

Appendix A – Meeting Background and Agenda

Accessible Vehicles for Hire

What are the issues (from data and consultations)?

- Wait times for an accessible trip are on average 20-30 minutes longer than a standard trip.
- Accessible vehicles are not always available, especially at the airport, when required
- Overnight accessible service is not always available.
- Accessible vehicle users may be required to make several calls to different companies, depending on the availability of accessible vehicles.
- Accessible rides take more time due to proper securement and assisting the customer.
- Accessible vehicles cost more than standard vehicles.

What's been done to date?

- Added capacity: 60 accessible taxi licenses added in December 2018 and vehicles on the road by March 1, 2019.
- New fines: A VFH fine for improper securement of a wheelchair was added in 2019.
- Review and analysis of other jurisdictions to see what has been working.

What are the goals of this program?

- Ensure those requiring accessible vehicles for hire get a comparable level of service as those who use standard vehicles for hire.
- Improve safety of accessible vehicles for hire.
- Provide incentives to drivers and accessible vehicle owners to improve service.
- Improved tracking of accessible trips and wait times.

What is being considered?

- A centralized accessible trip dispatch system.
 - Improved accessibility to service
 - Better tracking of accessible service
 - Graduated incentives for drivers & owners who use the centralized dispatch system
 - Reduction in wait times for accessible service.
- More funding towards enforcement of accessible vehicles.
- Reimbursement for accessibility training.

Purpose: To gather insight and feedback from stakeholders on proposed accessibility improvements that are to be funded through the vehicle for hire accessibility surcharge.

Background: Since the Vehicles for Hire By-law came into effect to regulate these services within Winnipeg, an accessibility surcharge of \$0.07 per trip has been charged to both personal transportation provider dispatchers and to taxi dispatchers to encourage a minimum ratio of accessible vehicles within the fleets of service providers. Revenues collected by the City of Winnipeg from this surcharge are intended to be used to make accessibility improvements to local vehicle for hire services.

The stakeholder feedback gathered through this consultation will help to determine how the surcharge funds collected to date will be used to make meaningful accessibility improvements to the service.

Agenda

1. Introductions

2. Presentation

- a. Background
- b. Proposed Improvements
- c. Questions

3. Discussion

- a. Did we accurately capture the issues you experience?
- b. Are the goals aligned with how you think the accessibility surcharge could address the issues you experience?
- c. What is important to consider to ensure a centralized dispatch is accessible and user friendly?
- d. Do you think the proposed improvements will accomplish the goals?

4. Next steps

Appendix B – Presentation Content
(provided in accessible format)

Accessibility improvements in Vehicles for Hire services Helping secure a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV)

Stakeholder Consultations
September 2020

Vehicles for Hire – Accessibility Surcharge

Since the Vehicles for Hire By-law came into effect to regulate these services within Winnipeg, an accessibility surcharge of \$0.07 per trip has been charged to both personal transportation provider dispatchers and to taxi dispatchers to encourage a minimum ratio of accessible vehicles within the fleets of service providers.

Revenues collected by the City of Winnipeg from this surcharge are intended to be used to make accessibility improvements to local vehicles for hire services.

What are the issues (from data and consultations)?

- Wait times for an accessible trip are longer than a standard trip
- Accessible vehicles are not always available
- Accessible rides take more time to complete
- Accessible vehicles cost more than standard vehicles

What's been done to date?

- Added capacity
- New or added fines
- Review and analysis of other jurisdictions

What are the goals of this program?

- Ensure a comparable level of service for those who use accessible or standard vehicles for hire
- Improve safety
- Provide incentives to drivers and accessible vehicle owners
- Improved tracking of accessible trips and wait times

What is being considered?

1. A centralized accessible trip dispatch system
2. Focused enforcement related to accessible service
3. Reimbursement for accessibility training

1. A centralized accessible trip dispatch system

How would this work?

- Provide one access point where users can request via website, phone or App, a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) – either taxi or PTP
- Register user requests, as received, in a systematic database, and allocates the trip to the nearest available WAV
- Easy access to current and historical booking information to assist customer service and provide a better customer experience
- Tracks the trip, from the time of request, duration of the route taken, to drop off location and payment
- Provides reports of active and available vehicles, including the number of trips completed or declined

1. A centralized accessible trip dispatch system

How would this meet the goals of the program?

Goal: Ensures those requiring accessible vehicles for hire get a comparable level of service as those who use standard vehicles for hire

- Provides an available WAV on demand,
- Reduces wait times for accessible service
- Provides option for service provider type – Taxi or PTP

Goal: Improved safety

- Trained and qualified drivers – all drivers within the system would be required to complete accessibility training
- Increased Confidence – knowing that the most direct, or economical route was taken and tracked for reference or auditing processes

Goal: Improved tracking of trips and wait times

- Trip dispatch system tracks the trip, from the time of request, duration of the route taken, to drop off location and payment
- System would allocate trip request to nearest available WAV, allow user to receive an email or text when vehicle is near, and record client trip history.

1. A centralized accessible trip dispatch system

Goal: Provide incentives to drivers and accessible vehicle owners

- Potential financial incentives for both Taxi and PTP drivers, and vehicle owners
- Reduced down time by allocating and accepting fares nearest to them
- System technology support:
 - Mapping/Route tools to know the quickest route for the trip destination
 - Dispatch software
 - Record of trip history and shift summary

2. Focused enforcement related to accessible service

How would this work?

Increased capacity for accessible enforcement

How would this meet the goals of the program?

Goal: Improve safety

- Increased driver and vehicle inspections
- Improved enforcement education
- Fines for non-compliance and safety infractions

3. Reimbursement for accessibility training

How would this work?

Consideration to provide accessibility training at no cost to accessible vehicle drivers

How would this meet the goals of the program?

