



**STUDY OF ON-DEMAND ACCESSIBLE
TAXICAB SERVICES IN THE CITY OF OTTAWA**

FOR

**CITY OF OTTAWA
EMERGENCY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

FINAL REPORT

31 DECEMBER 2021

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STUDY OF ON-DEMAND ACCESSIBLE TAXICAB SERVICE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its meeting of September 11, 2019 Council approved a motion directing staff to review the feasibility of conducting a study respecting the quality, availability and costs of on-demand accessible taxicab services to include recommendations respecting potential solutions and improvements with staff to report back with a potential scope of work in advance of the 2020 budget process.

At its meeting of October 23, 2019 Council received a report outlining a proposed scope of work for a targeted study of on-demand accessible taxicab service comprised of: document review (including examination of previous City reports, a scan of programs in place in other jurisdictions to facilitate provision of on-demand accessible services; assessment of potential funding sources etc.); interviews with key stakeholders; and, survey of service providers and clients culminating in a report with practical recommendations. The scope of work was confirmed with approval of the 2020 budget with consultants retained in the spring of 2020 to undertake the work.

Ottawa City Council has approved a number of reports respecting the provision of accessible taxicab service since 2002. In 2016 Council approved a new Vehicle for Hire (VFH) By-law (2016-272) that permitted the operation of Private Transportation Companies (PTCs). That report did not require PTCs to provide accessible service but approved a recommendation providing for the establishment of an Accessibility Fund to be subsidized by a voluntary per trip fee to be paid by PTCs.

Staff were tasked to report back with a recommended approach for disbursement of the funds “to offset costs for a number of programs supporting accessible transportation, including but not limited to enhancing the taxi coupon program”.

In March of 2019, Council approved the VFH Accessibility Fund Allocation Plan which recommended provision of funds to not-for-profit and community agencies to expand accessible transportation services in rural areas as well a reduction in the cost of taxi coupons and an increase in the maximum allowance of taxi coupons per customer.

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Media coverage following approval of the Allocation Plan highlighted some frustration among accessible taxicab owners that none of the funds were provided directly to the owners and operators of accessible taxicabs in recognition of their increased costs of fitting-up and operating accessible taxicabs.

Consultation feedback included in the Allocation Plan report noted that the top three barriers cited by clients of accessible taxicabs were: affordability; availability; and timeliness of accessible taxicabs. While the March 2019 report made provision to enhance the affordability of accessible taxicabs (via enhancements to the taxi coupon program) the report did not approve recommendations to incentivize accessible taxicabs to improve the availability or timeliness of accessible taxicab service.

Accordingly, the motion approved by Council in September of 2019 focused on a targeted study of on-demand accessible taxicab service to review opportunities to incentivize the improved availability, timeliness and overall quality of service.

A number of municipalities have implemented measures to enhance or incentivize improved accessible taxicab services within their jurisdictions including measures funded through voluntary or mandatory levies applied to industry participants (brokers, owners or drivers) augmented, in some instances, with direct investment from the municipality.

In undertaking a literature review including reports that established incentive programs in other jurisdictions there was a general recognition of the higher costs of owning and operating a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) as well as the increased time and effort associated with completing accessible calls.

Previous studies have estimated costs of owning and operating a WAV as ranging between 60 to 70 percent higher than the costs of a standard taxicab with the most often cited single cost being the cost to convert / fit-up to accommodate wheelchair passengers which are estimated to range anywhere from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

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In scanning other jurisdictions, investment in on-demand accessible taxicab service have generally fallen into the following categories:

- Option A: An annual grant paid to owners in recognition of the higher costs of owning and operating an Accessible Taxicab
- Option B: An annual, graduated incentive paid to “owners” and “drivers” based on achieving stated criteria (e.g., days on the road, hours on the road, operating hours between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m., etc)
- Option C: A per trip supplement (surcharge) paid to drivers for each completed wheelchair accessible fare
- Option D: Centralized dispatch featuring client booking via a single telephone number, website, or app.
- Option E: Provision of enhanced / reimbursed accessible driver training

A summary chart describing the options (who does it, incentive amounts, criteria, how results are measured, strengths, weaknesses, implementation challenges, funding) is attached as Annex A.

In keeping with the scope of work for the project, targeted consultations were undertaken with on-demand accessible taxicab stakeholders including taxicab brokers; taxicab union local 1688 and, the City’s Accessibility Advisory Committee. Correspondence on file with the City was also reviewed and included as part of the consultation.

The consultation used the options chart (Annex A) as the basis for facilitating feedback asking stakeholders to rank the incentives in order of preference including rationale with stakeholders invited to suggest adjustments or clarifications that would improve the options, as well as to propose any additional options not captured in the chart.

The Comment Sheet noted that stakeholder feedback and preferences would be considered within the context of feasibility, affordability as well as the reported effectiveness of options implemented in other municipal jurisdictions.

With respect to consultation results, there was broad agreement that owners and drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) should be remunerated in recognition of the higher cost of owning and operating a WAV as represented by Option A.

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There was mixed consensus on the rating of performance related incentives (Options B and C) but agreement that criteria-based incentives (B or C) are necessary to improve service.

Centralized Dispatch (Option D) was considered by the Accessibility Advisory Committee to be a fundamental building block to “significantly increase the quality of service provided to disabled residents and visitors” regardless of whatever (other) incentive options are implemented.

Option E (enhanced training / reimbursement), while important, was not prioritized as an incentive that will enhance the availability and timeliness of WAV service, which was the focus of the original motion approved by the Community and Protective Services Committee.

In reviewing the consultation results within the context of findings and results experienced by other cities, this study ultimately recommends a hybrid package that draws most heavily on the Calgary program, the most advanced and empirically effective model that was reviewed, while adopting elements of other incentive programs that were reviewed.

In short, this report recommends a package that includes centralized dispatch, an annual incentive and a per trip surcharge paid to drivers for each accessible fare.

The fundamental building block is centralized dispatch. Centralized dispatch has the win-win of prioritizing and expediting accessible calls to the closest accessible taxicab to the benefit of clients while providing for the most efficient deployment of accessible taxicabs (avoiding redundant duplicate calls) to the benefit of the driver. A dedicated centralized dispatch for accessible fares has the added benefit of providing the City with regularized, detailed, data exclusive to the wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) fleet which is vital to the efficacy, auditability and administration of the financial incentives tied to program.

All cities with comprehensive incentive programs (Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto) stressed the importance of timely, detailed data, easily audited and administered, to the success of their overall incentive programs.

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This report proposes an RFP consistent with the Calgary WAV program (see wavcalgary.com) that provides a dedicated website, single telephone number and app to request WAVs. Calgary's annual cost of \$350,000 was estimated to include the costs of the third-party respondent to provide and administer the dispatch technology, driver outreach and training, and customer marketing and also included the City's own costs to develop the RFP, gather stakeholder feedback and evaluate the pilot.

Calgary's WAV program was launched in December 2019 and, as part of an update provided in November 2021, staff reported that the average wait time for an accessible taxi is less than 22 minutes with 90 per cent of clients surveyed feeling confident that a taxi will arrive when requested through WAV Calgary and with 100% of respondents indicating that they were likely or very likely to continue using the service.

With respect to financial incentives, this study recommends adoption of an annual incentive with criteria to recognize the costs borne by accessible plate holder and drivers while setting out some appropriate standards of service to ensure that plate holders and drivers are taking reasonable steps to ensure that the vehicles are on the road and available for dispatch.

Although a simple grant (without criteria apart from plate renewal) was the highest ranked option among stakeholders, Calgary (the only city which provided an upfront grant) has discontinued the grant, while moving the monies into the incentive portion of the program. Calgary, as part of their November 2021 update, noted that a small number of plate holders received the grant without actually putting a vehicle on the road and determined that the funding envelope should be moved to the incentive program that has eligibility criteria tied to service delivery.

This study agrees with that finding and proposes an annual incentive to plate holders of up to \$3,000 per year with an annual incentive to accessible drivers of up to \$1,000 per year. Accordingly, an accessible plate holder who is also a driver will be eligible to receive up to \$4,000 per year or \$40,000 over the ten-year life of the wheelchair accessible vehicle.

It is proposed that the graduated reimbursement of accessible plate holders be based on the vehicles being available for dispatch a minimum of 250 days per year; 120 hours per month with 120 overnight shifts and an inspection rate of 90% or better.

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For accessible drivers it is proposed that reimbursement be based on acceptance of all wheelchair accessible trips, minimum incidents or complaints and daily maintenance of harness / ramps.

Finally, the packaged incentive program proposes implementation of a \$15 per trip surcharge paid to accessible taxicab drivers for each completed accessible fare provided pursuant to the centralized dispatch (WAV) program.

This surcharge will recognize the generally increased cost associated with completing accessible calls while rewarding drivers for prioritizing dispatched accessible calls.

All of the volumetric data (days of service, hours of service, overnight shifts, fare acceptance, complaints, and individual accessible fares) may be easily monitored and evaluated via the data provided by the centralized dispatch (WAV) program with the balance of the criteria assessed through periodic inspections by By-law and Regulatory Services personnel.

