reduce no-trips is this: Each taxi company should have a dedicated phone line to cancel taxi requests. Internet and Text message cancellations should be incorporated too. This would allow people to cancel their taxi request without getting a busy signal. One taxi service provider in another jurisdiction sends a text message automatically when the taxi is within 500M of location requested. They also allow cancellation by way of text message and customers embraced service. Public accountability needs to play a part in the solutions as well. If several "no-trips" originate from the same telephone number or address, perhaps service should be refused on future occasions due to the inconveniences caused to drivers and other customers.

**With regards to item 3:** If LTS really wants to force all taxis on the road at certain times; this may be an idea. Take total control of the entire system and drivers become employees. Drivers would no longer own vehicles and have the burden of all the expenses associated with the vehicles. 3 shifts per car per day. 12 Noon to 8 PM, 8PM-4AM and 4AM to 12 Noon. Shift changes at those times would allow taxis to be on the road during ALL peak times and repair the damage done by current driver change times and the increasing pressure to have two drivers on every vehicle. This would also cut down on collisions caused by driver fatigue and/or inattentiveness.

If all the vehicles are City or Company owned and all the drivers are employees, drivers would be asked to give away the labor standards of two 15 minute breaks and one 30 minute break but would not be required to work overtime. Drivers would not be stressed out about the cost of maintenance and repairs which can add up very quickly and take away valuable shift time spent in the garage for repairs. All drivers would be treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve. Drivers will also increase customer service to increase tips and everybody wins in this scenario.

**With regards to item 5:** The word “Monopoly” may not have been the best choice. What I’m trying to convey here is simply this: Current LTS regulations with regards to Technology requirements have made it virtually impossible for any small start-up type taxi services to enter into the Calgary market. Computers, Receipt Printers, Cameras and Data transmission to LTS are all requirements that only the large brokers are capable of affording. Even then, at least one of the large brokers complained several times that it would cost \$3,000,000 to implement the data transmission requirements. Requests by brokers for more plates should be considered as biased because they always stand to benefit from more plates regardless of who holds them or how slow business is.

**With regards to item 7:** New drivers with little experience or loyalty to the industry are currently able to “win” taxi plates under the current “lottery” type system that LTS has been using. Both the cost to enter the “plate lottery” and fees charged for those non transferable plates are too high and should be reviewed. Only drivers with 10 or more years of service should be allowed to receive plates. Livery Transport Services is the only entity of the City Of Calgary that is totally user funded. Over the years, LTS has built up a massive multi million dollar surplus referred to officially as a “Reserve Fund”. This surplus has been achieved by overcharging drivers ever increasing fees for services.

With regards to other items in the LTS proposal and some other different issues:

In recent years, drivers have been denied copies of their police clearance and driver’s abstracts even though they have paid for them. Drivers wishing a copy of these documents for their own reasons are forced to have these services conducted a second time for a fee elsewhere even though they have already paid for these services through LTS. I would like to ask a member of TLAC to put forward a motion that: LTS provide drivers a true copy of both their Police Clearance and Driver’s Abstract at a charge of no more than one dollar per page.

Since LTS has proposed that “Multi Owners” divest of all but one of the plates they hold, brokers should also have to divest of all but a limited number of the plates they hold too. A cap of 50, 100 or 150 plates per broker seems reasonable and fair given that they are not required to comply with many of the regulations proposed and already in place. The proposed new regulations appear very biased towards the brokers. Many drivers believe that brokers should have to comply with more of the regulations in place and proposed including the requirement to actually drive taxi themselves in order to hold plates. While this isn’t all that practical, it would allow them to finally learn what things are really like.

Forcing all taxis to be in service during the proposed time slots will create a shortage of taxis Saturdays and Sundays from 4AM through 4PM. There are other times when a shortage of taxis would occur under the proposed regulations including but not limited to: January 1, March 18, November 1 and 4AM-12Noon every day during Stampede.