Goal: Provide incentives to accessible vehicle drivers

- Cost savings for out of pocket driver expenses

Appendix C – Meeting Notes

Vehicles for Hire – Accessibility Surcharge Planning with Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members

Location: Winnipeg Parking Authority
495 Portage Ave

Date: January 28, 2020
Time: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Grant Heather (City of Winnipeg)
Patrick Stewart (Independent Living
Resource Centre)
Morgan Vespa (City of Winnipeg)

Regrets:

Allen Mankewich (provided input via
email)

Meeting Notes

- Patrick provided a research and recommendations document (see attached)
- ILRC recommends ensuring an adjustable surcharge within a range so that the charge can be changed based on the needs of the services
 - Calgary Livery has the ability to adjust the rate up to 30 cents in order to adjust for dynamics in the industry.
 - A flexible rate can adapt to changes that may come with a changing industry
- Grant mentioned that in 2018, a survey showed an incentive program and a centralized dispatch system were the most popular measures for improving accessible vehicles for hire
- Require a plan for the accessibility surcharge the benefits everyone (community, drivers, and owners) at no extra cost to taxpayers (through per trip fees only)
- Vehicles for Hire in Winnipeg had 5.4 million trips in 2019
- A \$0.20 surcharge would allow for approximately \$1 million to improve accessible service
- MUVE estimates for a centralized dispatch: \$350k startup (promotion, infrastructure, hiring, etc.) and \$300k to run on a yearly basis.
- Patrick feels that the number of vehicles on the road is appropriate and has been solved but there are still issues with service that the accessibility surcharge could solve.
- Support for a centralized dispatch, along with other incentives.
- Incentives for drivers could include a graduated incentive system for taking requests through the centralized dispatch system. Increased incentives could be based on time of day and total number of hours/trips.

Stakeholder engagement

- Morgan provided the draft stakeholder engagement plan to provide context to where we are, and the plan we are working on to get to the final decisions.
- The intention of the plan is to gather feedback by those directly impacted (targeted approach), rather than collecting feedback from the general public.
- Objectives of stakeholder engagement are:

- Ensure stakeholders are aware of the current circumstances, options, and the work that has been done to date to collect and respond to feedback.
- Gather feedback on the important aspects of a central dispatch system that are required to address current system deficiencies and incorporate feedback where possible.
- Gather detailed feedback to define options for using the revenue collected through the accessibility surcharge: grant incentives, a central dispatch system and/or other viable options and incorporate feedback where possible.
- Ensure there is awareness around factors influencing the use of the surcharge, the importance of feedback, and how stakeholder feedback was used.
- Patrick offered to collect data from drivers when they do recertification at ILRC.
- Focus groups to be held with: vehicles for hire owners and companies, accessible vehicles for hire users and advocacy groups/organizations
- A stakeholder engagement summary will be available following focus groups and analysis of feedback

Key values

- Most important things the accessibility surcharge should accomplish:
 - Improve on-demand service to ensure 24 hour/day service is available
 - Improve the accessibility of the service to users so that they don't need to make multiple calls to get a ride
 - Provide incentives, possibly on a graduated scale, to both drivers and owners
 - Improve safety and enforcement
 - The biggest key to surcharge will be increasing the level of customer service through the drivers.
- Surcharge should not be transferred to Winnipeg Transit Plus to improve their service

Questions

- Do we know approx. how many trips are done by accessible vehicles that are actually accessible?
- How does the central dispatch system dissuade people who don't need accessible service from using the service to call a van?

Other ideas

- Suggestion to use surcharge funds to improve Transit Plus capacity:
 - NYC pilot project allowed users of their Paratransit service the ability to use taxis when needed on a subsidized basis.
 - Could use vouchers
 - Could use a pay system

Next steps

- Morgan to draft questions for drivers at the end of training and circulate
- Patrick to provide comment and implement feedback collection at the end of retraining
- Grant and Morgan to draft materials for focus group sessions

Improving the Accessibility Fund: Supporting Consumers, Drivers and Community Standards

Many cities across North America have recognized that improving the accessibility of their vehicle-for-hire industries requires resources, often distributed through a publically administered accessibility fund. It is imperative that improvements made to accessibility are made within a model that benefits passengers, drivers, vehicle owners and dispatch companies, ensuring that this vital branch of our transportation network is sustainable, growing to meet the needs of an expanding and (historically) underserved population.

When the city of Winnipeg assumed jurisdiction in 2017, an accessibility fund was established to improve the availability and accessibility of service for passengers with disabilities. The fund has been resourced by a \$0.07 per trip fee, levied against dispatch companies that did not operate a minimum of 10% accessible taxicab or PTP vehicles within their fleet. Today that model does not appear ready to provide the sustained resources needed to make tangible improvements to the industry, through; driver incentives, subsidies to offset the cost of purchasing and operating an accessible vehicle and establishing a centralized dispatch service to improve the availability of accessible vehicles for passengers with disabilities. By examining the policies and practices of other cities (*table b*) we can find many examples of how these improvements can be made within models that benefits all stakeholders, with minimal (or no) impact on public expenditures.

The majority of cities operating an accessibility fund do so by including a per trip levy to the metered or digitally determined rate paid by taxicab or PTP passengers. This model presumes zero cost to local government, benefits rather than taxes local business, with minimal financial impact on consumers, *see table A* (i.e. a \$0.20 levy on a \$20 taxicab ride represents a 1% price increase).

