



AUSTIN MOBILITY

Austin Taxicab Task Force Report

10.14.14

Urban Transportation Commission



Austin Transportation Department





Purpose

Austin Taxicab Task Force

This body was assembled for the purpose of vetting and addressing a number of issues currently faced within the local taxicab industry. These issues impact franchise performance, driver responsibility and conditions of work, as well as the taxi service level to the consumer. The task force was assembled to inform the Austin Transportation Department's recommendations which we are presenting to the Urban Transportation Commission and ultimately the Austin City Council.



Purpose

Austin Taxicab Task Force

- Urban Transportation Commission
- 3 Taxicab Franchises
- Taxi Drivers Association of Austin
- ADAPT of Texas
- Airport Commission
- At-Large Taxi Driver
- At-Large Citizen
- Aviation Department
- Austin Hotel & Lodging Association
- Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau

SCOPE OF THE TASK FORCE

Staff Identified Issues:

- Franchise Renewal
- Day Lease Options
- Driver Hours on Duty
- Dispatch Acceptance
- Full Utilization of Permits
- ADA Performance Reporting
- Technology (Apps)
- Alternative Fuel Vehicles/Green Goals/Vehicle Mileage
- The “Formula”

Task Force Identified Issues:

- Vehicle type
- Lease caps (owner/operator)
- Mandatory credit cards acceptance (third party processing credit card/mobile devices)
- Accessible fleet size (currently 6% - 6.5%)
- Drug testing
- Alternating days at the airport
- Global/Universal dispatch



SCOPE OF THE TASK FORCE

Task Force Identified Issues (cont.):

- Add \$1 surcharge for Airport fee to the taximeter
- Dress code for drivers
- Training for drivers (Service certification Program)
- Defensive driving (3-5yrs)
- Enforcement authority
- Number of Enforcement Officers
- Training for APD
- Temporary special event permits for taxis
- Max passenger including driver
- No salvage title
- Min. amount of time permit in operation
- Dispatch acceptance (how do we treat that call)



CONTENTS AND DIRECTION FROM COUNCIL

The Council resolved that “Taxi customers should be able to expect that 90 percent of requests for service result in pickups within 15 minutes” and directed Staff to consider short-term solutions, including but not limited to:

- Strengthening City Code Section 13-2-345 mandating that the closest driver pick up a customer;
- Prohibiting franchise owners from disallowing their drivers to use third party applications; and
- Other ways of improving the efficiency of existing permits.

Council further resolved that Staff work with the Task Force to explore:

- Universal dispatch
- A transition toward employee drivers
- Green vehicle incentives
- Limits on terminal fees
- Additional taxi permits
- Improvements to ADA service
- Insurance
- Workplace protections for drivers
- “Legacy” permits



STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Driver's Hours On-Duty:

- a. (Existing) §13-2-55 Rest Period for Drivers – A driver who operates a ground transportation service vehicle for 12 consecutive hours must take an eight-hour rest period before resuming operation of a ground transportation service vehicle.
- b. (Recommended Amendment) – A driver who operates a ground transportation service vehicle may only operate the ground transportation service vehicle for a total of 12 cumulative hours within a 24-hour period.



STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

Dispatch Acceptance:

- a. (Existing) §13-2-345 Response To Dispatched Service Requests – While operating a taxicab, a driver shall respond to service requests from the driver's dispatch terminal when the location for pick-up is within a reasonable distance from the location of the taxicab.
- b. (Recommended Amendment) – While in service, a taxicab driver shall affirmatively respond to service requests from the driver's dispatch terminal when the taxicab has been determined to be closest to the location of pick-up by GPS.



STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

Accessible Service Performance Measures:

- a. (Existing) §13-2-404(B) – For a franchise holder to qualify for special franchise permits during the second and succeeding years after this ordinance takes effect, each modified ground transportation service vehicle for which a special permit was issued during the preceding year must have been in operation for at least 12 hours a day for 274 days of the preceding 12-month period.
- b. (Recommended Amendment) – For a franchise holder to qualify for special franchise permits, each modified ground transportation service vehicle for which a special permit was issued shall:

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

- maintain an average response time to requests for accessible service within seven minutes of the franchise's average response time for non-accessible service requests; and
- provide service to a minimum of three percent of the total dispatched accessible trips completed by the franchise each month.
- all future allocated special franchise permits be utilized on company-owned wheelchair accessible vehicles operated by employee drivers.

*Failure to satisfy performance measures should result in the assessment of administrative fees, up to permit revocation for continued underperformance.

Approaching the franchise renewals, all franchises will be required to submit a comprehensive plan detailing how the modified accessible service performance measures will be addressed.



STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

Credit Card Acceptance:

- Although credit card payments are widely used by all three taxi franchises, this method of accepted payment should be mandatory (with supporting ordinance).

Standard for Taxi Service Delivery:

- As per Council Resolution 20140515-025, franchise ordinances should contain a provision requiring ninety percent of requests for service result in pickups within fifteen minutes. This information should be provided to ATD monthly.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

Universal Dispatch:

- a. ATD recognizes the benefits of a dispatch system that provides taxi customers with access to the nearest available taxicab regardless of franchise affiliation. However, there are a number of issues to be addressed before a recommendation can be made.
 - i. Representatives from all three franchises shared concerns about access to GPS data.
 - ii. Funding for a universal dispatch system would need to be determined.



STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

“Legacy” Permits:

- ATD recommends that due to the number of potential changes to the local ground transportation landscape, a Legacy permit program not be implemented at this time.

Green Vehicle Incentives:

- To incentivize the use of alternative fuel vehicles, it is recommended the 8 year service life of “green” vehicles utilized as taxis be increased to 10 years, with the potential of a longer term should the vehicle continue to successfully pass the required vehicle safety inspections.



STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

Need for Specialized or Additional Taxi Permits:

- When analyzing the current levels of taxicab service locally, the current capacity (756 taxicab permits) can be partially attributed. Considering the creation of “space” for Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), there needs to be consideration placed on modifying the current system used to determine necessary taxicab permits.

Calculation of Necessary Franchise Permits (“The Formula”)

- The department shall determine the annual increase or decrease in the number of necessary franchise permits that results in achievement of performance measures set for the overall franchise program. The performance measures should be approved by City Council in review and approval of the overall performance measures established for the department.





TAXICAB TASK FORCE MOVING FORWARD

REPORT TO MAYOR & COUNCIL

Staff will move forward with updating Mayor & Council on the recommendations resulting from the discussions of the task force. Staff would like to ask the UTC if it wishes to provide input.