Again, by reference to the Calgary Incentive Program, which has been in place since January 1, 2019, ninety (90) percent of accessible plate holder and drivers surveyed felt the grants and incentives helped offset the higher cost of operating an accessible taxi and, 80 percent indicated that they intended to keep on driving an accessible taxi in future.

Even though calls specifically for wheelchair accessible vehicles comprise less than 1 percent of all taxicabs trips, the accessible taxi fleet is an essential adjunct to the public transportation system as the only on-demand option for persons requiring a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

This study proposes that an incentive program with centralized dispatch and appropriate incentives will improve the availability, timeliness, and overall quality of on-demand accessible taxicab service.

It is understood that City staff will consider these recommendations within the context of its own legislative agenda processes and operational requirements, including its own assessment of legal and financial implications.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Committee Motion and Discussion

At its meeting of September 11, 2019, as part of its consideration of the 2019-2022 By-law Review Work Plan report ([ACS2019-EPS-GEN-0009](#)) Council carried the following motion:

WHEREAS the *Vehicle-For-Hire By-law* currently regulates the provision of on demand accessible taxicab service, including that such accessible taxicab service be available 10 hours a day, 5 days a week, and,

WHEREAS complaints and concerns have been expressed about accessible taxicab services, including the quality and availability of accessible taxicab services and the cost to accessible taxi plate holders of providing accessible taxicab service, and

WHEREAS a targeted study of these complaints and concerns is deemed necessary, and this study goes beyond a review of the current regulations and bylaw,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the General Manager (GM) of Emergency and Protective Services (EPS):

1. Review the feasibility of conducting a study of the complaints and concerns expressed regarding the quality, availability, and costs [of] on demand accessible taxicab services, including their causes, and recommending any potential solutions for improvements; and
2. In advance of the 2020 Budget process, report back to the Community and Protective Services Committee on the potential scope of work to undertake such study of accessible taxicab services, including the costs associated with such review, the capacity for staff to undertake this review, and the anticipated timelines for the review.

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At the August 29, 2019, meeting at the Community and Protective Services Committee (CPSC) where the motion was originally approved, three stakeholder representatives were present to speak to the item: an accessibility advocate and former chair of the former City of Ottawa's Taxi Advisory Committee; a taxi owner; and a taxi broker.¹ Each presented the following points of view,

- The accessibility advocate expressed concern with the number of accessible plates being returned to the city as drivers were not making money and indeed, losing money. Of the 7 cent per ride Accessibility Fund, not one cent went to drivers, with the exception of taxi chits, which helps but doesn't go too far. It is harder to get accessible cabs because the numbers are down. Finally, the accessibility advocate noted that the consultation regarding allocation of accessibility fund did not consult with persons who are cab users but focused on Para Transpo users.
- A taxi owner voiced concerns that accessible taxi drivers were returning their plates to the City while regular taxi drivers were putting plates "in drawers" because drivers are not making enough income to pay expenses as a result of ride sharing options now available in the City.
- Finally, the taxi broker pointed out that with collective agreements in place with drivers, brokers are not in the position to manage drivers' hours of work. He suggested that some accessible plates could be assigned to brokers so that they could hire drivers on a 12 hour basis. If the vehicles were assigned, "we would be in a position to put our own vehicles on the road ...rent them out to a driver on a 12 hour basis. We could accommodate the cost or we would be bearing more of the cost...in order to offer better service".

The Committee decision was taken to review options to incentivize owners and drivers of accessible taxicabs to provide improved quality, availability, and hours of service. Staff expressed support for the motion.

¹ Audio Stream from City of Ottawa YouTube channel.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuMRSUP_X4I

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As a result, a scope of work was developed and passed with the approval of the 2020 budget on December 11, 2019. External consultants were hired in the spring of 2020 to undertake the study.

2 Study Objectives, Scope and Approach

2.1 Study Objectives and Scope

The report outlining the scope of work to be undertaken by the consultants was received by CPSC and Council at their meetings of October 17 and October 23, 2019, respectively.

The study objectives were to:

- Review concerns expressed regarding the quality, availability, and costs of on-demand accessible taxicab services, including their causes; and
- Provide practical recommendations regarding potential solutions for improvements.

The scope of the study focused largely on readily available materials from the City of Ottawa and select comparative municipalities including interviews with staff of those cities to obtain information and perspective on options implemented in those jurisdictions. Ottawa taxi industry representatives were also consulted to obtain and clarify local taxicab statistics. A targeted consultation with taxi brokers, owners and drivers as well as accessibility advocates was undertaken to receive feedback on the options under consideration. A presentation was made to the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) at its meeting of November 16, 2021. The AAC provided a formal submission on December 20, 2021 which is attached as Annex B.

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2.2 Study Approach

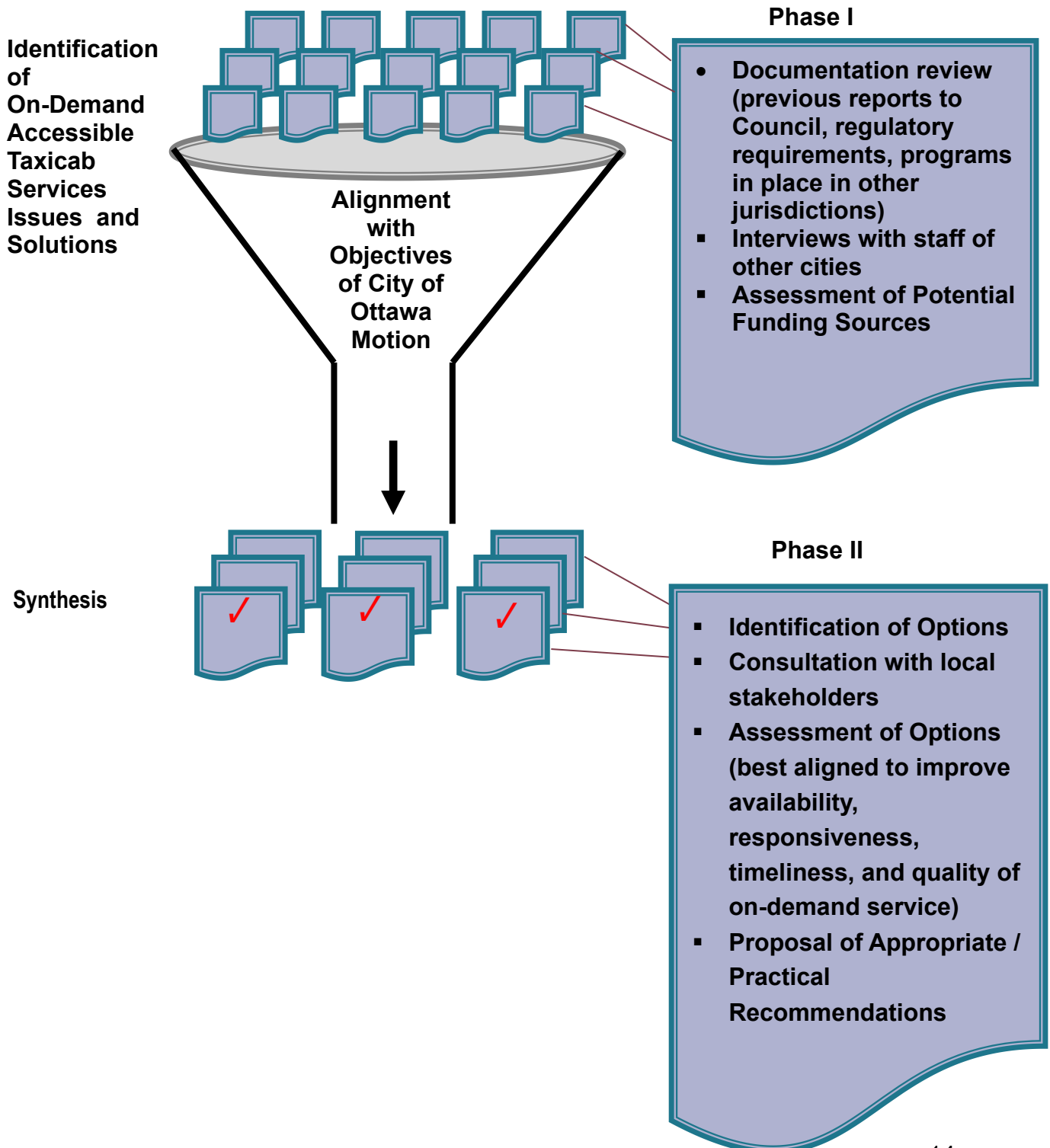
The study approach included the following activities:

- **Planning** – Regular contact (e.g., email, calls) with the City of Ottawa Project Authority to confirm the scope and address administrative matters as they arose.
- **Documentation Review** – Review of relevant and readily available documentation, including previous studies or reports respecting on-demand accessible services within the City of Ottawa; industry complaints; industry data; and enforcement data, was conducted.
- **Interjurisdictional Review** – Review of readily available public information from other municipalities to assess the programs in place in other jurisdictions to facilitate provision of on-demand accessible services.
- **Interviews** – A select number of stakeholders were to be engaged. The purpose of these interviews was to identify industry issues and potential solutions regarding on-demand accessible taxicab services in Ottawa.
- **Survey / Workshop** – Undertake a survey and/or conduct a workshop to obtain specific feedback from service providers and clients respecting on-demand accessible services. The purpose of the survey/workshop was to obtain a sense of issues / solutions.
- **Synthesis / Analysis** – Based on the activities completed, all information obtained / gathered was synthesized to identify potential solutions and summarize findings.
- **Report** – Development of a report with appropriate, practical recommendations.