5.3 m Vehicle-for-Hire rides per year in Winnipeg		
Accessibility Levy (per trip)	Price increase (per \$20 fare)	Accessibility Fund (per year)
\$0.10	0.5%	\$530,000
\$0.15	0.75%	\$795,000
\$0.20	1.0%	\$1,060,000
\$0.25	1.25%	\$1,325,000
\$0.30	1.5%	\$1,590,000
\$0.50	2.5%	\$2,650,000

Table A

Table B

North American Municipalities		
City	Per Trip Fee	Initiatives
Portland (OR)	\$0.50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15 per trip to accessible taxicab drivers. • Centralized dispatch for accessible taxicabs.
British Columbia	\$0.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced license fees. • Subsidies and reimbursements for vehicle costs.
New York (NY)	\$0.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel subsidies. • Centralized dispatch for accessible taxicabs. • Vehicle purchase/conversion subsidies.
Calgary (AB)	\$0.10 – 0.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized dispatch for accessible taxicabs. • Incentives and subsidies for drivers and owners.
Montgomery (MD)	\$.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passenger subsidises for accessible taxicab trips.
Seattle (WA)	\$0.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15 per shift and \$20 per dispatched trip for accessible taxicab drivers. • \$3,500 per yr. vehicle maintenance for owners. • No license fee for accessible vehicles.
Chicago (IL)	\$0.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized dispatch for accessible taxicabs. • \$15 per shift for accessible taxicab drivers. • \$20,000 for vehicle conversion and \$8,000 per yr. vehicle maintenance for owners.
Winnipeg (MB)	\$0.07 *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yet to be determined.
Ottawa (ON)	\$0.07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxicab coupons for accessible taxicab trips. • Rural agencies funded to provide accessible transportation. • No license fee for accessible vehicles.
Hamilton	No surcharge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5.00 per trip to accessible taxicab drivers.

Recommendations

- i) That the City of Winnipeg adopt a per trip accessibility levy, applied to the metered or digitally determined fare, paid by all vehicle-for-hire passengers, to resource an *accessibility fund*, administered by the Winnipeg Parking Authority.
- ii) That the *accessibility fund* support initiatives and incentives that benefit the community, passengers with disabilities, vehicle-for-hire drivers, vehicle license owners and dispatch companies (*table c*).
- iii) That the Winnipeg Parking Authority be designated to set the levy no less than \$0.10 and no more than \$0.50 per trip (set annually), to meet the stated targets of the fund (comparable with the authority granted to Calgary's *Livery Transport Services*).
- iv) That the initial levy be set at \$0.20 per trip, generating a projected \$1.06m per year.
- v) That the revised *accessibility fund* be used to resource the following initiatives:
 - a) Establishing a centralized dispatch (\$300,000 per yr.)
 - b) Incentivizing drivers and owners associated with the approximately 120 accessible taxicabs (max. \$3,000 per vehicle: \$360,000 per yr.)
 - c) Rebating all accessible transportation training recertifications (\$60,000 per yr.)
 - d) Establishing a pilot project subsidizing the use of taxicabs by Transit Plus consumers (\$250,000).

Table C

Possible Incentives & Initiatives		
Community	Accessible Licence Plate Holders	Accessible Vehicle Drivers
Centralized dispatch service.	Vehicle on road for min. set time.	Complete min. number of wheelchair accessible trips.
Subsidised accessible taxicab fares and/or vouchers.	Minimal complaints re: vehicle condition.	Minimal customer service complaints.
Expanded paratransit services.	Mechanicals submitted on time.	Available during off-peak hours.
Subsidised accessible transportation training course.	Passing safety inspection.	Complete accessibility awareness training course.
Expanded driver training programs.	Fuel subsidy.	Fuel subsidy.
	Vehicle purchase and conversion subsidy.	Passing random inspections.
	Reduced/eliminated licensing fees.	Reduced/eliminated licensing fees.
		Per trip fee.
		Per shift fee.

Vehicles for Hire – Accessible Service Improvements Industry Stakeholder Meeting

Location: Virtual, via Zoom

Date: September 22, 2020

Time: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Participants: 11

Accessible vehicles for hire owners

Accessible vehicles for hire dispatchers

Accessible vehicles for hire drivers

Public Service: 6

Winnipeg Parking Authority

Office of Public Engagement

Meeting Notes

- 1. Presentation**
- 2. Question and Answer Period**

Question notes:

- Will Private Transportation Providers (PTPs) be made into taxis?
 - No, PTPs and taxis will be on the same system
- Does that mean PTP get same rate as taxi
It would be a good idea to make the PTP van in to taxi if they are willing to do the same job as taxi
 - There are accessible PTPs that are on a different system from taxis right now
- How will the software work?
 - In other cities – an app, a phone number
 - First vehicle in the area has the first right of refusal
- Understanding is each payment going directly to driver; if we add our company to the city, how will it work? City will request our services and how is payment managed?
 - Not meant to replace existing framework that is in place; meant to be an access point; if someone is choosing PTP service, it would potentially be going away from regulated rates; would know their fare upfront based on an estimate.
- If a company wants to join the City's software, we accept the trip, how does it work at the end?
 - The driver would accept payment as usual.
- Is it a specific company or the city to be responsible for answering the call for the centralized dispatch system?

- City does not want to be involved in day-to-day dispatching.
- Plan would be to put out a contract to the third party in order to run and manage this system in accordance with specifications; separate system that doesn't preclude somebody from calling company directly
- This is for someone who can't get service right away, travelers, etc – one access point for accessible service.
- Is Council approval required?
 - Require Council approval
- Don't see that centralized dispatch will have a good result, past two weeks have been obvious, there have been a few calls after midnight. One customer can ruin the reputation of the system.
- A secondary dispatch system
- Could be a lot of issues; Calgary has failed with their system. Need to look into something that makes sense for Winnipeg

- Fairness - People go to the fourth or fifth van down the line rather than the next one waiting
- If we have the centralized dispatch system, would the correct vehicle be taken?
 - This is for a separate discussion

3. Breakout Rooms

Breakout Room 1:

- a. Did we accurately capture the issues you experience?
 - Depends on the experience of the company. Feels he is relatively new and not as experienced to provide comments.
 - Difficult finding diligent service providers. There is a great deal of discouragement among drivers. Some drivers are unaware of the meaning of accessible service and how best to provide it.

- b. Are the goals aligned with how you think the accessibility surcharge could address the issues you experience?
 - Is concerned as it does not completely align. Feels that the dispatch system and incentives could be part of a larger plan. Unsure of what else would be part of this plan at this time. Feels that there are issues that could be fixed at the dispatcher level first.

