
VEHICLE FOR HIRE COMMISSION

VEHICLE FOR HIRE COMMISSION

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SESSION

JULY 7, 2009
HOLIDAY INN CONVENTION CENTRE, 4520-76 AVENUE

The City Of Edmonton Vehicle for Hire Commission conducted a Public Involvement session on the evening of July 7, 2009 to obtain input from industry stakeholders on the following 2 key matters:

1. CO2 emission reduction strategies for taxis.
2. Driver Training initiatives aimed at developing or maintaining best practice standards.

The following document summarizes comments made by each speaker and provides a Commission response to each comment.

Representing the Vehicle for Hire Commission on July 7 was Hatem Naboulsi, Leon Lubin, Charan Khehra, Manmohan Pnaich, Chris Leahey, Mack Fysh and Robert Clarke.

1. CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSION REDUCTION STRATEGIES

<i>SPEAKER NUMBER</i>	<i>COMMENTS</i>	<i>COMMISSION RESPONSE</i>
1	<p>Mr. Steve Alvanos spoke to the Commission about taxi business going down between 40% and 60% and the tough times being faced by the taxi drivers. Regarding CO2 emission reduction, the idea is good but the City should start doing something with their own fleet first. Its difficult times and only god knows when business conditions will improve.</p> <p>People are leaving the industry as they cannot make a living. By forcing reduced CO2 emissions you are forcing taxi drivers to spend over \$30,000 on replacement vehicles. This burden is too great.</p>	<p>Agree, the City must address CO2 emission reduction in its owned fleets, but feel that taxis must be part of this solution. Taxis represent about 85% of Edmonton's private vehicle for hire make-up.</p> <p>Agree that the regional economy is depressed compared to 2 years ago. This phenomenon is universal – not restricted to the vehicle for hire industry. CO2 emission reduction does not mean all taxi drivers have to purchase hybrid vehicles. For example, replacement of a 1998 Crown Victoria with a 2005 Crown Victoria also provides emission reduction. Similarly, a 2006 Chev Impala produces a significantly less amount of CO2 emissions compared to a 2006 Crown Victoria.</p>

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS	COMMISSION RESPONSE
2	<p>Mr. Andrew asked what the taxi Commission and City can do to reduce CO2 emission; it's not an easy solution.</p> <p>Taxi Commission and City of Edmonton as a big organization has tremendous lobbying power.</p> <p>He insisted that the Taxi Commission do something so that the Edmonton taxi drivers are able to serve the airport. If Edmonton taxi cabs served the Edmonton International airport, reduced emissions by eliminating dead-heading in one direction would result.</p>	<p>All parties including the City will be part of the solution.</p> <p>Agree that Provincial and Federal Government help needs to be solicited.</p> <p>Agree this solution is desirable, but not totally within the jurisdictional power of the City of Edmonton. More political will power is required from all levels of Government to make this a reality.</p>
3	<p>Mr. Phil Strong asked the Commission why the City finds it necessary for the taxis to be the first to reduce CO2 emission. He felt that the City & Commission are hard on the taxi drivers instead of the City's public fleets. It's not easy to afford a new car so a driver purchases an 2 or 3 year old car and that car is good for only 2 years.</p> <p>Creating a 5 year age limit for taxis is an onerous burden on the taxi drivers and owners. As a broker, dispatch company should have 20% hybrid vehicles by 2012, it's not my vehicle, its owner's vehicles, and we can't force anyone to purchase a particular type of vehicle so how do we enforce that by creating incentives for taxi owners to buy hybrid vehicles ? As an industry, we should get more and more hybrid vehicles and for that don't push the issue instead we should educate owners and drivers to save fuel.</p>	<p>Again the City is not intending to place the entire CO2 emission reduction strategy on the taxi industry. The Taxi industry must recognize its role in this overall strategy.</p> <p>CO2 emission levels are lower in newer vehicles. Experience in other Canadian jurisdictions indicates that age limitations on taxi vehicles represents a valuable public safety factor. Most Airport Authorities across North America have age limitations enforced. Like the City of Edmonton- Edmonton Taxi Brokers need to "think outside the box". Some possibilities for industry consideration are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Broker policies requiring every Taxi license transfer within the Corporation to bring a newer model year vehicle into the fleet. • Create Broker requirements that require any replacement vehicle into taxi service to meet a minimum of 11 litres/100km of consumption. • Create Broker policies that require