It is acknowledged that due to the impact of Covid-19, the consultants worked with the Project Authority to ensure that scope and approach were adjusted, as required, to enable completeness of the study (e.g., targeted interviews and consultations with stakeholders).

2.3 Analytical Framework

An overall analytical framework was applied for the study. The components and approach are illustrated and elaborated on below.



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Phase I – Identification of On-Demand Accessible Taxicab Services Issues and Solutions - included: a review of previous reports to Committee and Council relating to accessible taxicab service; reviewing accessibility requirements set out in the Vehicle for Hire (VFH) By-law 2016-272; reviewing complaint and enforcement data on file with the City; examining programs implemented in other jurisdictions including an assessment of potential funding sources relating to the provision of enhanced services; and, Ottawa VFH industry trip data to assist with the assessment of local costing and funding of options. Publicly available information was generally utilized. Information provided by the City of Ottawa and taxicab industry was reviewed to capture some statistical details not in the public domain. Submitted data was not audited or corroborated.

From Phase I of the Analytical Framework, findings of the current state with the City of Ottawa as well as practices and programs in place in other Canadian municipalities were applied to the synthesis approaches for Phase II of the Analytical Framework. Targeted consultations were undertaken with taxi industry stakeholders brokers, owners, drivers (via Unifor Local 1688 and its Accessibility Advisory Committee) and accessibility advocates including the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee to obtain feedback on options under consideration.

Phase II – Synthesis, located at the bottom of the figure, provided a filter to identify common findings and themes in other jurisdictions as well as preferences and feedback provided by local (Ottawa) stakeholders. The analysis included an assessment of how well those options have worked, empirically, in other municipalities to improve the availability, responsiveness, timelessness and overall quality of on-demand accessible taxicab service. The preferred options were examined through a feasibility / affordability lens to develop the practical recommendations put forward to the City of Ottawa for its consideration.

3 Context: Chronology of City Reports

3.1 Chronology of City Reports - Accessible Taxicab Services

The following sets out a chronology and summary of key City of Ottawa reports related to accessible taxicab services.

- ❖ November 13, 2002 – Council approved a process for issuing the City’s first 25 accessible taxi plates ([ACS2001-EPS-BYL-0015](#)). Plates were issued by lottery (\$1 per plate) with all accessible drivers required to complete an enhanced Accessible Training course. Accessible plates were permitted to be transferred after 5 years.
- ❖ January 10, 2007 – Council approved [Motion No. 4/36](#) approving the issuance of 40 additional accessible taxi licenses.
- ❖ July 11, 2007 – Council approved a report to improve on-demand accessible taxicab service ([ACS2007-CPS-BYL-0024](#)) by approving the issuance of 40 additional accessible taxi licenses per year for 3 years to bring the total number from 65 to 185.
- ❖ April 11, 2012 – Council approved a report ([ACS2012-COS-EPS-0018](#)) that included recommendations and motions including: that the 12 remaining accessible taxi plate holder licenses that had not to-date been issued, be offered to candidates in accordance with the Accessible Priorities List.
- ❖ April 13, 2016 – Council approved a report ([ACS2016-COS-EPS-0012](#)) regulating Vehicles-for-Hire – Taxis, Limousines and Private Transportation Companies (PTCs), with an effective date of September 30, 2016. The by-law permitted the operation of PTCs (e.g., Uber and Lyft) without the requirement to provide wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) as part of their fleets, but approved the following recommendations relating to the provision of accessible transportation services:
 - Delegating to the GM of EPS the authority to negotiate, finalize and execute the establishment of a voluntary, per-trip surcharge for accessibility, with any funds received from this surcharge to be directed to a dedicated reserve fund.

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- Directing the GM to work with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, Para Transpo and other internal and external stakeholders to develop a strategy with respect to how new fees generated through an accessibility levy could be used to offset costs for a number of programs supporting accessible transportation, including but not limited to enhancing the taxi coupon program, and report back to Committee and Council with a recommended approach.
 - Waiving the accessible taxi driver license fee.
 - Petitioning the Province to: provide authority to the City of Ottawa to impose a mandatory accessibility levy to be applied to PTCs that do not offer accessible service to City standards.
- ❖ May 18, 2017 – The Community and Protective Services Committee (CPSC) received an update ([ACS2017-EPS-GEN-0007](#)), which noted that agreement in principle of a per-trip surcharge had been obtained from Uber Canada with the surcharge to be applied to all completed trips commencing October 4, 2016, when Uber Canada became licensed.

With the agreement in place, staff committed to begin consultations with stakeholders to develop a strategy with respect to the manner in which funds generated through the accessibility surcharge could best be used.

The report also noted that the VFH By-law enacted by Council provided an updated plate holder license to population ratio, and advised that four new non-transferrable accessible taxi plate holder licenses would be available for issuance bringing the accessible fleet number to 191.

- ❖ March 27, 2019 – Council approved a report that proposed the Vehicle-for-Hire Accessibility Fund – Allocation Plan ([ACS2019-EPS-GEN-0002](#)).

The report noted that the total amount of funds available in the VFH Accessibility Fund was \$1,248,413 (as of December 31, 2018) and advised that an average annual fund of \$720,000 could be expected based on historical trip data, and the \$0.07 per trip voluntary fee.

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The recommendations of the report were based on innovative ideas generated as part of five in-person sessions, an online survey, as well as feedback received by telephone and email. A total of 33 ideas were generated through the public consultation process with participants asked to rank their ideas from one to five, with one being their most preferred idea.

Based on stakeholder consultations and a feasibility analysis conducted by staff, the Vehicle for Hire (VFH) Accessibility Fund Steering Committee recommended that the funds be allocated to:

1. Provide funds to not-for-profit and community agencies, such as community resource centres, to expand accessible transportation services in rural areas;
2. Develop a Smartphone app for Para Transpo customers so they can track the arrival of their ride;
3. Reduce the cost of taxi coupons; and
4. Increase the maximum allowance of taxi coupons per customer.

Council approved the recommendations except the recommendation regarding the Para Transpo app as Para Transpo confirmed that it would be proceeding with development of an app with or without the funds earmarked from the Accessibility Fund.

Recommendations 3 and 4 were the only approved recommendations impacting on-demand accessible taxicab services. The practical impact of those recommendations was to:

- Commit a portion of the VFH Accessibility Fund be used each year to increase the taxi coupon rebate from 40% to 55%. This would reduce the cost of one coupon book by 25% (or \$6).
- Double the maximum allowance of taxi coupon books from four to eight per customer, per month.

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As part of the consultation process, participants were asked to identify the top barriers that prevent them from using various modes of private and public transportation available in the city of Ottawa. The following were the top three barriers cited with respect to accessible taxicabs:

1. *Affordability*: Participants reported that fares associated with accessible taxicabs are too expensive – even with a Taxi Coupon Program discount.
2. *Availability*: Participants reported that it is difficult, and in many cases, impossible, to get an accessible taxicab 24 hours a day – especially in the late evening and early morning. Many participants believe there are not enough accessible taxicabs available. Participants also noted that they believe accessible taxicabs do not want to drive to rural areas making it difficult for rural customers to access this service.
3. *Timeliness*: Participants expressed concern over long wait times for accessible taxicabs and expressed a desire for on-demand accessible taxicab services. Participants reported that in many cases, after ordering an accessible taxicab, the taxicab did not show up.

The report recommendations helped increase the affordability of accessible fares but did not address the issues of availability or timeliness.

3.2 Local Media Coverage

Media coverage published at the time the Allocation Plan was released, debated, and approved revealed several themes.

An article released on the date that CPSC was considering the item (March 21) focused on the City's "cracking down on elusive accessible taxis"² and outlined the City's laying of charges relating to accessible taxicabs not being on the street

² "City Cracking Down on elusive accessible taxis" – Kate Porter, CBC – March 21, 2019

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and available for dispatch 10 hours a day 5 days a week as required by the VFH By-law. As part of the article, several councillors lamented that the \$.07 per trip surcharge is too little to cover the true costs of improving accessible transportation.

A second article released following approval of the VFH Fund Allocation Plan indicated that licensed drivers of accessible taxicabs were frustrated and disappointed that funds derived from PTCs, because they were not required to provide on-demand accessible service, were not used to help drivers who are licensed to provide accessible services particularly given the increased costs associated with purchasing and operating an accessible taxicab.