- Concerned with current set up at places like HSC where a certain company has the rights to fares there. Unsure of how a centralized dispatch system would work in these situations. Some fares walk past the first taxi and take the 3rd taxi in line. How is this fair to the first taxi in line?
 - c. What is important to consider to ensure a centralized dispatch is accessible and user friendly?
 - Solution needs to consider the drivers as well as the users – example – consider the different times of day. Company for centralized dispatch system would need to be local and have experience in Winnipeg and an understanding of current situation. Very important for using and customizing the system to the city.
 - Would require industry involvement for the Request for Proposals formulation. Happy to provide further discussion and assistance.
 - d. Do you think the proposed improvements will accomplish the goals?
 - Not all issues require funding, some can be corrected within the taxi company

Closing thoughts – 1-2 mins

- Problem sometimes occurs with creating the link to the accessible users and the centralized dispatch system may create the link between the user and the taxi.

Breakout Room 2:

- a. Did we accurately capture the issues you experience?
 - would like to know if City has plan to manage TransitPlus so that riders are really in need of this service. Example: someone wanted a sofa moved so called TransitPlus. Interested in CD system but wants to be able to reject trips that are not legitimate.
 - would look into building this in. Would record user/household to flag them if not using system appropriately.
 - does company have right to reject?
 - would probably build that in and adjust bylaw for that
- b. Are the goals aligned with how you think the accessibility surcharge could address the issues you experience?
 - asked in chat if this was the final consultation.
 - There will be consultation with community stakeholders, and likely follow-up consultation once approved by council
 - What is the size of the accessible market?
 - will get the answer. Impacted by COVID.

- c. What is important to consider to ensure a centralized dispatch is accessible and user friendly?
- asked if there has been discussion on benefit of a centralized dispatch (CD) system.
 - Decisions should be data driven
 - asked if cost of outfitting would be covered by extra trips.
 - replied that the accessible community has been very open about its concerns
 - Vehicles are not available at late hours – fewer drivers are available. Feels needs more drivers for accessible vans. Even if vans are there, few drivers.
 - Financial incentives would be available to drivers to be accessible.
 - There are very few trips after 9pm. Vans do both accessible and non-accessible trips. Would like to know if CD would be regulated similarly to taxi dispatchers?
 - Company would be paid by the City, acting on behalf of the City. They will not be taking a per-trip fee. Will be paid solely through the accessibility fee.
 - After 11pm, the call for accessible vans is significantly reduced. Would like incentives for dispatcher to have vans available.
 - Users do not call for the vans because their experience has shown that they will not get one. Availability is too low per their life experience.
 - how would driver fatigue be managed?
 - would gather data, start with pilot project to understand impacts on usage and capacity. If no customers, then no penalties.
 - would like to build this so that incentives are strong, and drivers are eager to be available
 - not enough customers for this
 - we know that TransitPlus experiences pass-ups – perhaps these could be augmented through this system. Experience of users is that they feel that there are no vehicles available so they do not bother calling. Want to address this.
 - would PTP drivers be able to park beside taxis at the airport?
 - has discussed with Airport group. Airport operates under Federal rules, and has been fined for not meeting accessibility requirements. Wait times could be improved there
- d. Do you think the proposed improvements will accomplish the goals?
- have there been any studies on the impact of a CD on the industry.
 - research in other jurisdictions has shown a benefit to both customers and companies. No negative impact on the companies
 - Winnipeg is too small, demographics are different than elsewhere
 - Similar to Calgary. Winnipeg is starting from a good place.

4. Report Back

Breakout room 1

- Depends on the experience of the company and could be the dispatch system and incentives
- There is an interest in being involved with regards to what the system would consider and the ins and outs of details in formulating the Request for Proposals; consider drivers as well as users.
- Encouragement for the drivers to join the dispatch system

Question about software: What is the marketing plan for the software?

Response – haven't worked out the details of the marketing plan yet, but certainly something to flag to consider. All licensed dispatchers are on the website and if there is a centralized dispatch system, we would include that on the website as well.

Question: is it possible to give an existing company to come up with a plan?

Response – bound by city purchasing policies. Have to get Council approval and check if this would be allowed. Any Request for Proposals that would go out, could be bid on by any company within the city. It could be an existing company.

Response – great suggestion – is this something the private industry can work on themselves in the interim to get the message out to the accessible community?

Response – could put industry in touch with community advocate groups. Without going forward to Council, we don't have the ability to access the accessibility surcharge.

Comment – want to have a productive and good dispatching system. Call it centralized dispatch, not secondary. Want an opportunity for existing company to put together a plan.

Breakout Room 2

- No costs put on the owners and drivers
- Looking at options that may already exist

5. Next Steps and Close

Vehicles for Hire – Accessible Service Improvements Community Stakeholder Meeting

Location: Virtual, via Zoom

Date: September 29, 2020

Time: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Participants: 24

Independent Living Resource Centre
Accessible Vehicles for Hire Users
Transportation Options Network For Seniors
Spinal Cord Injury Manitoba
Vision Impaired Resource Network
Vehicles for Hire training

Public Service: 9

Winnipeg Parking Authority
Office of Public Engagement
Winnipeg Transit
Planning, Property, and Development

Meeting Notes

- 1. Presentation**
- 2. Question and Answer Period**
- 3. Breakout Rooms**

Breakout Room 1

VFH has a good understanding. Not surprised by the ideas put forward. Key issues have been hit. Previously was a deficit of vehicles, that has been significantly improved. Wait times are an issue, users need to hunt for available vehicles. Some companies have contracts that reduce their availability. Would like to know how drivers will be incentivized to be available. Happy to see link with Enforcement. Is a casual user. Would like to see better seat belt compliance and proper use, as can be mis-applied. In speaking with drivers, knows they are hurting financially due to COVID. Feels an incentive program will help, and a solution like this will go a long way to building relationships between drivers and City.

