



Request for City Council Committee Action From the Department of

Date March 2, 2004
To Public Safety and Regulatory Service Committee Chair,
Council Member Dan Niziolek

Subject Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab Age Requirement

Recommendation

Staffs recommendations are to:

- Change City ordinance (see attached draft) to allow for additional years of service (7) or 400,000 miles whichever is first for accessible taxicabs with hydraulic or pneumatic lifts.
- Quarterly Inspections for both mechanical and cosmetics.
- No vehicles with hydraulic or pneumatic lifts maybe introduced as handicap accessible with more than 100,000 miles or 7 years old or older.
- Handicap accessible vehicles without hydraulic or pneumatic lifts would remain under the auspices of current ordinance allowing five (5) model years and then replacement.
- The above recommendations be submitted to the Taxicab Service Committee for their comment and review.

Previous Directives

(any past Council actions or directions to staff)

Prepared or Submitted by Duane Haponuk, Traffic Control Agent II, (612) 335-5928

Approved by (names, title, signature)

Presenters in Committee Pam Selinski, Traffic Control Supervisor and Duane Haponuk,
Traffic Control Agent II

Financial Impact (Check those that apply)

No financial impact - or - Action is within current department budget.
(If checked, go directly to Background/Supporting Information)

Action requires an appropriation increase to the Capital Budget

Action requires an appropriation increase to the Operating Budget

Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase

Action requires use of contingency or reserves

Other financial impact (Explain):

Request provided to the Budget Office when provided to the Committee Coordinator

Community Impact (use any categories that apply)
Neighborhood Notification
City Goals
Comprehensive Plan
Zoning Code
Other

Background/Supporting Information Attached

February 23, 2004

Report to Committee on Age Limits for Wheelchair Accessible Taxicabs

Submitted by: Licenses and Consumer Services, Taxicab Inspections Division

In 1996 a pilot project was started with Rainbow Taxi Service Corporation to provide accessible taxicab service. Two wheelchair accessible taxicabs were purchase to provide priority service to people with disabilities. These taxicabs were a cargo style van with hydraulic lifts on the rear of the vehicle.

On January 1, 2002, the city council authorized the addition of 45 additional wheelchair accessible taxicab licenses to be issued in the following allotments, 20 to Airport Taxi, 15 to Yellow Taxi and 10 to Rainbow Taxi. These vehicles were allowed to be licensed in multiple jurisdictions to provide a broader service area for people with disabilities.

Today we face a quandary of how long should an accessible taxicab vehicle is allowed to operate as an accessible taxicab before replacement. Current City of Minneapolis ordinance 341.595, see appendix A, allows a vehicle to operate as a taxicab for five model years of less. Checking with other cities there is a wide range of regulations governing the age limits on taxicabs. [Traffic Control conducted a survey to find out what other jurisdictions did with regards to handicap accessible vehicles.](#) We found Miami, Dade County will allow a 10-year limit with a progressive inspection process and in Windsor, Canada, and there is a 4-year limit and twice yearly mechanical and cosmetic inspections. (See appendix B)

In November and December of 2003 the Licenses and Consumer Services department held meetings with the three Taxicab Service Companies providing accessible taxicab service to inquire their ideas and thoughts with regards to age limits on accessible taxicabs.

There are currently 3-different styles of accessible taxicab vehicles in use on the streets of Minneapolis.

1. The mini van style vehicle. [This vehicle has](#) a manual rear-loading ramp with room for 1-wheelchair and 3 ambulatory passengers.

2. The converted heavy-duty cargo style van. [This vehicle has](#) a rear mounted hydraulic lift with room for 1 wheelchair and 3 ambulatory passengers.
3. Metro mobility mini buses purchased [and converted](#) into taxicabs. [These vehicles](#) have a side mounted hydraulic lift with room for 3-wheelchairs and up to 10 ambulatory passengers.

More in-depth information regarding the style of handicap accessible vehicles has been included in appendix C.

The current cost of maintenance, repair and safety strap replacement is making it difficult for owners to recoup operating costs to allow for the purchase of newer vehicles. This information was disseminated to City staff at a meeting with the Taxi industry.

With the purchase of the larger style of vans with hydraulic lifts there are conversion costs and state inspections to insure the structural integrity of the vehicle. The vehicle floor must be upgraded for structural integrity and to allow for the installation of tracking for tie down straps to hold wheelchairs. (See appendix C for cost report on vehicles and equipment.)

Service Companies informed City staff they have problems finding drivers willing to lease these vehicles even though they have priority booking for customers that need accessible taxicabs. Currently Rainbow and Airport Taxi lease the vehicles and Yellow Taxi hires and pays an hourly wage to keep drivers in these vehicles. Companies that lease informed staff that the overnight and weekend shifts are the most difficult to lease due to the limited amount of calls for service.

Staff brought the age limit issue to the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities looking for their suggestions and recommendations. Committee members definitely do not want to lose this mode of transportation but agree there has to be some rotation of the fleet. They suggested maybe extending the life of an accessible vehicle to 7 years and agree with staff that adding quarterly mechanical and cosmetic inspections would be appropriate.

The taxi industry provides people with disabilities another source of transportation that does not require making an appointment days in advance. The taxi industry provides service for last minute plans or shopping excursions.

The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities provided extensive input regarding their preferences of handicap accessible vehicles. They stated a preference for the larger style of van that provided more comfort than the other style. The major concern was that the service be available.