

Report to Calgary Taxi Limousine Advisory Committee

March 10, 2014

Response to new conditions of license to address peak period taxi shortages.

SUMMARY

The new conditions of license to address peak period taxi shortages effectively change the current role of drivers from independent self employed contractors to that of employees without consideration for individual circumstances or the actual role of employer being taken by anybody. The data referred to in the report was from an extremely unique period in Calgary in July of 2013. Along with Stampede, there was also the situation that Calgary was recovering from devastating floods and normal use of taxi services was changed significantly as a result. Tourism was down and many citizens altered their normal patterns for a variety of flood related reasons.

Drivers need to have a proper voice in the process of working towards solutions for the perceived shortage of taxis during peak demand times. Many factors contribute to the perception of a shortage of taxis when in fact; there is no actual shortage at all. I intend to expose some truths of the industry not accounted for in the report from LTS and offer some alternative solutions. I also intend to briefly outline some other industry issues.

Background Information

People are accustomed to getting what they want, when they want it. We truly live in an instant gratification world and this has had an impact on service expectations during peak demand times in the taxi industry. This seems to be a little unique in that people don't place unreasonable expectations on other businesses during peak demands for service. Parking spaces are difficult to find during the Christmas shopping season and nobody demands that capacity be increased. Line-ups and waits occur at restaurants during peak demand times and people don't demand increased capacity. Late night pizza restaurants experience line-ups and waits after the bars close and the city doesn't force all pizza restaurants to be open.

The proliferation of mobile phones over the last 15-20 years has resulted in nearly every citizen over the age of 18 owning a mobile phone. This in turn has contributed at least in part to increased call volumes to taxi dispatch offices. There has also been an increase in the overall number of "No-Trips" that occur due to multiple requests for the same service.

Investigation

Taxis are seen all around the downtown and beltline areas looking for flag trips during the peak demand times identified. Many of the drivers would rather wait in a line-up at a bar or cruise for flags instead of booking on to the dispatch system because they don't want to waste time running around for No-Trips when they could be earning a living instead. Public accountability never seems to come into play at any time. When people call for a taxi at a public place and flag down the first taxi they see, they seldom tell the driver that they have called for a taxi. They also seldom cancel their original request for a taxi. Drivers don't

usually know that their flag trip has called for a taxi and are hard pressed to cancel the customer request if they do find out a request for service has already been made. Increased communication on the part of both drivers and passengers is required to resolve this issue.

Stakeholder Engagement or Research Conducted:

I've spoken to a number of Lease Drivers, Driver/Owners, Sedan Drivers, Legal Experts, Industry Veterans, Customers and a former Taxi Inspector for input on this issue.

Recommendations for TLAC to Consider

To receive this report for information and consideration regarding the Taxi Bylaw amendments.

To acknowledge that forcing the proposed conditions of license and taxi driver license renewal is counter-productive to resolving the perception of taxi shortages during peak demand times and will actually cause service shortages during other times as outlined in the attached report.

To explore alternative initiatives to addressing the perception of taxi shortages during peak periods.

To strike down the proposed new conditions of license.

To strike down the proposed new conditions of Taxi Driver License renewal.

To acknowledge that ease of communicating service request cancellations will help cut down the number of no-trips and work towards re-establishing drivers trust in the dispatch system.

To establish a "Veteran Driver" Taxi License program to retain veteran drivers.

To limit fee increases to the same time increment as meter rate increases.

To have LTS offer true copies of driver police clearances and driver's abstracts at a reasonable fee.

To eliminate the requirement of written submissions by drivers to be accompanied by a report to be handled during the TLAC meeting process.

ATTACHMENTS

I have attached a Word Document titled TLAC Submission 100314 to support my report.

Submissions Presented BY:

Robert McGregor, Calgary Taxi Driver currently affiliated with Checker Transportation Group.