In experience as a user, is good to address the lack of availability. Finding which company has vehicles available is challenging and confusing due to lack of visibility.

Multiple facets to capacity. Not just pure quantity. Expanding hours of operation is key. Need to have on-demand service available at 2am leaving a place of business. Must become more comparable to standard service. Biggest issue right now is that everyone has awareness of Duffy's and Ucity for standard vehicle transport, but for accessible transport it is significantly more fragmented. This solution would make it easier to for users by centralizing

contact to the fragmented service provider community. It is expected this would result in increased use of the accessible transportation service.

Cost is another factor. Often VFH are more pricey due to specialized vehicles. Is there a plan to level the playing field there?

When you order an accessible taxi vs standard taxi, the rates are the same. PTPs have non-regulated pricing, some follow taxi rates, some have contracted rates. Plan is for financial incentives to build over time, using data driven decision making. Providing the incentives to the owners would help offset the costs, which have approximately double the outfitting costs (~\$40k vs ~\$20k). Also would provide incentives to encourage improved safety. Could also implement fines for trip declines, but would prefer to incentivize drivers to make themselves available and for providing more trips, maintaining a good customer service rating, etc. This way could show why some drivers are making more money providing this service. Tracking declines would allow VFH to remove drivers that are regularly declining trips.

- Is dispatch going to be accessible to both Taxi and PTPs.
 - Considering presently.
 - Noted a driver contacted him and was worried about just Taxis, siphoning away his customer base.
 - Would allow users to select their preference. Depending on criteria, a user may select one or the other. Some providers have very peaky hours due to existing contracts, and on off-peak could fill in these gaps by providing additional capacity
 - Possibility for PTPs to be able to operate as a taxi for accessible transport purposes, set fares etc.
 - That is an option, if ordered through CD, an approximate fare cost is presented to make it clear to the user. Automations and controls will assist with this.
- e. Are the goals aligned with how you think the accessibility surcharge could address the issues you experience?
- Are you thinking about recalibrating the accessibility fund so that it is used differently than planned? When providers pass the threshold of accessibility availability, will this be sustainable? Normally is 10-20 cents per ride in other municipalities. Where are you right now on this issue?
 - Collecting 7 cents per trip since March 1, 2018. Reserve fund is available. Once we have a plan to move forward, will need council approval to go ahead. Future – no changes planned. That’s today. Once we submit the report for this we will begin costing out the initial uptake costs (outfitting, system procurement, etc). CD will likely not be City-run, but City-funded and managed through a 3rd party, using the accessibility surcharge. Solution will be owned by VFH, for continuity should service provider change. As part of costing out will look at potential changes for the future, to present to council. Nothing is off the table, so premature to talk

about decision on future changes to fund. Looking at other main municipalities for lessons learned.

f. What is important to consider to ensure a centralized dispatch is accessible and user friendly?

Notes:

- interested in ensuring that the app, website, and all features consider low-/no-vision users, and users with other challenges than mobility. Can the app be tailored for the user, on both iOS and Android platforms.
 - Good point. Will ensure that alternate options are available, in case one route is inadequate for the user. One requirement is storage of customer data, to make booking regular, routine trips more friendly to the user.
 - Some clients would definitely use this for trips such as the grocery store where TransitPlus may not be appropriate. Would be very helpful for folks that just want point A to point B that are otherwise stuck at home.
 - Had a conversation with manager of Chicago's CD. Remembers that 90% of trips are dispatched via phone call. That conversation is as important as having just the single number to call. The dispatcher being aware of the various barriers that a person make experience makes it a lot more user friendly. A website and app would be required for performance, but that phone call conversation is vital for success. Need the human factor.
 - Agreed, and not everyone has a computer or connected device available. Having a direct phone conversation is an ideal way to have that conversation about what service is needed. This makes the system accessible.
 - Agrees with this.
- g. Do you think the proposed improvements will accomplish the goals?
- Similar to earlier comments. On the right track. Will need some education of drivers, dispatchers, and users. This is an ideal time to be looking at this, as COVID is causing a service and demand disruption. Seeing the role that big PTP companies will have will be interesting. Really liking what is being put together here
 - Described industry stakeholder meeting, and the stressed importance of a marketing/promotion/awareness campaign, including the hotel and airport industry in that awareness. Working with advocacy partners to get the word out about the solution. That it is available, and how it works. Not meant to be competition for existing dispatchers or TransitPlus. This is about on-demand

service for adhoc requests. Viable for users that do not qualify for TransitPlus but have a need.

- Last question – Is the dispatch going to be exclusively for wheelchair/scooter, or anyone self-identifying.
 - would rather take a much broader view. Some users need a van because they cannot use a car easily due to physical barriers. A van may be more comfortable. Do not want the service to be used for bulk transport of eg. Hockey bags. Drivers can do that work when there is no demand by the accessible community. The mobility side is the most important as that is what the vehicles are outfitted for, but users will have a variety of reasons for wanting to request on. Does not want to make the criteria too narrow.
- as a person with a vision impairment, if I had hockey bags, would I be able to use this service?
 - Would not be excluded. Goal would be to make sure that users that do not identify as accessible users do not get priority service over accessible users.

Breakout Room 3

- a. Did we accurately capture the issues you experience?
 - Did a great job in capturing the issues. A lot of what is heard is around cost with using the VFH services. Generally, people don't have enough access to information about them. Searching for many different numbers; no one knows where to call.
 - Between using Transit Plus and accessible taxis, there is a big gap. People are looking for the middle option and it's difficult to get price information and then it can be shocking how much it costs
 - Have to get the drivers interested in taking wheelchairs. In the back of Portage Place, they line up but won't take someone in a wheelchair. They think it is more work. Have to get the drivers excited about taking those rides.
 - Denying rides for someone in a wheelchair. Lots of times, clients use seeing eye dogs and drivers deny them a ride because they do not want the dog in the vehicle. Do not have anywhere to go if they can't get a Transit Plus trip. Being not accepted because 'we don't accept pets'.
 - May extend from a lack of training; do not understand that the dogs are working. A lack of knowledge and training throughout the city of general.

