



City of London

July 18, 2013

Community and Protective Services Committee
Denise T. Brown – Chair
Committee Room, City Hall

Dear Members

Please accept this submission as support for the extension of 2008 model year Lincoln Town cars for the 2013/2014 renewal period for one additional year. We currently have a 6 year expiry and 7 years for a hybrid.

The advent of halted production after the 2011 model year has left a void for a viable replacement for the upcoming future. There has also been a shifting market in “luxury” cars so therefore historical data on repairs and maintenance and customer satisfaction is limited.

We continue to explore other options such as the approved Lincoln MKT with a base of \$50,000, the purchase of 2011 Town cars at an average \$28,000 (but that leaves a greatly reduced life span) and other options from Cadillac and Mercedes which are in the \$60,000 base range. There is a limited supply of “luxury” cars that can affordably be replaced every 6 years and the previously owned market is limited in this time frame.

Checker has contacted fleets in Toronto, New York, Las Vegas, San Francisco and Chicago regarding their preferred choice of executive sedans and overwhelmingly that choice is Lincoln Town cars. This is what the customers want and have come to expect from a sedan service. We do know this is the preference North American wide.

While they too will face changes the difference is they enjoy extended life on their cars to the tune of 2004. Some companies in the larger markets also enjoy a higher level of cars such as the Mercedes S5 series that comes with a \$110,000 MSRP.

As providers in this type of service we realize that to meet customer’s expectations we must provide the type and style of transportation demanded beyond reproach. Our maintenance programs are untouchable compared to other industries. Some examples of what we do to stay leaders in our field are;

1. Consistently the best record for least amount of infractions at anytime the City of London has conducted “blitzes”. We had just **one** during the last exercise two months ago
2. Twice annual safety inspections – one by the City and one six months later from our certified mechanics on site
3. An **average** of 1 oil change every 2-3 weeks
4. An **average** of 1.5 sets of brand new tires every year
5. Defensive driving courses
6. To illustrate the commitment we put into our fleet ALL of our drivers and brokers have their Basic CPR course and Non Violent Intervention course as mandated by London Health Sciences

7. The use of winter tires in the winter and summer tires in the summer versus “All Season” which are not as reliable as season specific
8. Exterior of cars washed minimum daily and more if conditions demand
9. Interior of cars cleaned after EVERY trip
10. Tears or stretches in leather repaired immediately

Checker has gone to great lengths to insure our cars are in the best of possible shape. If a car's air conditioning malfunctions that car is sent to the garage immediately. In this last while of extreme heat we can all see how that is a critical maintenance piece. As General Manager I can tell numerous stories, backed by maintenance logs, of brokers spending thousands of dollars insuring timely repair of items such as air conditioning, catalytic converters, filter replacement, wheel alignments, oil and transmission fluid changes and all of this on a much greater frequency than anyone else. Our cars are the best conditioned on the road on a regular basis year for year and frankly in better condition than a great percentage of private vehicles as they should be.

We mention this to make a simple point. The replacement of our fleet on a six year basis is becoming an undue burden particularly with no suitable replacements at our immediate disposal. We enjoy the highest level of maintenance and repair with just as high a level of cost. These Town cars enjoy up to 700,000 kilometres and yet ours will be retired at just over 300,000 at most. These cars were built to drive, as long as they are maintained and Checker certainly does that.

Other facets of our industry whether local or across North America enjoy longer life spans, some by one year others by four or five years. We are proposing a one year extension on our current fleet and an additional one year on hybrids. **We anticipate that this situation of losing the Town car from production and the lack of numerous options is an anomaly and the granted extension will allow us to project future needs in a more timely and proper fashion moving forward.**

We also anticipate that the cars we have in mind for our future will become more readily available on a previous owned basis thus making a transition into a one or two year old car not only a little more affordable but made all the better with a greater life span and most importantly keeping our standards at a level our customers of London and beyond have come to expect from us.

The timing for the status quo transition is by end of October 2013 so time is not on our side to institute change but a change of huge proportions nonetheless. We here at Checker look forward to a vigorous dialogue so as to put this issue to rest.

Regards,

Mark Taylor
General Manager
Checker Limousine

