

Nov. 16, 2016

To: **Development and Compliance Services,**
Licensing and Municipal Law Enforcement – By Law Enforcement

Att'n: **Orest Katolyk,** Chief Municipal Law Enforcement Officer

From: Accessibility Advisory Committee (ACCAC),
Built Environment and Facilities Sub-Committee (BESC)

Re: **General Service review of Accessible Cabs**

Background is that, further to your presentation to ACCAC (Jan 28, 2016) regarding the potential for changes to the Municipal Cab By-Law (L.-129-51), and the implications it may have for accessible cab service, it was requested that our sub-committee provide your department with a general review of how this service is working. As timing for this review was not achievable for the March 30th submission deadline (Re: By-Law Consolidated April 5, 2016) we are now submitting to you our comments for your consideration.

Further delay to this review submission was created by our request for more statistical data in this regard. At our ACCAC meeting March 24th our Sub-Committee passed a motion that City Staff provide (if available) any relevant statistical data regarding the recorded trip usage of accessible cabs (relative to Schedule A, Clauses 2.2 c and d of the L-129-51 Licensing By-Law). As we feel strongly that this information may provide us with better feedback on how well the existing program, and user ratio of available cabs, is working we chose to wait for that response before submitting our report to you.
Note: original motion re-submitted to City Clerk, June 23^d and Aug 25th, with no-response yet to date.

As part of our opinion review an informal user "survey" was sent out to a local community group that use the service of accessible cabs on a regular basis. (See pages following this note). Based on those reviews, as well as experience from our sub-committee members, we respectfully offer the following comments:

- Users are frustrated with the service timing (from call to pick up)
 - **Suggesting that a significantly higher ratio of accessible cabs are needed**
- Users are frustrated with the service availability (particularly early am)
 - **Also supporting that a higher ratio of accessible cabs are needed**
- Users are frustrated with the service accommodations
 - **Suggesting that added services, such as the ability to make reservations, be considered**
- Drivers and staff are, in general, courteous and responsive to a user's needs
 - **Suggesting that staff and/or training is acceptable**
- Some drivers and staff are not courteous or responsive to a user's needs
 - **Suggesting that staff and/or training specific to accessible need is warranted**
- Some cab designs are not ergonomically comfortable for a user to remain in their wheelchair
 - **Suggesting that the style or type of automobile used should either be better co-ordinated with the user at the time of request and/or considered further for selection of vehicles used**

- It appears that there is an inconsistency with the degree of service (availability, support, courtesy) between operating cab companies in this regard
 - Suggesting that service contracts are comparably reviewed by City staff with an emphasis on accessibility and/or a preference given to increased service ratios to those that are performing favourably
- It appears that there is a lack of available data from Cab operators as to how well they are providing accessible service (Re: recorded trip usage) and/or how strong the need for this service is (relative to requests, timing, and customer feedback)
 - Suggesting that Licensed Cab operators should place a stronger consideration on accessibility within their present and/or future business plan models

In conclusion, we (ACCAC) thank you for your request for feedback, and welcome the opportunity to continue working with you in this regard.

ACCAC, Built Environment and Facility Sub-Committee

(this letter was received and reviewed, Nov. 14, 2016)

March 15, 2016

As an active member of ACCAC, and it's Built Environment Sub-Committee in particular, with regards to our recent discussion on Accessible Cabs, I asked friends and family that use accessible cabs in the City of London for their personal opinions. The following comments were then compiled from the responses that I received.

Questions asked, were:

Are they easy, and convenient to get?

Should the available ratio be changed? (current ratio is 1:18 accessible versus non accessible cab)

Do they function well? (re: typical mini-van style versus paratransit buses)

Are the fare rates comparable?