- b. Are the goals aligned with how you think the accessibility surcharge could address the issues you experience?
 - There's the functional system, enforcement, and accessibility

- What's really important in terms of different transportation, rather than putting so much money into a system, see the value of education at the ground level. You could have an amazing system but without the education and enforcement, it wouldn't achieve the goals.
- Not all the money should go into creating a system. Make sure we are feeding resources back into the community. Systematic problems are hard but the lived experience issues are quite challenging.
- The surcharge may not be enough to deal with the big issues. Other provinces are charging 10 to 20 cents.

Response: 7 cents was approved by Council in December 2017. This amount came up through consultant's reports. Other cities have since changed their accessibility surcharges. This may change based on the plans that are recommended and to ensure the long-term sustainability of the accessibility program.

Should clients register each time on the website or should they just go and order a vehicle?
How will clients check a vehicle? Do they have to be registered?

- Response: They can register on an app or call for a vehicle and a vehicle is found on an as-received basis. City of Calgary has a system in place.
- One time registration

How will clients figure out if the vehicle is safe?

- Response: Vehicles have to be regulated through the City of Winnipeg
- All vehicles have to adhere to the City requirements and follow what is required.
- Same accessible taxis or PTPs but will be dispatched in a different way

c. What is important to consider to ensure a centralized dispatch is accessible and user friendly?

When this type of system is created, will it be operated through a 311 type system? A neutral body, middle point.

- Response: We would be looking for something similar to a Calgary, they put an Request for Proposals out to get a contractor to carry out this work
- Neutrality and accountability is very important. Some people stop using services if they are flagged and this can become an equity issue, especially if there are health concerns or mental health at play.
- Part of making sure the system is accessible and user friendly is to make sure proper testing is done before the launch. Make sure you consult the users that will actually be using the system, whether it's someone with a mobility or dexterity issue. Can they access the system by the telephone prompts? Can they use the voice system? Can they use their screen reader software? Have to test with different abilities to ensure there is a comprehensive training/testing.

- Make sure the system is available by phone, not just cell phone so lower income people have access

Question: what would registration mean? What would it be like?

- Concerns with Handi-Transit application system and they need to know everything.
- May be similar and straight forward with creating an online account

d. Do you think the proposed improvements will accomplish the goals?

Notes:

- Will someone have to state their accessibility needs? Will the service be open to everyone? With Transit Plus, have to confirm you have a disability. What is the description in the registration?
- How to know which car to go to? This is already an issue with Transit Plus.

Notes: intention is not to have any standard vehicles. If someone is visually impaired, they would not be able to see the vehicle. Ensure training for drivers when we implement the system.

- Cost and affordability of services is so important. To make a lasting system that supports people has to meet the needs and be an equitable system for people.

4. Report Back

Breakout room 1:

- On the right track; solutions seem to be tailored to goals
- System and vehicles have to be accessible; multiple methods of access
- Availability was a key need, including off-peak hours

Breakout room 2:

- On the right track with the direction for this centralized dispatch system.
- Need a standardized size of vehicle or service provided to individuals
- Teresa mentioned there are different types of vehicles with different types of equipment
- Availability was an overall theme as well

Breakout room 3:

Question: Can someone who is visually impaired use an accessible vehicle?

If a standard cab can be used, then that's an option for them.

Question: Would standard vehicles be on the centralized dispatch?

We would be keeping centralized dispatch for those who use a wheelchair.

People who are visually impaired may use a taxi. The more vulnerable population may use wheelchair accessible vehicles.

In building this, overarching items; do not want to exclude people. Want to provide the most access and do not want to exclude. There could be other disabilities.

Issues with safety, accessibility, not allowing service animals can be reported. We can do enforcement action and can access the video footage, etc. Complaints can be made through 311. We do take complaints seriously and will investigate with the enforcement team.

5. Next Steps and Close

Vehicles for Hire – Accessible Service Improvements Community Stakeholder Meeting

Location: Virtual, via Zoom

Date: September 29, 2020

Time: 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Participants: 5

University of Winnipeg
Vision Impaired Resource Network
Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Disabilities Issues Office, Province of Manitoba

Public Service: 4

Winnipeg Parking Authority
Office of Public Engagement

Meeting Notes:

- 1. Presentation**
- 2. Questions and Answer Period**

Question: When a vehicle is not being used for accessible trips, would it just be used as a normal vehicle?

Answer: By-law allows for accessible taxis to provide non-accessible service. They are required to prioritize accessible trips when there are trips in the queue. Through the central dispatch system, it would know the vehicle is in use and automatically dispatch the next available accessible vehicle.

Question: Mentioned a lot about vehicle accessibility for someone with an ambulatory accessibility. You mentioned an app – I use voice over on an iPhone because I cannot see the screen. The taxi apps are not useable. The last app that came is very accessible. What do you have to make sure apps are usable by everyone?

Answer: Individual company apps, we do not have much to do with that. However, with the centralized dispatch system, the City will be overseeing a third-party contract, provisions will be built into the Request for Proposals so any app or website meets the needs of citizens. The plan is to have an app, a website, and a telephone to access with a number of options.

Question: Mentioned that concurrently, 22% of vehicle for hire fleet is accessible, wondering how that compares to other Canadian cities?

Answer: 22% of taxi fleet, not all vehicles for hire. When factoring in number of PTPs, the number drops significantly. Lots of the PTPs are standard. We are higher than most cities with 22% on the taxi side. Our goal was to review that number and make sure the capacity meets

the demand. As we see changes in demand, the City's goal is to adjust to add additional accessible vehicles.

Question: Is there a summary of what other cities have done?

Answer: not sure if we have a consolidated document. Three cities who have succeeded are Chicago (central dispatch for 10-15 years), Las Vegas, Calgary. We have done a fair bit of work in finding out how their systems work.