Media coverage at the time noted, these measures did nothing to help currently licensed taxi drivers. ³ In particular, it was noted that:

“...accessible taxis are more expensive to operate than regular licensed cabs because plate owners have to pay between \$15,000 and \$18,000 to convert their vans to accommodate passengers in wheelchairs. In addition, ...maintenance and higher fuel costs, combined with expensive insurance, are making the business untenable.”⁴

Accessible taxicab plate holders and drivers called for full reimbursement of the conversion cost of wheelchair-accessible vehicles as well as a subsidy to applied to each accessible trip.

An accessibility advocate, who represented similar concerns respecting incentivizing drivers when he appeared at the CPSC in September 2019, cited the following:

"We have to make it worth their while to be able to do [this]. You want them to feel like they want to take that call."⁵

³ “Accessible taxi drivers pushed to 'boiling point’” – Robyn Miller, CBC – April 16, 2019.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

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3.3 Submission by Unifor Local 1688

Unifor Local 1688, submitted a position paper dated July 23, 2019 outlining the union proposal for review of the Vehicle for Hire (VFH) By-law 2016-272) including five specific recommendations relating to Accessible Taxicabs which are summarized as follows:

- 1) Conversion Expenses: request to subsidize the conversion cost of Accessible Taxicab vehicles, given: the extra cost associated with purchasing a taxicab “van” to convert into an accessible vehicle; the higher cost to maintain an accessible taxicab; and, the higher cost of gas required to fuel an accessible taxicab vs a regular standard taxicab.
- 2) Tariff (surcharge) for wheelchair accessible trips: request to provide a levy of \$15 to be added to the Tariff to be paid by the City via its accessible fund, given the higher costs cited above as well as: the extra time that required to on-board and off-board the wheelchair client from door-to-door; and, in recognition of most wheelchair fares being short fares.
- 3) Accessible Vehicle Age: request to extend the accessible vehicle age limit from a 10-year-old model to 12-year-old model, to ease costs for accessible taxi drivers whose vehicles are still in good condition; to allow those drivers to amortize those costs over a more reasonable period of time. Any issues with the vehicles can be addressed during inspections as the vehicle ages.
- 4) Cancellation Fees: request to implement a \$7 cancellation notice whereby clients are given notice, prior to accepting service, that a \$7 fee will be applied to fares cancelled by the client in recognition of the cost in time and gasoline to drive to a pick-up address only to find that the customer has changed their mind or got a ride using another taxi company.
- 5) Minimum accessible service: request to reconsider the minimum service requirement that is set in Section 60 of the current VFH bylaw requires accessible drivers to be on the road (10) hours a day, (5) days a week, given that the bylaw did not consider current provincial labour laws the allows employees rights of meal breaks, vacation time or sick days.

3.4 Approval of Study of On-Demand Accessible Taxicab Service

The foregoing represents the chronology of Committee and Council decisions leading up to Council approval of the Vehicle-for-Hire Accessibility Fund –

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Allocation Plan in March of 2019 as well as subsequent media coverage and response by the taxi union Unifor 1688 leading up to the motion approved by CPS Committee (August 29, 2019) and Council (September 11, 2019) calling for a “targeted study” of on-demand accessible taxi service to look at the “quality and availability” of accessible taxicab service including “the cost to accessible taxi plate holders of providing accessible taxicab services” with a goal of “recommending any potential solutions for improvements”.

4 City of Ottawa Accessible Taxicab Services Overview

4.1 Summary of By-law Provisions - Accessible Taxicab Services

The Vehicle for Hire (VFH) By-law 2016-2726 contains a number of provisions respecting accessible taxicab services that are applicable to accessible taxicab plate holders, accessible taxicab drivers as well as the brokers with which they are affiliated.

Provisions Applicable to Licensed Plate Holders

The VFH By-law includes a number of general provisions that are applicable to plate holders of both standard and accessible taxicabs (e.g., requirement to maintain the taxicab in a good state of repair, requirement to equip the taxicab with roof sign displaying the broker affiliation, etc.).

Key provisions applicable specifically to licensed accessible taxicab plate owners include:

- ensuring that the accessible taxicab is in service a minimum of ten (10) hours a day, five (5) days a week except where the accessible taxicab is being serviced for valid mechanical reasons; and
- providing accessible taxicab service on a priority basis to any person with a disability who requests such service.

Provisions Applicable to Licensed Drivers of Accessible Taxicabs

As is the case with plate holders, there are also a number of general provisions applicable to licensed drivers of both standard and accessible taxicabs (e.g., operating with a properly sealed taximeter, operating with a functioning camera system, not engaging the taximeter until the trip commences, etc.)

⁶ <https://ottawa.ca/en/living-ottawa/laws-licences-and-permits/laws/law-z/vehicle-hire-law-no-2016-272>

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All licensed taxicab drivers (standard or accessible) are required to have successfully completed the Accessible Taxicab Training Course as part of the license application process.

Key provisions applicable to licensed accessible taxicab drivers include the following:

- booking-in with the taxicab broker at all times when the accessible taxicab is in service;
- providing accessible taxicab service on a priority basis to any person with a disability (i.e. a person registered with Para Transpo or with a community support agency who provides proof of such registration) who requests such service;
- bringing the accessible taxicab as close as lawfully possible to the building's accessible entrance;
- taking appropriate measures to notify the passenger of the arrival of the taxicab including ringing a residence and waiting at least three (3) minutes for a response;
- accompanying the passenger to and from the immediate interior of the building;
- providing support and carrying items for the passenger;
- carefully fastening the passenger seat belt;
- securing the passenger's mobility aids;
- politely inquiring and addressing the passenger's needs and concerns before assisting the person into the accessible taxicab and commencing service;
- requesting and waiting for paramedic services if the person develops a need for medical attention during the trip if a friend or family member is not present;
- pre-arranging or pre-booking return trips for accessible taxicab service when so requested; and
- taking all necessary action to ensure the return trip is provided by informing the taxicab broker and dispatcher of the details of the return trip.

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Provisions Applicable to Taxicab Brokers

There are a number of general provisions applicable to all taxicab brokers including: the requirement to maintain a permanent office from which the dispatching of taxicabs is conducted; maintaining a list of all taxi plate holders with whom the taxicab broker has entered into any form of arrangement to provide taxicab dispatch service; and, ensuring that taxicab dispatch service is provided twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week to persons requesting taxicab service, etc.).

Key provisions applicable to Taxicab brokers respecting accessible taxicabs include:

- maintaining and producing a detailed record of accessible taxicab service requests (also applicable to standard taxicab service requests) for a period of not less than three (3) years following the conclusion of the trip, which includes:
 - the date and time of each request for taxicab service;
 - commencement point and destination point of each trip;
 - the time of arrival at pick-up; the time of arrival at the destination;
 - the driver name and license number;
 - the taxi plate number for each dispatched trip; and
 - the annual total number of trips requested and fulfilled, and requested and not fulfilled, with the reason for cancelled trips;
- ensuring that a request for accessible taxicab service from or for a person with a disability shall be dispatched on a priority basis to the next available accessible taxicab located nearest the location of the request for service; and
- referring a request for accessible taxicab service to another taxi broker who can immediately provide the requested accessible taxicab service where such service cannot be immediately provided.

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All licensed taxicab brokers with a fleet size of 25 taxicabs are required to maintain a minimum of fifteen (15%) percent of their fleet as accessible taxicabs. Brokers are required to notify the City of Ottawa Chief License Inspector, within twenty-four (24) hours, of any incident where there is reasonable cause to believe that a licensed accessible taxicab driver has refused to provide accessible taxicab service; or has failed to book-in with the taxicab broker. Taxicab brokers are also required to dispatch an accessible taxicab on a priority basis to a person with a disability who requests such service.

4.2 Accessibility Training

As noted above, all licensed taxicab drivers (standard or accessible) are required to have successfully completed the Accessible Taxicab Training Course as part of the license application process.

Accessible Taxicab Training Course focuses on providing service appropriate to persons with disabilities and/or using mobility devices.

This training, provided by Coventry Connections, has been audited and approved by staff of the Bylaw and Regulatory Services Branch. The cost of the course is \$200 and Coventry Connections has advised that it presently offers refresher courses at no cost.

Para Transpo requires additional training for drivers contracted to provide service to clients as part of its pre-scheduled service. The “Drive Safe” program includes both accessibility and customer service training.

4.3 On-Demand Accessible Taxicab – Vehicle Numbers and Trips

There are presently 191 Accessible Taxicab Licenses administered by the City of Ottawa pursuant to the Vehicle for Hire By-law 2016-272. Accessible taxicabs are vehicles which are configured to be able to transport a minimum of one standard motorized wheelchair or scooter at all times.

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The City estimates that there are presently 82 wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) operating in the City including WAVs supporting the ParaTranspo contract. Of the 109 plates that are not active: 28 have been forfeited to the City; 8 are being temporarily held by the City; 34 are expired / not yet renewed; 25 have been conditionally renewed pending inspections; and, 14 have been offered to candidates on the priority waiting list.

Reasons provided for forfeiture include: cannot afford to buy a van/replacement van; cannot pay renewal fees; plate does not generate enough income; unable to find drivers; loss of business/revenue to Private Transportation Companies (PTCs); insurance provided by Coventry Connections is too expensive; unable to pay outstanding fees to Coventry Connections (which were continued to be charged even during the months that the drivers did not work); and physically unable to help accessible clients.

