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Your TAXI

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Speaking notes from Public Participation Meeting, City of London Community and Protective Services Committee – October 26, 2016 – Centennial Hall.

Presenter: James R. Donnelly, President, Blue & White Taxis and Your Taxi

As my presentation was done from point form notes, this submission will be in point form. With the exception of only 3 points, we fully agree and endorse the draft bylaw as presented by City Staff. We have been pleasantly surprised to find this bylaw to be concise, well researched and well structured. It address many of the current and past issues in the City, while making allowances for a new class of Vehicle for Hire in the City.

1. Schedule 3 – Brokers – section 2.1 subsection i), of the proposed bylaw states that "Every Broker shall: i) ensure that each Vehicle for Hire that it Dispatches is equipped to accept credit card and debit car payments at no additional cost to the Passenger;". Through Mr. Caranci we have spoken with city staff about this. This section interferes with existing banking arrangements and financial contracts of the Brokers. The usage fees leveled by the third party vendors of the Point of Sale units in the cars is not a Broker or Driver fee for service. It is a convenience network fee charged by the providers, much the same as using a private ATM at a convenience store. These fees should be considered outside the scope of the bylaw. We suggest this section should clarify that third part fees for additional services beyond transportation are excluded. Very similar to a negotiated price for parcel handling is not considered to be part of the fare for transportation in a taxi.
2. Bylaw Part 8, Section 8.2 of the proposed bylaw states "There is no limitation imposed on the number of Accessible Cab Owner Licences." We submit that the rule should never be "no rules". Though we are not opposed to increasing the number of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis, there must continue to be a controlled ration to ensure these vehicles are viable to the operators of such vehicles. To this end we suggest that a ratio be established whereby Brokers are required to operate specially issued plates for Accessible Taxis of 5% of their over all fleet. When this additional 5% is added to the existing individually issued owner licences to drivers and the remaining Class A Accessible owner licences the City will have accomplished a 10% ratio for Wheelchair Accessible Taxis. Wheelchair Accessible Taxis only serve a very small percentage of persons covered by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Many of those covered by the AODA are better served with sedans and other low riding vehicles. The higher step into a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi is a barrier to many of the disabled community that do not utilize a wheelchair. The extra high step into these vehicles is necessitated by the design and modification of the vehicle to accommodate the wheelchair ramp for wheelchair accessibility. A reasonable mix of vehicles based on the population they can best serve would seem the most prudent approach.
3. The issue of Cameras in Private Vehicles for Hire (PVH) has been raised. The results of this will likely look like the results of when Executive Limousines did not initially have cameras required at the same time as Taxicabs. It was soon found they were equally required. The purpose of a camera in a car is multifaceted. The primary purpose is deterrence, which cameras do often deter crime. However the other major factors are identification and independent witness of events. Though some electronic platforms may be able to identify the person who initiated the request for service and the driver who is registered to be driving the vehicle, a camera confirms this, as well as records other passengers who may ride with the person who requested service. These other passengers may be family, good friends or simply recent acquaintances who the registered passenger may or may not know well.

The single most definite use of a camera system is as an independent witness to the occurrences in the vehicle. It removes all doubt to what did or did not occur in a car. To who did what to whom. Even if a young student intoxicated by a night of partying who's memory has become foggy, there is no issue, as the camera will tell all in absolute fact. It equally protects drivers who are either assaulted or falsely accused of improper behaviour. Cameras are employed in almost all businesses that interact with the public to create an absolutely reliable record of facts.

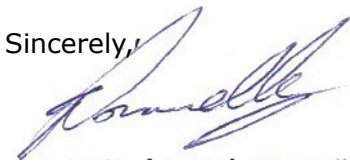
The vast majority of cases requiring use of a camera recording has nothing to do with a robbery or other monetary incident. It is usually related to who was traveling with whom (where phone apps only record one passenger) and what condition they were in when they departed the vehicle. It also serves to ensure that statements given by both drivers and passengers are fully honest.

CAMERAS SHOULD BE IN EVERY VEHICLE FOR HIRE AND ALL OTHER VEHICLES THAT TRANSPORT THE PUBLIC.

That an Uber driver who stated she has provided 4600 trips in a year is anything less than a full time driver, and worries about damage by a camera to her private car, is specious at best. 4600 trips per year is a decent average for a full time taxicab driver. Taxicabs are the private vehicle of the taxicab operators. Most owned in their personal name, however we are required to paint them in uniform colours, install dispatch and safety equipment and commercially insure the vehicle. Further with proper installation a camera can be professionally installed in a vehicle without causing any lasting damage from the installation.

4. The Vulnerable Person Sector Check is the most thorough and comprehensive background check available in Canada at this time, this is why Council instituted its use some years ago and City Staff continue to recommend its use by Council. It **must be completed under RCMP guidelines** by the local police department where the applicant resides. I personally reside in the City of St. Thomas and therefore must have the Check completed by the St. Thomas Police Service, not the London Police Service. This is part of the RCMP guidelines. Cornwall Police Service cannot complete a Vulnerable Persons Sector Check on me as I do not reside in Cornwall, under the RCMP guidelines. To substitute any other form of background check is to lessen public safety. **A person can apply for a Vulnerable Person Sector Check online with London Police Service at www.londonpolice.ca/en/services/Vulnerable-Sector-Check.aspx#.** This process is the same process followed by teachers, school bus drivers, school volunteers, elderly care volunteers and thousands of others. The process is not overly onerous nor expensive and is the best way to ensure community safety.
5. As was brought up by a few other presenters, the Transportation Network Company (TNC) and PVH regulations are not just for Uber. Even if Uber were to meet standards satisfactory to the City, they are only one Broker in this category. There are half a dozen other companies currently operating in North America providing similar services that would be categorized the same, with new services popping up regularly. These regulations must be put in place to serve and protect our community and be the benchmark for all companies who may become Brokers in the City. To that end these regulations, checks, inspections, and registrations must be submitted to and verified by the City Staff.
6. We ask the Committee and Council to proceed with putting in place this new bylaw as quickly as possible to bring an end to nearly two years of illegal operations on the London streets by unmarked, unregulated and unchecked vehicles for hire.

Sincerely,



James R Donnelly
President