Vehicles for Hire Advisory Committee is also involved and ideas have come from that group as well. Will see if we can get something together on this.

Question: System would allow to track criteria. One listed is tracking payment. What is the reason for this?

Answer: Tracking the lengths of trips and data to help us understanding what trips are being taken. Not for fare jumping, but to better understand the trips.

Question: long-term goal is not to limit people from using cash?

Answer: People have gone away from that but cash will be acceptable. This is about providing more options to give choice and better service.

Question: Minimum number of vehicles, have to be compliant, training, etc. Accessibility of an app with a third party. When it comes to that aspect, why does the regulation stop? The phone dispatch is a work around, but from a safety aspect, Uber is accessible and at that point, user can tell the car's description, license plate, etc. Have information if a ride is denied.

Answer: Anything through this program, when we put out an Request for Proposals for a centralized dispatch service provider, we would require them to be accessible. The proprietary apps depend on the reach of government; right now, not written into the by-law. Encourage you to complain to them. Anything done by the City will be accessible.

If we put out an Request for Proposals , the app would be accessible and would notify in an accessible way. They would be acting on behalf of the City. In the City of Calgary, it says the notification will be coming from the City of Calgary.

Question: Mentioned the By-law, also important to note we have Provincial Legislation in place and that it doesn't violate the Provincial legislation.

Discussion Questions

e. Did we accurately capture the issues you experience?

- As a wheelchair user, you captured my greatest concerns and concerns of other wheelchair users: there is a great need to make sure there are accessible vehicles for hire available around the clock, especially into the evening, and during rush hour as well. More vehicles on the road at all times (late evening and over night especially)
- Majority of accessible vans operate during daytime hours; lack of on-demand service over night. Want to address capacity. One piece is numbers.

Question: Unclear about the surcharge – are all riders being charged the surcharge or only disabled people?

Answer: Currently charged to dispatchers where less than 10% of their fleet is accessible vans. Charged on all accessible trips and standard trips. Once they go over 10% of their fleet, they are no longer charged the surcharge. 7 cents meant to be a disincentive to increase accessible fleets, and has also allowed the City to build a reserve to fund improvements. Will never be a charge only levied on accessible trips.

Question: Training – what is the scope of the training? Have been left behind because I use a guide dog as a mobility aid. There are requirements here. Does training cover that?

Answer: By-law speaks to service dogs and that refusals cannot happen. Accessibility training covers this but refresher could emphasize.

- Hearing reports of people being passed up for rides because they have a guide dog.
- CNIB sent a letter to every taxi service across the country about this issue this past September (Guide dog awareness month) and prepared a training video for taxi drivers sharing how best to assist someone with a guide dog.

Question: If you phone 311 about someone being refused a ride because of a dog, what can be done? People generally sent to the human rights commission.

Answer: it's a specific line item in the VFH By-law. A trip cannot be refused on that basis.

f. Are the goals aligned with how you think the accessibility surcharge could address the issues you experience?

- Focus on incentives for drivers and owners because the cost of an accessible van is so high.
- Wish there was a way to make the manufacturers have at least one accessible vehicle in their entire fleet. Can pick from different types of pick-up trucks but no affordable accessible vans.

- Want to provide incentives back to owners over 3-5 year plan, bring down the costs through data and making sure vehicles are actually available
- Like the goal of improving tracking and having better data and further oversight as opposed to constantly requiring people to call in with complaints. This way, hopefully be able to improve the overall oversight.
- One of the biggest challenges is with obtaining data from some of the companies; don't collect certain types of data so having better data drives better decision making and improvements.

g. What is important to consider to ensure a centralized dispatch is accessible and user friendly?

- Has to be properly resourced because on hold messages are frustrating; can't sit for a long time on hold
- Build in wait time requirements to contract
- Ensure call centres are staffed, and call centres can work from home now too
- Mostly been covered, getting through on the phone, having choices as to how you book, making sure that's there and don't have to wait. That's really important.
- Could track experiences with turning down rides, customer service; could look at disincentives. Some PTPs track experiences
- If a driver doesn't want to take a service animal, may refuse a ride. Tracking could help with this.
- City is not yet in the details, but we are looking at features.
- Importance of ensuring the app/website is accessible for screen readers. Winnipeg Transit Plus system went through testing but it was not accessible. That will be very important; they may have some lessons learned.
- So important in every project to have those lessons learned.
- Other cities may also have some lessons learned from their processes
- Transit Plus is at the table with us; other jurisdictions will also be helpful and have been to this point.
- Don't be afraid to stand your ground, because Winnipeg has some good ideas. Calgary is not successful in introducing next stop announcement on Transit (may not be the leader)
-

h. Do you think the proposed improvements will accomplish the goals?

- Overall, yes, the City is being proactive in moving things forward and improving service to make it more accessible. Without seeing the numbers, budget, hard data, difficult to make significant suggestions; heading in the right direction.
- Haven't worked out the incentives yet from an industry standpoint. We will start firming up the plan and figure out the costing, etc. following these meetings.
- One major goal of incentives to ensure drivers feel they are fairly compensated and ensure they want to provide a high level of accessible service.

Question: COVID-related question. Regular taxi driver – told they would not touch somebody to guide because of COVID. Is that the case? Should cover something in training with regards to giving verbal directions. Driver parked a long way down the street.

Answer: COVID has thrown a wrench into things and there are a lot of fears out there. Could provide better customer service by giving verbal cues and such. Good point and we will take it under advisement.