Based on Accessible Vehicle data provided to the City by licensed taxi brokers (Blue Line, Capital and West-way)⁷ 132,894 fares were provided by Accessible Taxicab Vehicles for the 12 month period from October 2019 through September 2020 representing an average of 11,075 fares per month.

Of the 132,894 fares, 21,225 (or 16% of all fares) were dispatched as on-demand accessible fares representing an average of 1,769 on-demand accessible fares per month.

⁷ Figures from a consolidated spreadsheet based on data received from the City via taxicab brokers for the 12 month period from Oct 2019 through Sep 2020. A video meeting was held with taxicab brokers on Mar 16, 2021 to confirm a shared understanding of the data, however, no audit or corroboration of the source data has been undertaken.

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In the 3 months period (Dec 2019 through Feb 2020) preceding the declaration of the Covid pandemic, on demand accessible fares were averaging 2,960 per month. For the 3-month period (Jul through Sep 2020) on demand accessible fares were averaging 1,305 per month representing an approximately 56%⁸ reduction in the number of accessible fares. This is consistent with Covid impacts noted in other jurisdictions.

The KPMG Accessibility discussion paper attached to the 2016 Vehicle for Hire report, reported that there were 15,610 (1,300 per month) dispatched on-demand accessible calls in 2013 representing less than 1% of all dispatched fares.⁹ This percentage metric is consistent with volume metrics noted in other jurisdictions.

4.4 Para Transpo Contract

It is important to note that a number of City of Ottawa accessible taxicabs are contracted with Para Transpo to provide pre-scheduled trips. As noted on the Para Transpo Facts and Figures webpage, Para Transpo has a dedicated fleet of 82 vehicles and contract arrangements with 120 vehicles (sedans and accessible vans). The contracted company, Para Logistics (a partnership between Blue Line, Capital and West-Way Taxis) is paid the metered rate plus a 15% overhead surcharge. Drivers receive the metered rate less a percentage paid to the taxicab broker dependent on the taxi company and its collective agreement. Drivers contracted to Para Transpo receive additional training under a “Drive Safe” program which includes both accessibility and customer service training.

⁸ Trip volumes have ebbed and flowed based on Covid waves and associated regulatory measures, but a 50-60% drop in ridership is consistent with volume metrics reported in other jurisdictions.

⁹ Coventry Connections. (2015) The Facts on Ottawa’s Taxi and Accessible Taxi Industry, as referenced in KPGM Accessibility discussion paper – Attachment 12 to Vehicle for Hire report (ACS2016-COS-EPS-0012)

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4.5 Industry Complaints and Enforcement Data

Complaint data is comprised of a combination of complaints routed directly to the City via 311 and complaints forwarded to the City by the taxi broker companies. Complaints can be related to items as diverse as: fare refusals, fare amount complaint; route complaint; vehicle deficiency/cleanliness and adverse conduct. Complaints related to accessible taxicabs provided by the City are summarized in the table set out below.

Accessible Taxicab – Complaints and Charges		
	Complaints	Charges
2018	22	11
2019	120	57
2020	12	5

The large majority of complaints are related to fare refusal or not accepting fares that were dispatched to them. The surge in complaints and charges in 2019 is related to increased enforcement of the 10 hours a day, five days a week requirement set out in the VFH By-law.

5 Taxicab Industry Costs

The KPMG Accessibility Discussion paper included as part of the 2016 Vehicle for Hire report noted the increased costs of owning and operating a wheelchair accessible taxicab.

The increased costs included both the longer time associated with assisting persons with disabilities, as outlined in the by-law provisions, as well as increased costs associated with operating the wheelchair accessible vehicle itself (costs to purchase, maintain, insure, and fuel the vehicle) which, based on information provided by Coventry connections, were estimated as being approximately 60 percent higher than costs associated with regular sedan type taxicabs (\$197 per day versus \$123 per day) with the vehicle purchase payments component being over 3.5 times the cost of sedan owners.¹⁰

A 2009 report prepared by BMA Management Consulting¹¹ entitled Accessible On-Demand Taxi Service for the City of Kingston enumerated similar capital and operating costs. The BMA study included purchase price, conversion cost and estimated financing costs and found annual wheelchair accessible vehicle costs to be approximately 4.5 times higher than those of standard vehicles including an estimated \$14,500 for conversion/fit-up of the vehicle. On the operating side, BMA found annual operating costs (maintenance, insurance and fuel) to be approximately 38 percent higher than those of sedans. BMA found that the “combined additional annual operating and capital costs associated with operating a wheelchair accessible vehicle to be approximately \$14,330, almost \$1,200 per month”¹² representing an increased cost of approximately 71% versus standard taxicabs.

¹⁰ Coventry Connections. (2015) The Facts on Ottawa’s Taxi and Accessible Taxi Industry, as referenced in KPGM Accessibility discussion paper – Attachment 12 to Vehicle for Hire report (ACS2016-COS-EPS-0012)

¹¹ Accessible On-Demand Taxi Service-August 2009—City of Kingston- BMA Management Consulting Inc.

¹² Ibid, page 11

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“This situation is further exacerbated when revenue forecasts are taken into consideration as accessible taxis typically provide 30%-40% less trips than a standard taxi. Research and direct comparisons reflect that driver revenue which is mainly commission based can be significantly lower for wheelchair accessible vehicles as a result of the additional time required to load and unload passengers and with a smaller relative accessible fleet size, service coverage is difficult resulting in additional “deadhead mileage” (mileage driven without a fare).”

Similar findings were communicated in the Calgary Accessible Taxi Review¹³ which noted:

- deadheading costs associated with wheelchair accessible trips which may lead to drivers refusing these dispatched trips;
- challenges with attracting customers for regular trips which drivers rely on to make a living in between delivering wheelchair accessible trips;

The Kingston study concluded that:

“Research has consistently reflected that there are, in fact, additional capital and operating costs as well as reduced opportunities to generate revenue associated with the operation of a wheelchair accessible service. In fact, analysis suggests that in the absence of some form of subsidy provided to wheelchair accessible services, these services operate at a net loss.”¹⁴

¹³ City of Calgary, “Financial Burden of Accessible Taxi Plate Holders and Drivers” from Accessible Incentive Program Framework report (CPS2018-0127) approved by Calgary City Council, March 19, 2018

¹⁴ Accessible On-Demand Taxi Service-August 2009—City of Kingston- BMA Management Consulting Inc. page 15.

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It is the recognition of these costs as well as the importance of a sustainable on-demand accessible taxicab service that has prompted cities to implement incentive programs aimed at improving the availability and timeliness of on-demand service while, at the same time, ensuring that accessible taxicab owners and drivers are sufficiently remunerated to provide for the ongoing viability of the service.

6 Experience of Other Municipalities

A number of municipalities have implemented measures to enhance or incentivize improved accessible taxicab services within their jurisdictions including measures funded through voluntary or mandatory surcharges applied to industry stakeholders or via direct investment from the municipality.

Given the relatively recent advent of “app-based” private transportation companies, most recent accessibility initiatives have featured an accessibility fund subsidized by industry participants.

As noted in the 2016 Vehicle for Hire (VFH) report, some jurisdictions, such as Toronto have enabling legislation to implement mandatory charges under the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*, and municipalities such as Edmonton and Calgary have statutory authority, in accordance with Alberta’s *Municipal Government Act, 2000*, to establish an accessibility-related surcharge for their respective vehicle-for-hire industries. In short, municipalities in Alberta are empowered to charge a fee that constitutes a reasonable tax for the purposes of raising revenue, whereas Ottawa, operating under the *Ontario Municipal Act, 2001* requires a fee to be related to municipal costs.

Based on a review of select Canadian cities, strategies to enhance on-demand accessible taxicab services have generally fallen into the following categories:

- Option A - An annual grant paid to owners in recognition of the higher costs of owning and operating an Accessible Taxicab
- Option B - An annual, graduated incentive paid to “owners” and “drivers” based on achieving stated criteria (e.g., days on the road, hours on the road, operating hours between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m., etc)
- Option C - A per trip supplement (surcharge) paid to drivers for each completed wheelchair accessible fare
- Option D - Centralized dispatch featuring client booking via a single telephone number, website, or app
- Option E - Provision of enhanced / reimbursed accessible driver training

Municipalities were selected based on: publicly available information (via Web scan); experience with ride sharing and accessibility taxicab services; and, the presence of incentive funding programs for their accessibility taxicab services.

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The municipalities reviewed included five (5) Canadian cities – Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton.

It is acknowledged that at the time of the interjurisdictional review, municipalities were at different stages in the implementation of their accessibility funding program. Funding programs generally have eligibility and/or service standards that must be met, and funding is typically not automatic. In some cities, recipients must reapply each year for funding. Individual municipal incentive programs are described in the following sections with a summary chart attached as Annex A.

6.1 Toronto

In May of 2016, Toronto City Council, like the City of Ottawa, established a new By-law to govern vehicles-for hire, including taxicabs and private transportation companies (PTCs). Toronto, similar to Ottawa, approved a direction to staff to report back with an accessibility strategy and accessibility fund.