Requiring drivers to achieve a TBD number of hours per year in order to renew their taxi driver's license is truly ridiculous. A 20 year veteran having to take a driver training refresher course because they chose to take some time off is a perfect example of how ridiculous this proposed regulation truly is. Many drivers choose to keep their license so they can have a job to come back to when they find other work. Many drivers work on a seasonal basis and view this proposed regulation as a cash grab to increase driver training revenues. This proposal will totally backfire and effectively reduce the pool of available drivers instead of increasing the pool of available drivers as suggested.

One of the most common customer complaints is getting a busy signal when calling. Checker Yellow Cabs has an IVR (intelligent Voice Recognition) system to answer calls without need for an operator when customer calls from the same location as is already on file for the telephone number calling from. Smartphone apps already in place and under development will also work toward alleviating the busy signal problem. Passengers on New Year's Eve were thrilled to get a taxi extremely quickly using the iPhone app. They tried calling numerous times unsuccessfully and got a taxi almost immediately using the iPhone app. I believe that technology will help resolve current issues.

Often taxis are waiting to be dispatched while customers get a busy signal for whatever reason. I've frequently been dispatched to a nearby taxi trip after waiting in line a period of time only to have the customer think we're very busy because it took them 45 minutes to get through on the phone. If the phone lines are so jammed up, how come more trips aren't coming down to the drivers? Are all these callers making time consuming lost and found inquiries? Are they all booking future time calls? Do the brokers turn phone lines off when trips stack up in some areas? If this indeed is what happens from time to time, both the drivers and the customers are being abused by the brokers and this must stop.

With regards to proposals and motions for more taxi plates: Outside of the peak periods, there are already too many taxis in Calgary. Drivers often wait for one hour or more between dropping off passengers and getting their next trip. Taxi stands downtown are generally over capacity all day long. Taxis don't have enough business and many taxi stands have been removed since the introduction of the Calgary Parking Authority's "Park Plus System". As was mentioned during the Feb. 21, 2014 TLAC meeting; a driver working an 11.2 hour shift may only have their meter on for 1.8 hours. That boils down to a very low ratio of actual earning time that will get even worse with more plates.

Drivers frequently park at downtown hotels during rush hour and don't book in because they don't want to be forced into gridlock traffic conditions responding to a trip request that potentially won't be there when they arrive. This is another example of how "no-trips" are the actual root of the problem. More rush hour friendly taxi stands are needed.

I would like to point out at this time that nobody has ever said the bars and customers need to take more responsibility for themselves. Blaming the taxi drivers is an easy way to shift responsibility away from where it truly belongs. The cliché “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail” comes to mind. Simply put, more people need to have a designated driver and bars need to stop “over serving”. Bars won’t stop the practice of over serving because that’s how they make money. Careful review of the liquor laws would show that the vast majority of bar customers are technically over served every day. The more participants actively involved in addressing the situation; the higher the likelihood of reaching solutions. Alternative solutions to the LTS proposed regulations are needed.

Many jurisdictions require the bar owners to be more pro-active towards getting their customers home safely at the end of their visits instead of forcing them out on to the streets to try to get a taxi at the same time as everybody else. In other cities, many bars have their own shuttle service to ferry customers home. Other alternative solutions also exist in other cities. In Arizona for example; some bars have partnered up with a specific taxi company to subsidize the customer’s taxi ride through a receipt return program.

Globalfest has a highly successful shuttle bus program that should be looked at as a great example of how to do things properly when it comes to moving a large number of people quickly. This strategy could be used at Stampede, Fort Calgary concerts and other special events too. Another innovative idea would be to have shuttle buses in the core and beltline areas at bar rush time. 2:00AM-3:00AM. This is just one idea with potential.

For a written submission to be eligible to be added to the TLAC Agenda, it must be accompanied by a report. (Note: written submissions can still be provided without a report. Such submissions would simply be handled outside of the TLAC meeting process.) This requirement actually makes it more difficult for drivers to be part of the process and I believe Taxi Drivers should be exempted from being required to have a report accompany their written submissions.