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS	COMMISSION RESPONSE
	<p>If the City feels that 10% of each taxi brokers fleet to be hybrid vehicles by 2010, then the City better have 10% of their fleet ready by 2010. Let's not force the cab industry, indeed try the bigger industries to improve CO2 emission reductions. He gave examples of Vancouver and Winnipeg and said it's important to educate people about hybrid vehicles. Its like sugar attracts more flies than vinegar. Encouragement instead of a big stick will help.</p> <p>City Council could do more to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by creating incentives for all vehicles containing more persons than just a driver. Too many single person trips in private cars.</p>	<p>every 8 cylinder taxi vehicle be replaced with a 6 cylinder (or less) vehicle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education of industry stakeholders on the value of hybrid vehicles is the responsibility of the industry. The Federal /Provincial governments have already completed the energy reduction / cost savings analysis. • Agree this is not a "one-sided solution" but the taxi industry cannot disregard appropriate CO2 emission reduction. <p>Agree that the City of Edmonton must consider its global options. Single person vehicle trips around Edmonton are very CO2 emission costly. Other forms of relief need to be considered.</p>
4.	<p>Mr. Balraj Manhas started by giving a detailed comparison between Edmonton and other Provinces regarding the number of vehicles plates issued, number of taxis on road, population etc . By example, Winnipeg has over 60% of its fleet as hybrid vehicles, but they only have 431 taxi plates compared to Edmonton's 1,220. Winnipeg taxis are busier than</p>	<p>Taxi to population ratios vary significantly all across North America. "Permanent vs: seasonal" plates also provide a controversial subject, as do "daytime service vs: night time service" plates, as do "weekend warrior" plates. Winnipeg presently has 410 regular taxi licenses and 89 accessible taxi and handivan licenses.</p>

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS	COMMISSION RESPONSE
	<p>Edmonton taxis.</p> <p>He added that other cities make more money than Edmonton taxi drivers so why the cab industry is targeted? The drivers are facing economic hardships; and are idle for 18 hours a day-we can think of CO2 reduction in coming years maybe 5 to 10 years. The City has not changed their own fleet No incentives are given to the taxi drivers then why should the City impose hybrid vehicles on us? The difference in cost is huge to buy a new hybrid vehicle and the driver cannot afford it</p> <p>The City should work, if really interested to reduce CO2 emission, with the International Airport and the Edmonton taxis should be permitted to serve the airport as well, to reduce deadheading and CO2 emissions by 30-40% automatically. He then talked about Winnipeg issuing "winter plates" as one measure to deal with greater demand for taxis during winter months. They are making money and that's the only reason they can afford hybrid vehicles, we can't, Mr. Manhas concluded.</p>	<p>There is no empirical or substantive data to validate that Edmonton taxi drivers earn less than their Canadian or North American counter parts. Ongoing vehicle operational and maintenance costs are marginally lower on hybrid vehicles – proven by the International community.</p> <p>Agree this strategy would create the suggested result. Jurisdictional issues that do NOT DIRECTLY CONNECT the City of Edmonton with the International Airport are at the root of this ongoing problem. A new "class" of temporary winter taxi license is not under consideration at this time. City Council would need to approve any Bylaw amendment to change existing practices.</p>
5.	<p>Mr. Abdi Abdullah said the owners cannot afford a new car, has no job, and suggested that the city should come up solutions to subsidize and help the taxi drivers. He concluded by saying that drivers work 7 days a week, can hardly pay the rent.</p>	<p>Agree that current conditions are harsh, but suggest that taxi drivers, just like all other workers, must have contingency plans for future economic downturns.</p>
6.	<p>Mr. Tadeusz Jurasz stated that taxis are only a small percentage of overall vehicles on road in Edmonton. I don't think by switching to hybrid vehicles, it will reduce CO2 emission. Big vehicles like trucks, vehicles with big engines, buses emit more CO2 than taxis. There is no solution forcing us in buying expensive cars for small reduction in CO2 emission. Why bring</p>	<p>Remember that "all transportation partners" must be held accountable. Taxis cannot be exempt. Hybrid vehicles are not the only solution to reducing CO2 emissions.</p>