Unlike the Ottawa direction, which tasked staff to review opportunities “to offset costs for a number of programs supporting accessible transportation”, the aim of the proposed Toronto Accessibility Fund, was “to encourage, through financial incentives, existing wheelchair accessible taxicabs to be on the road and available to deliver service”¹⁵. As such, the Toronto fund was focused more narrowly on enhancing the “provision of metered on-demand vehicle-for-hire service” by City licensed accessible taxicabs.

¹⁵ Review of the City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 546, Licensing of Vehicles-for-Hire. GL6.31, Attachment 3, approved by Toronto City Council on July 2019. Page 5

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“Staff heard from users of accessible service that the service is not always readily available and that there is sometimes inconsistent quality of service. Accessible service providers told staff that the cost of operating wheelchair accessible vehicles is higher than that of standard taxicabs and that this is due, in part, to the cost of conversion and maintenance. Higher costs, staff heard, limit the financial return that owners and drivers can expect and, as a result, act as a deterrent to having these vehicles on the road full-time. The aim of the proposed accessibility strategy is to address the higher cost of delivering accessible service, increase the availability of accessible service, and improve the consistency and quality of accessible service.”¹⁶

Accordingly, in Toronto City Council in July of 2019 adopted a number of amendments to the City of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 546, Licensing of Vehicles-for-Hire, including the establishment of an Accessibility Fund Program.

The program is funded by a regulatory charge on members of the industry. Owners and drivers of accessible taxicabs are exempt from the fees.

Sixty-four (64%) percent of the fund is subsidized by a \$0.10 per trip fee applied to PTCs with a further 7% attributable to a \$7.23 fee charged to PTC drivers upon application or renewal. The balance of the fund (29%) is funded from various annual fees ranging from \$63 to \$250 applied to taxicab brokers, operators and drivers.

¹⁶ Review of the City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 546, Licensing of Vehicles-for-Hire, GL6.31, cover report, approved by Toronto City Council, July 2019, page 2

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Funds are disbursed to wheelchair accessible taxicab owners and drivers based on service standards and eligibility criteria¹⁷.

The proposed service standards for accessible taxicab owners tied to the incentive was to specify a minimum number of hours a vehicle is operating and available for dispatch (for example, 1300 hours annually, which is an average of 25 hours weekly) with data provided by the taxicab broker (weighted 95%) and provision of cordless debit machine for privacy and ease of access of client (weighted 5%).

The service standards for taxicab drivers are a combination of: the minimum number of hours a driver is operating and available for dispatch (e.g., 25 hours weekly as cited above) (weighted 50 percent); and, confirmation that the driver accepts all wheelchair accessible vehicle trips dispatched by brokerage, in accordance with restrictions against service refusals (weighted 50 percent).

The report recommended that the specifics of the standards be set by the Executive Director of Licensing to “allow the City to respond to changes in demand for accessible vehicles (for example, introducing the number of days required to be in service or requiring service during certain time periods such as late nights). This also provides the opportunity for the City to remove service standards that are not making a demonstrable improvement to accessible service”.¹⁸

¹⁷ Drivers and owners under contract with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) Wheel-Trans program are not eligible. The 2016 Accessibility Discussion paper prepared by KPMG noted that in Ottawa “for contracted services, the taxi companies are paid the metered taxi fare plus a 15% overhead surcharge by Para Transpo”

¹⁸ Review of the City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 546, Licensing of Vehicles-for-Hire, GL6.31, cover report, approved by Toronto City Council, July 2019.

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City of Toronto staff, interviewed by phone in late 2020, indicated that assessment of criteria depended primarily on the self-declaration of accessible taxicabs owners and drivers with little data from brokerages. The review of forms was characterized as “very labour intensive” and given the nature of the incentive (an upset annual limit paid out in a lump sum annually) staff, anecdotally, was not convinced that the fund, as presently structured, had actually incentivized on-demand service in the Toronto market. Staff was looking at apps or digital boxes that would facilitate data flowing directly to the City of a third-party administrator to better track result as well as expedite administration of the program.

Staff provided an Update on Outstanding Vehicle-for-Hire Directives to the General Government and Licensing Committee at its meeting of November 30, 2021.¹⁹

“Although the Vehicle-for-Hire Bylaw requires taxicab brokers, limousine service companies, and PTCs to submit trip data to the City, currently, only the PTC industry and one taxicab broker complies in a satisfactory manner. This data is crucial for the City to be able to make policies governing the whole vehicle-for-hire industry around accessibility, transportation planning, congestion management and environmental initiatives.”²⁰

The report noted that vehicle-for-hire industry continues to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and estimates that the number of drivers in the industry has fallen, by almost 50% for PTCs and 42% for the taxicab industry.

As a result, the Toronto report recommended maintaining the temporary 75 percent reduction on the Vehicle-for-Hire Accessibility Fund Program's (AFP) regulatory charges, approved by Council in February 2021, for the year 2022.

¹⁹ Update on Outstanding Vehicle-for-Hire Directives, to General Government and Licensing Committee, from Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards, dated Nov 16, 2021

²⁰ Ibid, page 3

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The report noted that “while this may be related to decreased demand, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, more refined estimates of the supply of and demand for accessible vehicle-for-hire service are unavailable due to the lack of data provided to the City by the taxicab industry.”²¹

“Trip data is crucial to the evaluation and validation of service standards, and to determine the supply and demand of vehicle-for-hire accessible service”²²

Although submitted claims are subject to audit, “...it is challenging to validate the information being provided by wheelchair accessible taxicab owners and drivers in the application and declaration process. In the absence of data, significant staff resources are required to review and verify declarations. This manual process is also more susceptible to human error.”²³

MLS has tried to ... “to educate taxicab brokers on recordkeeping requirements. This includes informational meetings, and advisory letters. Some taxicab brokerages noted they did not wish to comply, for various reasons, while others noted capacity concerns, due to resource constraints, particularly during the pandemic. Based on the above noted concerns, MLS is exploring further education, technology, and enforcement efforts to ensure compliance with the Vehicle-for-Hire Bylaw.”²⁴

6.2 Hamilton

At its meeting of January 25, 2017 Hamilton City Council approved the licensing of Private Transportation Providers (PTPs).

²¹ Ibid, page 10

²² Ibid, page 14

²³ Ibid, page 14

²⁴ Ibid, page 14

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At its meeting of June 27, 2018, Hamilton City Council approved a one-year pilot program to provide a subsidy for accessible taxicab trips to further support the provision of accessible taxicab services for the accessible community²⁵. The pilot program provided a \$5 flat subsidized rate to all qualified accessible taxicab drivers for each accessible taxi trip dispatched by Hamilton brokers at an estimated cost of \$115,000 using funds generated from licensed Personal Transportation Provider (PTP) companies (Uber, Lyft) who each voluntarily pay \$20,000 per year in-lieu of providing accessible services. A 0.25 temporary full-time equivalent (FTE) was approved for program administration, to be funded from the PTP revenues generated from new licenses.

At its meeting of January 22, 2020 Hamilton City Council received an update on the pilot and approved that the pilot be extended for an additional 16 months with permanent funding for the program to be considered as part of 2021 budget deliberations.²⁶

The Pilot Program update report noted that “the \$5 incentive has ignited interest among taxicab drivers resulting in previously underutilized accessible taxicabs that are now on the road providing accessible trips to persons with disabilities”.

The preliminary findings of the Pilot Program, demonstrated success for both drivers providing the accessible taxicab service and the community in need of the accessible taxicab service. The fleet of accessible taxicabs increased by 18 (from 22 to 40) representing an 82% increase in the accessible fleet. At the same time, the number of accessible taxicab trips increased by 1190 from an average of 868 per month to 2058 per month, representing an 137% increase. Ride refusals or denials also decreased from 115 per month to essentially zero. Prior to the pilot there was an average of 45 “no shows” per month whereas only 5 “no show” complaints were received throughout the one-year pilot.

²⁵ Hamilton, Financial Incentives for Taxi Operators to Provide Accessible Taxicab Trips (PED18082) City Wide Item approved by Council, June 27, 2018, page 6

²⁶ Hamilton. Accessible Taxicab Financial Incentive Program (PED18082(a) (City Wide). Document dated January 14, 2020.

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The update report noted that continuation of the program could not rely solely on funding from the existing voluntary payments by PTP companies. Staff estimated that extended pilot would cost \$10,000 per month (\$120,000 per year) while the voluntary per company PTP company fee would generate \$40,000 per year. Accordingly, the cost of the pilot, as presently constituted, was one-third sponsored by PTPs and two-thirds subsidized by the City.

The update report advised that in 2020 staff would be examining the current funding model involving PTPs with a focus on improving the “in-lieu” payment, allowing for a more sustainable Financial Incentive Program for Accessible taxis.

At its meeting of June 24, 2020 Hamilton Council approved a report removing the lump sum voluntary payment and replaced it with a \$.06 per trip fee applied to PTPs to fund accessible transportation²⁷. The staff report, indicated that based on 2019 trip data the incentive funds would be fully cost recoverable. The incentive continues as a pilot program at this time.

