



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 12.1.2
Transportation Standing Committee
April 27, 2017

TO: Chair and Members of the Transportation Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Bob Bjerke, Chief Planner and Director Planning & Development

DATE: March 21, 2017

SUBJECT: **Taxi Safety**

ORIGIN

July 21, 2016 motion of Transportation Standing Committee:

Moved by Councillor Walker:

THAT the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report for a strategy on moving forward on making taxis safer, including but not limited to universal education, in-car cameras, barriers, increased visibility of roof light numbers, by-law changes, stakeholder engagement, and licensing standards and that this report come back to the Transportation Standing Committee at the September meeting.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- *Motor Vehicle Act*, R.S.N.S., 1989, c. 293, section 305(1)
- By-law T-1000, *Respecting the Regulation of Taxis, Accessible Taxis and Limousines*
- Administrative Order #39, *Respecting Taxi and Limousine Regulation*
- By-law A-100, *Respecting the Appeal Committee*
- Establishment of the Taxi and Limousine Liaison Group (TLLG) as approved by Regional Council, July 5, 2011.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Transportation Standing Committee recommend Regional Council direct staff:

1. To draft amendments to Administrative Order #39 so that; Licensing Decals are displayed inside the front passenger and back passenger areas of a vehicle for hire to identify the license number of a vehicle.

Recommendation continued on page 2.

2. To create a RFP toward an in-depth industry review and jurisdictional scan including recommendations not limited to the following:
 - Incorporating new industry technologies, e.g., in taxi video / audio recording systems, GPS real-time tracking systems, smartphone applications; etc.
 - License restrictions;
 - Sensitivity and Safety Training;
 - Passenger/Driver safety measures, e.g., in car shields, emergency alarm buttons and passenger trip logs;
 - Standards of professional, moral and ethical conduct of license holders; and
 - Conditions that would result in an automatic suspension or revocation of a license.

BACKGROUND

This TSC motion was in response to safety concerns regarding recent incidents of alleged passenger sexual assaults involving taxi drivers.

There have been 12 alleged sexual assaults involving taxi drivers since 2012. Two occurred in 2012, one in 2013, one in 2014, three in 2015 and five in 2016.

Between January 2006 and June 2008, the previous Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee completed an in-depth safety review of the taxi industry. The review focused on improving driver safety due to a number of violent attacks where drivers were the victim. An Information Report to Regional Council identified a series of possible regulatory amendments typical of those used in other jurisdictions. Industry participants were not in favour of mandating driver protection safety systems for Halifax; no by-law changes were made.

DISCUSSION

A special meeting of the TLLG was held July 27, 2016 to discuss the issue of taxi safety in relation to recent assaults. In addition to the TLLG members, attendance was extended to: Halifax Regional Police, HRM Public Safety Advisor, Planning & Development management, Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) representatives and industry brokers. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss strategies for immediate and future steps toward addressing several safety concerns.

Immediate Opportunities:

The following were identified as having an immediate impact in assisting the traveling public:

- The installation of identification decals prominently displayed in each vehicle would allow passengers to easily identify the vehicle and create an improved sense security. Installation could be achieved immediately and provided in various locations inside taxis for the convenience of all passengers. These decals would indicate the license number of the vehicle for hire;
- A "Passenger Safety Tips" pamphlet could be produced immediately; and
- Training enhancements.

Decals have been produced and distributed to the taxi owners with the assistance of Brokers and via mail for independent owners. Currently the placement of the decals is voluntary (see appendix A). Staff is recommending that Administrative Order #39 be amended to legislate this requirement for all licensed vehicles. On December 20, 2016, the Minister of Transportation granted approval in accordance with the *Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act* requirements.