Next steps

- Consider feedback and build out a plan
- Targeted discussions
- Make recommendations to Council
- If approved, look towards implementation

Close

Appendix D – Stakeholder Questions and Feedback

Accessible Service Improvements Feedback Tables

Industry Feedback and Responses

Industry concern or question	Response
How will the system be marketed?	A marketing plan will be developed as part of the future planning stages. We recognize it is important to encourage and build trust with accessible vehicles for hire customers so they use the system.
This should be a centralized dispatch system, not secondary dispatch system	This will be a one-stop option to get on-demand accessible vehicles for hire service. Vehicles will remain with the current dispatcher as well.
What happens at night when there are limited vehicles?	Incentives will be put in place to encourage night time drivers on the centralized dispatch system.
Will vehicles be dispatched in order?	Through a dispatch system, trips will be offered to the nearest accessible vehicle, and they will be able to accept or refuse the trip based on their current availability.
Fairness is important. Ensure the system is fair to all drivers.	A dispatch system would automatically allocate trips to the nearest accessible vehicle, without bias.
Will drivers be encouraged to join?	The City is considering recommending incentives to encourage drivers to join the system.
There are issues with Calgary's system; how will Winnipeg avoid that?	Calgary is reporting improved numbers and trust in the system. We recognize the importance of ensuring the system is applicable to the Winnipeg context. Cross-jurisdictional best practices are being researched and reviewed as we progress.
Is it a specific company or will the city be responsible for answering the call for the centralized dispatch system? Will the industry be given a chance to propose a plan?	The City is open to hearing ideas and suggestions from the industry and service users. It is unlikely that the City will be answering the call for the centralized dispatch system, and as per standard practice in the City, a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be released for third parties to bid on a contract to provide a centralized dispatch system.
Are payments going directly to the driver? Is payment collected differently?	The driver would accept payment as usual.

Industry concern or question	Response
Concerns about the results of a centralized system.	Any third party operating the system would be responsible to the City for reporting on specific metrics as defined and requested by the City.
There are very few calls after midnight. How will that be handled?	The City will be marketing the system to build trust with the users requiring accessible transportation and promote 24/7 on-demand services.
Some issues with accessible service can be handled within each company.	While this may be the case, accessible vehicle users and advocates have consistently indicated that access to vehicles for service is a concern.
Winnipeg is too small for a centralized dispatch system; demographics are different than elsewhere	Winnipeg is a growing city with every changing transportation needs and this is an innovative approach to improve accessible service for users.

Community Feedback and Responses

Community concern or question	Response
Create an adjustable surcharge within a range so that the charge can be changed based on the needs of the services	Recommendations to the accessibility surcharge will be brought forward to Council with the centralized dispatch program framework in order to fund all the associated costs related to it.
Set the accessibility surcharge no less than \$0.10 and no more than \$0.50 per trip (set annually), to meet the stated targets of the fund	Accessibility surcharge will be set based upon the forecasted costs required in order to sustain the program and may be adjusted by Council, if deemed necessary.
Create a plan for the accessibility service improvements that benefits everyone (community, drivers, and owners) at no extra cost to taxpayers (through per trip fees only)	The Public Service is required to present a plan for Council approval in order to use the funds collected through the accessibility surcharge. When the Vehicles for Hire By-law was adopted by Council in December 2017, the accessibility surcharge was approved to encourage the industry to make more accessible vehicles available.
Could use surcharge funds to improve Transit Plus capacity	At this time, the accessibility surcharge is meant to improve on-demand accessible service through the VFH division. Improved on-demand service could supplement Transit Plus capacity.

Community concern or question	Response
Fund the following initiatives: a) Establishing a centralized dispatch (\$300,000 per yr.) b) Incentivizing drivers and owners associated with the approximately 120 accessible taxicabs (max. \$3,000 per vehicle: \$360,000 per yr.) c) Rebating all accessible transportation training recertifications (\$60,000 per yr.) d) Establishing a pilot project subsidizing the use of taxicabs by Transit Plus consumers (\$250,000).	While cost estimates have not been finalized, the City continues to consider options related to improving the on-demand accessible service and the overall accessible industry for users and service providers.
Will accessible vehicles for hire users have choice if they use the centralized dispatch system?	Users will always be welcomed to directly contact a dispatcher of their choice or request the next available accessible vehicle through the centralized dispatch system.
Ensure there are a few options for booking, including a phone option.	The plan would be to include multiple options recognizing the needs of users.
Ensure there is storage of data/account to make booking trips easier.	Details such as these would form part of the requirements of the Request for Proposals.
Ensure there is testing of all booking systems to ensure they are fully accessible (including those using screen readers).	Details such as these would form part of the requirements of the Request for Proposals.
Further education of drivers, dispatchers and users is critical to success. Driver education is critical, especially with service animals.	On-going education is part of the improvements for accessible service.
Will those who do not have a physical disability be able to use the centralized dispatch system?	Those who do not require a wheelchair accessible van would not be excluded, however would only be able to obtain an accessible van through this service. Goal would be to make sure that users that do not identify as accessible users do not get priority service over accessible users.
Have to get more drivers interested in taking those who use wheelchairs.	The City is considering recommending incentives to encourage drivers to join the system.
Registration for a system should be simple.	We agree. The plan would be to recognize the needs of users and details such as this would form part of the Request for Proposals.

Community concern or question	Response
Putting all resources into a centralized dispatch system may not have the intended outcomes. This should be a comprehensive plan that also looks at the big issues with accessible transportation (education and enforcement).	While the program is being called a centralized dispatch system that is only one part of the overall network improvements. The intention will be to work towards improvements in all facets in on-demand accessible service.
How will you ensure vehicles are available at all hours of the day?	The City is considering recommending incentives to encourage vehicles to be available at all hours of the day.
Is a long-term goal to limit users from using cash?	Cash remains a payment option for users, however, other payment options will be available on this system.
A centralized system has to be properly resourced because on hold messages are frustrating; can't sit for a long time on hold.	Any third party operating the system would be responsible to the City for ensuring that specific resource guidelines are met. Having other options to request service will also assist in this area.
Incentives are important to ensure drivers are on board. How is that being handled?	The City hasn't worked out the incentives yet from an industry standpoint. We will start firming up the plan and figure out the costing, etc. following these meetings.