6.3 Calgary

At its meeting of March 19, 2018 Calgary Council approved an Accessible Incentive Program Framework report (CPS2018-0127) to be funded by a per-trip fee applied to all taxi and Private Transportation Company trips²⁸. Based on a direction from standing committee, staff was further directed to explore options related to a pilot central dispatch approach including, but not limited to, considering innovative technologies and were tasked to report back in the fall with the proposed program.

²⁷ Hamilton, Fee Review of Personal Transportation Providers (PED20104) (City Wide), dated June 16, 2020.

²⁸ Calgary, Accessible Taxi Review (SPS2018-0127) report to SPC on Community and Protective Services, March 7, 2018.

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On October 15, 2018 Calgary Council approved amendments to the *Livery Transport Bylaw 6M2007* which authorized the Chief Livery Inspector to establish and implement an Accessible Taxi Incentive Program.²⁹

Calgary's Accessible Taxi Incentive Program as set out the Accessible Taxi Incentive Program Framework was effective as of January 1, 2019.

The objectives of the Program are: to improve service to customers requesting on-demand wheelchair accessible taxis; to reduce the costs incurred by holders of an Accessible Taxi Plate Licence (ATPL) and accessible drivers associated with purchasing and operating wheelchair accessible vehicles, and; to incent holders of an ATPL and accessible drivers to improve 24/7 on-demand wheelchair accessible service delivery to qualify for the annual incentive.

This program is funded by collecting a fee of \$0.10 per-trip added to the fare of all taxis and Transportation Network Company trips taken in Calgary.

Accessible Plate Holders receive a grant of \$1,500 annually, as financial compensation for purchase and maintenance of a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

Accessible Plate Holders are also eligible for an annual incentive of up to \$1500 linked to achieving customer service and safety criteria with qualifying criteria as follows: vehicle on road a minimum of 250 days per year (up to \$500); vehicle driven a minimum of 981 hours per year (up to \$500); mechanicals submitted on time (up to \$125); inspector's orders completed on time (up to \$125); minimal complaints on the vehicle condition (up to \$125); and, cordless debit machine installed or reachable corded debit machine (up to \$125).

²⁹ Calgary, Accessible Taxi Initiatives. Report (CPS2018-10330) to SPC on Community and Protective Services, dated October 3, 2018

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Accessible Drivers are eligible for an annual incentive of up to \$2000 annually linked to achieving customer services and safety criteria with qualifying criteria as follows: accept all wheelchair accessible trips (up to \$1000); complete minimum 4 wheelchair accessible trips per month (up to \$200); daily maintenance of harness/ramps (up to \$200); minimal incidents or customer service complaints (up to \$200); available between the hours of 10:00 pm and 4:00 am for a minimum of 10 nights per month (up to \$200; and, on time renewal of taxi drivers license (up to \$200).

At the same October 15, 2018 meeting, Calgary Council directed one-time funding request of \$350,000 in 2019 and in 2020 to support a two-year Centralized Dispatch pilot.

The approved option tasked staff to contract with a third-party vendor to provide 24/7 central dispatch function for on demand accessible taxi service. The \$350,000 includes dispatch technology, driver outreach and training, customer marketing as well as City costs associated with developing an RFP, gathering stakeholder feedback and evaluating the pilot.

On December 4, 2019 Calgary announced the launch of central dispatch service for accessible taxis intended to reduce wait times for wheelchair users³⁰.

The centralized dispatch service, WAV Calgary (Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Calgary) is a voluntary program, that is made available to all active licensed wheelchair accessible taxis and drivers operating in the city, regardless of dispatch company, to provide customers with one point of contact to request a wheelchair accessible taxi.

³⁰ <https://wavcalgary.com>

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WAV Calgary is tasked to dispatch the closest available accessible taxi and provide approximate wait times to customers. The goal is to reduce wait times and improve service levels by providing customers with more accurate wait time information for the closest accessible taxi. Customers can contact WAV Calgary to book an accessible taxi via phone, website (WAVCalgary.com) or app (available for both Android and Apple devices).

The centralized dispatch program is aimed at ensuring that customers with wheelchairs, who are paying the same metered rate as non-accessible users, are getting the same level of service.

The Calgary website notes that although the City has issued 189 Accessible Taxi Plate Licenses (ATPLs) drivers are not limited to picking up only wheelchair users. In the past, customers called individual taxi companies and would often wait over an hour as taxi companies did not always have a wheelchair accessible taxi in the vicinity. As a result, users would become frustrated, call multiple taxi companies and take the first vehicle that showed up. The centralized dispatch program is intended to end that sort of duplication and result in a more efficient and responsive service for persons who use wheelchairs.

At its meeting of November 17, 2021, Calgary's Community Development Committee received an update report on its Accessible Taxi Incentive.³¹

The report noted that accessible taxicab trips averaged 1,650 per month representing .3 per cent of total taxi trips with 2020 trips down 57 percent from 2019 attributable to Covid.

³¹ Calgary. Update on Accessible Taxi Incentive Program (CD2021-1559). Briefing to Community Development Committee, dated November 17, 2021.

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As part of the engagement with Accessible Taxi Plate Holders and drivers, 90 percent of those surveyed felt the grants and incentives helped offset the higher cost of operating an accessible taxi and, notwithstanding, higher costs of purchasing, maintaining, longer driving distances in less fuel-efficient vehicles, 80 percent indicated that they intended to keep on driving an accessible taxi in future.

In addition to offsetting costs for drivers, a key objective of the Accessible Taxi Incentive Program was to improve service for customers. Before Council approved the Accessible Taxi Incentive Program and WAV Calgary, many customers expressed frustration about hours-long wait times and uncertainty about taxis arriving when booked. Since the programs launched, the average wait time for an accessible taxi is less than 22 minutes. Staff engagement with customers through the City's Advisory Committee on Accessibility and the Calgary Ability Network found that 90 per cent of those surveyed felt confident that a taxi will arrive when requested through WAV Calgary with 100% of respondents indicating that they were likely or very likely to continue using the service.

The update included several tweaks to the program to enhance program effectiveness and sustainability that will become effective January 1, 2022.

In recognition of owners and drivers who complete more accessible trips and therefore have higher operating costs, the grant funding will be reallocated to the annual incentive while the total amount of available funding will remain at \$5,000 annually.

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In addition, a new per trip incentive will be introduced “to provide funding that is commensurate with the number of accessible trips each driver completes”³². Eighty two (82) percent of owners and drivers supported introduction of a per trip incentive. The surcharge will be \$10 for daytime trips (4 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and \$20 for every nighttime trip (6 p.m. to 4 a.m.). The mechanism for evaluating performance will be data from WAV Calgary which Calgary is transitioning from a pilot to a full program self-funded through the 10 cent surcharge applied to all trips. The report notes that over 90 per cent of users have rated the service as 4 or 5 stars (out of 5) since the program was launched.

“WAV Calgary provides customers with one point of contact to request an accessible taxi and optimizes the accessible fleet by dispatching the closest available vehicle from a pool of drivers affiliated with different taxi companies. In addition to reducing wait times for customers and travel time for drivers, WAV Calgary provides data that is used to evaluate whether Accessible Taxi Plate Licence holders and drivers have met criteria to receive incentives under the Accessible Taxi Incentive Program. These two complementary programs work to ensure the viability of the accessible taxi fleet and have served as a model of innovation for jurisdictions across North America since they were launched.”³³

6.4 Winnipeg

The City of Winnipeg Vehicles for Hire By-law No. 129/2017 was approved by Council on December 13, 2017 and came into effect on February 28, 2018. An accessibility surcharge of \$0.07 per trip fee is charged to both personal transportation provider dispatchers and to taxi dispatchers. The Accessibility Surcharge does not apply to a licensed dispatcher (taxi or PTC) if more than 10% of a dispatcher’s fleet is comprised of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

³² Ibid, no pagination.

³³ Ibid, no pagination.

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Surcharge revenues were intended to make improvements to the level of accessible service provided by vehicles for hire and staff was tasked to consult with stakeholders and report back with recommendations to improve service.

At its meeting of April 29, 2021 Winnipeg City Council approved a 3-year pilot project (2021-2023) for “Improvements to Accessible On-Demand Transportation Service” **34** authorizing the use of Accessibility Surcharge funds to support the issuance of a request for proposals for a centralized accessible dispatch system as well as related financial incentives to the owners and drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles in order to improve accessible on-demand vehicle for hire service.

Through consultation with stakeholders (service users, accessible advocacy groups, service providers) the Vehicle for Hire (VFH) office consistently heard the following:

- “Wait times for accessible trips are longer than for standard trips;
- The availability of accessible vehicles is not as consistent as it is for standard vehicles;
- Accessible rides take more time to complete than standard trips;
- Accessible vehicles cost more than standard vehicles.”**35**

Although wait times are not specifically tracked, staff consistently heard from users based on their experience, as well as receiving complaints, that wait times for accessible vehicles are not consistent with that of standard vehicles particularly at certain times of the day, generally later evening/early morning.

34 Winnipeg. Annual Update on the Vehicle for Hire Industry and Amendments to the Vehicle for Hire By-law. Approved by Winnipeg Council on April 29, 2021.