Jim Sanders

Responses:

- We have not had good service with this. Staff has called multiple times to try and get a cab for XXXX and they are never available. Maybe there needs to be more?
- We have had few negative experiences with cabs. There were a couple of times when the cab company took the bookings and didn't show up. When called to ask about it, they said there was nothing available. And sometimes the wait times are really long. We think there should be more wheelchair accessible cabs. They function well in terms of fitting the wheelchair. The only problem is the availability.
- So the wait time can be lengthy. We have waited up to 45mins for one. Sometimes depending on whom it is and how their driving skills are it's a little difficult to get into the taxi as there isn't much room for staff to assist them as they are rear loaders. They are definitely convenient as the ladies can pick up and go even if there isn't a van available or ride on paratransit. As for the fares, they are taxi fares so expensive.
- We have had ok experiences; we wait a while for cabs from U Need A Cab, sometimes up to an hour. They also don't always have cabs available in the mornings sometimes until 9 or 10 am.
- We can't reserve a cab for specific times either. Yellow taxi has good service but we don't have vouchers for them.
- The last few times we have booked an accessible cab the experience hasn't been good. We had a medical appointment and couldn't get paratransit. I attempted to book a cab a day early was told I wasn't allowed to book early. I called at noon giving myself plenty of time for them to get here. I needed a pickup at 115p. They took 2.5 hours to get here and we had to leave before they got here. We also called to go shopping. We waited again about 2 hours for a cab to come, then before we left the house we made arrangements with the driver to come back to the store and pick us up in 1.5 hours. The drivers have all been very nice; minivan style works well, no concerns. Just huge concern regarding the number of w/c cabs available. They are not easy to arrange.

- It is always nicer to have access to more cabs if it's financially possible. It can be hard because you could call and one show up in 5 minutes and other days you can wait up to an hour. It would be great if they would have a better booking system where you could make regular bookings on a weekly basis and be able to get picked up on time for those bookings. The drivers of the wheelchair vans however are pretty amazing. They are always willing to lend a hand and truly understand the struggles that come along with transporting someone with high medical needs. The taxi vouchers are great and work well. I can see in the future that the need to accessible taxis is going to increase. It is a great way for some of the people we support to get around their community.
- In my experience recently we have waited 1-2 hours for an accessible cab. Once at the destination, begging the driver to stay in the area to get a ride back. We use cabs all the time and we find that they will say that they are available late (11-midnight or later) and we will triple check this then call when we are ready for a ride and they are not available. I think more cabs wheelchair accessible would be a huge benefit! Even if you book a cab a day or 2 in advance you are always waiting at least 10min or up to an hour for them to arrive. It's very convenient to use but right now they are no more reliable than paratransit.
- We do not use cabs very often. However when we have, we have not had very good service. XXX needed to get to Fanshawe College mid day at 4pm. She needed to wait over an hour.
- From my experience I have found it is not easy or convenient at all, the rates are obviously a lot more than paratransit but you are paying more to get directly where you need to go. Regarding the function of the cab I guess it depends which van and driver you get. Over all, it does serve the same general purpose and transports people who are in wheelchairs.
- I have a few bad experiences involving availability and poor customer service. About a week ago I attempted to order one and the company told me that there were none available so we were unable to go out. This has happened several times to me and coworkers of mine. When I have been able to pre book one they are always late and the driver apologizes telling me the company only has 4 or 5 accessible cabs throughout the company so that is why they are late. But that's not the worst; I think it is important for drivers to be respectful. The last driver I had seemed to be in a bad mood. He was very short and snappy with the person I support when she asked a simple question. I know that's not part of the feedback you asked for but I felt it necessary to add that in. To answer your question, yes, we definitely need more accessible cabs. Able bodied people can also use an accessible cab so I don't understand why they would limit the amount like that. Cabs should be inclusive!
- As I live in St Thomas, whenever I have an appointment in London I must use an accessible taxi-cab to get there. For me, the trouble I have is that I sit high in my chair. As the cab service uses mini-vans instead of full size vans (like Paratransit) I must crouch in my chair for the entire ride. As a result it is a very uncomfortable trip as I bang my head over every bump along the way!