The "Passenger Safety Tips" pamphlets have been produced and distributed to taxi vehicles, Storefront locations, Brokers and posted online at Halifax.ca. Staff has consulted with HRM Human Resources, Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, Nova Scotia Community College and Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) regarding sensitivity training options for drivers and owners in the licensing system. TIANS are leveraging existing safety materials that currently exist within their National

Standards Certification/Hospitality Programs and possible expansion of their current driver training program administration to include the initial driver application and testing for the industry. In addition to the items discussed at the July 27, 2016 TLLG meeting, previous meetings of the TLLG involved discussions on exploring options that would prevent or defer an appeal of a license suspension for those individuals charged with a serious criminal offense during the operation of a vehicle for hire until the conclusion of the associated court process. A jurisdictional scan of municipalities has found that 6 out of 8 municipalities support an opportunity of appeal by Committee or Tribunal for suspended or revoked licenses.

Subsequent Opportunities:

Other items discussed relative to passengers and driver safety included the following for consideration of by-law amendments:

- In taxi video/audio tamper-proof encrypted file storage system;
- GPS real-time tracking tamper-proof encrypted file storage system;
- In- car shields;
- Passenger trip logs;
- Restricted passenger front seat access;
- Emergency button; and
- Additional safety and sensitivity training.

These items are proposed to be included as part of an RFP to initiate an in-depth industry and jurisdictional review. Possible future by-law amendments should follow from conclusions and recommendations of this full sector study.

A special meeting arranged by the Mayor's Office was held on January 4, 2017 as part of staff's information gathering process, specifically to discuss options to avoid Councillors making decisions on licensing appeals involving in criminal matters, attendees included:

Denise Smith (Deputy Director, Public Prosecution Service)
Stephanie MacInnis-Langley (Executive Director, NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women)
Kevin Hindle (Regional Coordinator, HRM License Standards)
Andrea MacDonald (Manager, HRM License Standards)
Randy Kinghorne (HRM Legal Services)
Supt. Jim Perrin (Halifax Regional Police)
Ted Aubut (Executive Assistant to Justice Minister Diana Whalen)
Sarah Douglas (Mayor's Office)

Options discussed included:

- Requesting the NS Crown Attorney's Office to automatically request at initial arraignment that the courts not allow the person to operate as a taxi driver until the matter before the courts has been determined in such cases. This would preclude the need for administrative action and optional appeal on such license issues by the municipality.
- Explored whether the NSUARB could be an option of hearing such license appeals as an alternative to the HRM Appeals Committee. Their mandate includes licensing, approving fares, routes, stops, equipment, as well as hearing complaints against licensed carriers. The Board acts under both the *Motor Carrier Act* and the Federal *Motor Vehicle Transport Act (1987)*. A public passenger vehicle is defined as a motor vehicle carrying passengers for gain.

Minister Whalen's Office response to the UARB option was that the governance and process concerns that were raised can be resolved using existing municipal tools.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The incremental cost of an in-depth industry review and jurisdictional scan (estimated to be not more than \$60,000) will be a direct pressure on the Planning and Development budget. However, this work will be prioritized within the 2017/2018 Taxi & Limousine operating budget (cost centre S330).

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are moderate risks associated with not implementing the recommendations of this report. The risk considered is medium.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The TLLG and key stakeholders including HRP, HRM Public Safety Advisor, TIANs, Justice Minister's Office, Public Prosecutions Office, Status of Women and industry brokers were consulted regarding this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications.

ALTERNATIVES

1. The Transportation Standing Committee could move this report forward to Regional Council and request it be combined with the taxi industry report requested by Regional Council on March 7, 2017. This would provide for a collective review and discussion on options presented in both reports.
2. Defer recommended amendments to By-Law T-1000 and Administrative Order #39 until an industry review is completed.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Sample of in- car licensing decal

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Kevin Hindle, Regional Coordinator, License Standards, 902.490.2550

Original Signed

Report Approved by:

Andrea MacDonald, Manager License Standards, 902.490.7371

Appendix A – Sample of in-car Licensing Decal



The decal features a blue header with a white icon of a taxi driver and a taxi. The text reads "Halifax Regional Municipality Taxi Services". Below this is a white box for the taxi number, followed by a QR code and a list of resources: "Scan for: Code of Ethics, Taxi Rate Schedule, Safety Tips". The Halifax logo is in the bottom right corner.

**Halifax Regional Municipality
Taxi Services**

You are in Taxi #



Scan for:
Code of Ethics
Taxi Rate Schedule
Safety Tips

HALIFAX