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS	COMMISSION RESPONSE
	up this idea at all? We cannot afford expensive vehicles in spite of working 7 days a week.	
7.	<p>Mr. Jatinder Deol said it's a tough job to reduce CO2 emission, the hybrid vehicles are expensive, a taxi driver has to work 19 hours, takes pills to stay awake and work to earn a living.</p> <p>There are multiple owners, expensive vehicles and all this burden goes to the driver, not the brokers.</p>	<p>Agree that "future improvements" of any nature usually require increased expense. It would appear that the present economy forces drivers to work longer hours – compared to last year – to make the same revenue.</p> <p>Traditionally, increased operational costs are passed along from the Brokers to the vehicle owners to the vehicle drivers. Is it reasonable to expect that "insurance cost increases" should be borne solely by the Broker?</p>
8.	<p>Mr. Paul Minhas started by questioning the Commission – do they ever think about a single driver and how he makes money by driving a taxi? He can't afford it. All the financial load will directly or indirectly go to the driver.</p> <p>He concluded by saying that business is very slow nowadays due to the economic meltdown.</p>	<p>Agree that the Commission does not regulate Broker shift or stand rent. Brokers must compete with each other to attract drivers to their fleet.</p> <p>Agree that current economic condition impacts everybody.</p>
9.	<p>Mr. Phil Strong stated that instead of asking the cab drivers to fix the CO2 problem, the City should have a panel or something to see how we can encourage the general population from not driving downtown and take cabs instead.</p> <p>For example in London, the City Centre Circle, which is a lot bigger than Edmonton, encourages people to take other means of transport instead of driving their vehicles and helping out the cab drivers by creating more trips for them. This is created by charging an "extra license fee" for any vehicle operating within that zone.</p>	<p>Agree that the City needs to explore additional alternatives. Other service providers need to do the same. Airline travelers coming to one downtown hotel location would benefit from a taxi "share-ride" or "shuttle service".</p> <p>Agree that this example requires further examination. The Commission does not believe that present service levels require this level of scrutiny.</p>
10.	Mr. Phil Strong commented it is not up to us to lead the charge, we will follow	Agree that this is not solely a taxi problem.

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS	COMMISSION RESPONSE
	by example. So please give us an example and we will follow.	
11.	Mr. Malwhinder Deol asked the Commission as to why should we need hybrid vehicles, why should we spend \$30,000? The new vehicles are too expensive to buy.	The Commission is not regulating that everyone must purchase a hybrid vehicle. Other jurisdictions like Winnipeg have 65% of their taxis as hybrids.
12.	Mr. Ali, a taxi driver by profession, owns a hybrid vehicle. Since business is slow, there is no driving, no mileage, no money; savings are nil, no passengers. Mr. Ali heard on radio regarding 79% vehicles to go hybrid by 2011.	Neither the Commission nor the City Council has made any decision regarding hybrid vehicles and fleet percentages.

2. DRIVER TRAINING

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS (BY WHOM)	COMMISSION RESPONSE
1	<p>Mr. Steve Alvanos started by talking about the Chauffer license, Super license and other Licenses. Anyone can drive a limo / shuttle bus/ accessible cab / taxi but why penalize a driver with extra fee for different classes of Vehicles.</p> <p>The new comers get training and get the DDC but a driver who has been driving for many years, has no demerits, has no accidents, has no complaints and you force him every 5 years to go to some driving school and he gives money without getting any training and trust me they don't even take the training seriously they just give him the certificate.</p> <p>Let's work together and get rid of duplication.</p> <p>He disagreed with the 17 day training program for drivers.</p>	<p>Different "classes" of City driver licences have been created for specific purposes.</p> <p>Maintain that "refresher training" has merit for public safety reasons. If any person has knowledge of a training centre that provides a certificate to any person without supplying the training, they should report this company to Alberta Infrastructure & Transportation, at 403.340.5021.</p> <p>Agree that duplication should be eliminated, but industry stakeholders have not specifically identified the nature of duplication in training.</p> <p>Commission is presently examining various training program options. A 17 day training program is not under serious consideration.</p>
2	<p>Mr. Phil Strong said that he was not opposed to educating any profession in order that they are better off, but the fact that it's a 17day course is scary. New people would not have money to pay for this course and why should they know all the topics before they start working? Please don't create</p>	<p>Agree that a "graduated training" is an interesting concept that requires further study.</p>

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS (BY WHOM)	COMMISSION RESPONSE
	<p>barriers in entry into the industry; we are having a hard time getting enough taxi drivers. Senior drivers are beginning to back out because of other regulations as they are finding it difficult to drive so they are exiting, we are getting new people to serve Edmonton and if you set up too many barriers, it's going to be difficult. Indeed, assist them, teach them basics, get them on the road, they should start making money and not make them feel that if you want to stay in the industry you have to go for courses. There is too much of information, we need to look at real life experiences – how to handle situations, need more of a structured learning system. Phil supports a graduated licensing system. You start with one or two days of training, then drive for 3 to 6 months, after that, go back for another day or two of training, problem solving etc.</p>	
3	<p>Mr. Balraj Manhas started by quoting that "Experience makes you perfect and if you are more experienced on road, then nobody can teach you anything". Somebody who has been driving for 30 years would feel stupid going for this course, he said. As per a survey conducted for new bus drivers there are only 3 to 5 days on training on road for them, then why should the cab drivers attend 17 days course? He said that training for 17 days is too much.</p> <p>DDC and Experienced Driver course are more-or-less the same. We can't do too many courses, 4 or maximum 5 hours of training is acceptable but not 17 days. This course is fine for new drivers but again not for 17 days. We need training for beginners only.</p>	<p>Commission will look into Edmonton Transit driver training.</p> <p>Cannot agree that 4 or 5 hours of training is sufficient.</p>

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS (BY WHOM)	COMMISSION RESPONSE
	He suggested that the City should take such courses like DDC under them directly.	For the City to conduct DDC training, we would have to hire additional qualified staff, rent a training facility, purchase or rent additional equipment etc.
4	<p>Mr. Abdi Abdullah expressed his concern on letting a driver take his DDC course on Sundays. Why can't these courses be on Tuesdays?</p> <p>He is opposed to training for 17 days , one should learn from another driver and not from a teacher.</p>	<p>Contact other DDC program providers to find a suitable weekday program.</p> <p>It is our belief that experienced drivers may be a positive or negative influence on new drivers.</p>
5	<p>Mr. Gord Beatty said what is the motivation to change? Is the motivation to change because we have a lot of complaints, or because we have a lot of driving complaints, or does the Commission get a lot of complaints towards Customer Service or road safety and if we are talking of complaints then are these complaints equally spread in the industry? Are the complaints to all Brokers or is there only 1 rotten apple? If the complaints are coming in a disproportionate fashion then why isn't that broker not taken to task about his training</p> <p>He then talked about the cost of a 17day course for which a couple of admin staff etc will be hired and all this cost will fall back on the driver. Is there a significant reason to bring this much change? We are doing a better job serving our customers, so why this training? How many complaints are received, make a decision on facts rather than start a training program to deal with it.</p>	<p>The primary motivation to change is to maintain a "best practices position".</p> <p>We acknowledge that a 17day training program will cost more to produce and to take, than existing 3 day training programs.</p>

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS (BY WHOM)	COMMISSION RESPONSE
	The Taxi Commission established a criteria for new driver training and that criteria was supposed to be monitored by the Commission, have they gone out to do it, to check whether the training course meets the criteria or not?	The Commission is reviewing existing training programs against the established criteria, subject to co-operation with all brokers.
6	<p>Mr. Tadeusz Juraz talked about there being no difference between taking DDC and Exp driving course. He asked the Commission members if these courses are checked by the Commission before implementing or just recommend courses without checking?</p> <p>Every decision from the Commission is making the driver work longer and longer. City Commission should help drivers reduce their working hours and not increase it. It's for the safety of the driver, most dangerous part of our job, we are getting tired, someone who has been driving for 15-20 years, such courses are useless for him.</p>	<p>As yet the Commission has not received proof of duplication between these 2 courses.</p> <p>The Commission does not regulate maximum working hours in a day. We believe that refresher training holds value.</p>
7	Mr. Jatinder Deol suggested a book is written by some senior Commission member giving details of written tests, certifications and permit of driving a taxi. He was not in favour of the training. Mr. Deol suggested that books and manuals are made for completion of tests. People will read carefully and follow if reading that book serves as criteria for permit or license issuance.	The Commission agrees this is one approach to driver training. Current training options are under review.
8	Mr. Balraj Manhas said that the existing 1 day Experienced Driver training program could be done in 1 hour. The City bus drivers only	Disagree that a quality one day program could be compressed to one hour and maintain its value.

SPEAKER NUMBER	COMMENTS (BY WHOM)	COMMISSION RESPONSE
	get 3 to 5 days of training.	
9	Mr. Steve Alvanos thanked for increasing the English Language Benchmark, this has helped.	Agree.
10	Mr. Paul Minhas talked about the duplication between both courses. A more practical solution is needed. He recommended only 1 hour course and not waste any time of training. He emphasized that training is the responsibility of the broker not the Cab Commission, Cab Commission's responsibility is Customer Service.	Agree that presently the Broker is responsible for training. Remember that the Commission is responsible for establishing the "training criteria" in cooperation with the industry.
11	Mr. Jatinder Deol believes if a new driver can pass a written test, he shouldn't have to take the course.	This may be implemented in the future. Developing suitable tests will be costly. Challenge exams are one option.
12	Mr. Gary Waraich suggested that drivers with 15 years plus of driving experience should be exempted ; its not needed for them,	The Commission believes that any significant number of years with driving experience does not automatically qualify a person as a good driver.
13	Mr. Bill Dhanoa, a taxi driver and Driver trainer by profession, clarified that the DDC is not an 8 hour course but only for 6 hours, a very serious course. Its important to take up these courses, he was in favor of driving training	Agree.
14	Mr. Malwhinder Deol stated that's such training courses should be given to newcomers and not to people who have been driving for 30 years or so.	The Commission still believes in the value of refresher training.