35 Winnipeg. Annual Update on the Vehicle for Hire Industry and Amendments to the Vehicle for Hire By-law. Approved by Winnipeg Council on April 29, 2021, Appendix B “Framework”.

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At the same time, drivers of accessible vehicles advised that completing trips involving mobility devices generally take longer to board and off-board the passenger, ensuring they provide the passenger assistance in order to properly secure the passenger and then assisting them out of the vehicle and to the curb at their preferred drop-off location. Drivers indicated that this additional time impacts their ability to provide trips and may reduce their ability to earn additional income.

In addition, accessible taxi owners noted the increased cost to purchase a van (versus a standard sedan), the cost to convert the van to accommodate mobility devices (cited as costing an extra \$20,000 to \$30,000), as well as the generally higher cost of operating and maintaining a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

In evaluating options to improve on-demand accessible service, staff identified the following specific goals:

- Ensuring a comparable level of service for clients of accessible and standard vehicles for hire;
- Improving passenger safety;
- Providing incentives to drivers and owners of accessible vehicles;
- Improving tracking of accessible trips and wait times, in order to reduce wait times.

In keeping with feedback received, and the goals to improve service, Winnipeg City Council, at its meeting of April 29, 2021 approved a report that recommended a three-year pilot project including:

- A centralized accessible trip dispatch system via a request for proposals (RFP);
- Focused enforcement related to accessible service to improve education and ensure safety;
- Reimbursement for accessibility training.

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Like Calgary, the Winnipeg program includes establishment of a centralized accessible trip dispatch system which will:

- Provide a single access point where users can request via telephone, website or App, a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV)
- Register user requests, as received, in a systematic database, and allocates the trip to the nearest available WAV
- Reduce down-time for drivers by allocating fares to clients nearest to them
- Allow for storage of customer profile to ensure easy access to current and historical booking information to provide a better and more efficient customer experience
- Shows the vehicles that are signed on and available to provide service
- Through GPS, track each full trip from time of request, duration of trip and route taken, to drop off location and payment
- Provide reporting to the city administration on active and available vehicles, including the number of trips completed or declined, time of trips and other reporting data as required by the VFH Division.
- Based on defined service levels and availability, the system will be able to provide financial incentives to vehicle owners and drivers³⁶

Staff emphasized that the stronger data sets will lead to improved data driven decision-making regarding accessible on-demand service in future.

The Winnipeg, like the Calgary WAV program, is a voluntary program.

Accessible Vehicle Owners will be able to receive financial incentives of up to \$2,200 per year including: annual sign-up bonus (\$200); available a minimum of 250 days per year (\$500); minimum of 120 hours per month (\$500); overnight shift premium - minimum of 120 overnight shifts (10 p.m. to 4 a.m.)((\$250); less than 5 customer complaints per year (\$250); Inspection rate of 90% or better on critical items (securement, ramps, etc.)((\$500)

³⁶ Winnipeg. Annual Update on the Vehicle for Hire Industry and Amendments to the Vehicle for Hire By-law. Approved by Winnipeg Council on April 29, 2021. Paraphrased from Appendix B “Framework”

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Accessible Vehicle Drivers can receive up to \$2,200 per year including: annual sign-up bonus (\$200); Annual trips – graduated – from 20 to over 150 – (\$200 to a maximum of \$800); maintaining a 4 star or better customer average rating (\$100); overnight shift premium – minimum of 10 overnight shifts per month – logged in at least 4 hours between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. (\$500); trip acceptance rate of 90% or better via the WAV app (\$500); daily vehicle safety and maintenance checks (\$100). The incentive program also includes \$50 towards reimbursement of the cost of the accessible training refresher course which is required every two years.

All drivers are required to complete accessibility training that is verified by the administration. The report notes that consideration is being given to provide accessibility training and refresher training at no cost to accessible vehicle drivers to reduce out of pocket driver expenses.³⁷

In addition, the report speaks to increasing capacity for accessible vehicle and trip enforcement (e.g., inspections, on-the-road education as well as new and expanded fines for non-compliance and safety infractions).

The proposed initiatives are to be funded through the accessibility surcharge at no cost to the taxpayer or with a budget impact to the Vehicle for Hire (VFH) office. The project is currently budgeted at \$1.8m over the term of the 3-year pilot project, which is to include the centralized dispatch system and its operation as well as the incentives for vehicle owners and drivers.

While a third-party will run the dispatch system on a day-to-day basis, monitoring and oversight will be the responsibility of the City's Vehicle for Hire division.

At the conclusion of the pilot, the City would evaluate whether a third-party vendor would continue to offer the most feasible and cost-effective approach to continuing such a service over the long term.

³⁷ Ibid, Appendix B "Framework".

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6.5 Edmonton

At its meeting of January 27, 2016 Edmonton City Council approved a report respecting revisions to its Vehicle for Hire by-law allowing “private transportation providers” while establishing an accessibility charge for both general and private transportation company dispatchers in the amount of \$50 per vehicle annually. The \$50 fee is waived for dispatchers who ensure that they have at least one accessible vehicle available for dispatch at all times.

At its meeting of March 24, 2021 Edmonton’s Community and Public Services Committee received the Vehicle For Hire Annual Report – 2021 Update.³⁸

The update report noted that staff has been developing two major accessibility initiatives since 2019: an update to accessible driver training materials and an accessible vehicle centralized booking service.

The report advised that staff had completed the development of updated accessible driver training materials intended to enhance service delivery to accessible vehicle users. The materials were distributed to industry in Q1 2021 and cover the following areas:

- Introduction to disability, which includes prevalence of disability, models of disability, types of barriers and unconscious bias;
- Types of disabilities such as physical, visual, hearing, cognitive, and mental health;
- Disability law and legislation, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the
- Canadian Human Rights Act, and the City’s Vehicle for Hire Bylaw;
- Communication and inclusive language, communication etiquette, active listening, de-escalation, and mindfulness in conversations;
- Providing accessible customer service encompassing empathy and compassion, assisting a customer based on the type of disability, and service animals;

³⁸ Edmonton, Vehicle for Hire Annual Report - 2021 Update. March 24, 2021

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- Experiential disability awareness training covering awareness and understanding training, and mobility, vision, and hearing experience training.³⁹

Staff indicated that it was reviewing an accessible vehicle centralized booking service which could potentially process all service requests for accessible vehicles for hire. The benefits of this service would include the ability for accessible vehicle users to have on point of contact for trips with the City having oversight of availability and wait times.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, completion of research and consultation regarding the viability of this service was shifted from Q4 2020 to Q4 2021.

³⁹ Ibid, page 2.

7 Targeted Stakeholder Consultation

In keeping with the scope of work for the project, targeted consultations were undertaken with on-demand accessible taxicab stakeholders including: taxicab brokers; taxicab union local 1688 (inclusive of its accessibility advisory committee); and, the City's Accessibility Advisory Committee. Correspondence on file with the City was also reviewed and included as part of the consultation.

As noted previously, incentive programs to enhance on-demand accessible taxicab services generally fell into some combination of the following categories:

- Option A - Annual grant to taxi owners in recognition of the higher costs to fit-up and operate an accessible taxicab;
- Option B - Annual, graduated incentive paid to owners or drivers prorated to an upset limit based on established criteria (e.g., # of hours on the road; # of hours on the road between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m., etc.);
- Option C - Per trip surcharge paid to drivers for each accessible fare in recognition of the greater effort and responsibilities entailed in providing accessible service;
- Option D - Provision of centralized dispatch of calls for wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) to assign calls to the closest available vehicle; and,
- Option E - Investment in enhanced driver training/reimbursement of costs.

The attached summary chart (Annex A) was prepared to outline the options in place in the Canadian cities reviewed as part of this study (description, who does it; amount of incentive; criteria; how results are measured; strengths; weaknesses; implementation challenges; and, funding source)

In addition, a comment sheet was prepared asking stakeholders to rank the incentives in order of preference including rationale for their preference with stakeholders invited to:

- suggest any adjustments or clarifications that would improve the options, and
- propose additional options not captured in the chart

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The Comment Sheet noted that “Stakeholder feedback and preferences would be considered within the context of feasibility, affordability as well as the reported effectiveness of options implemented in other municipal jurisdictions.”

7.1 Taxi Union – Unifor 1688

Taxi Union Unifor 1688 and its Accessible Committee of Accessible Plate Holder and Drivers submitted their written comment on June 22 and a follow-up video meeting was held on July 6 to receive additional feedback.

Options in order of preference, including rationale, were:

- Annual Grant (Option A): to help cover the extra cost to purchase, convert, maintain and operate (e.g., gas costs) a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV)
- Per Trip Surcharge (Option C): rationale includes the above-noted costs but also cited: the extra time required to “load and unload” clients; the “extra time and distance” that is required to pick-up customers as well as the generally “shorter fares” associated with accessible client trips “which make them unprofitable unless a levy is added.
- Annual Incentive (Option B): rationale included the same rationale as the “per trip surcharge” but did not include the short fare rationale.
- Centralized Dispatch (Option D): will result in a “fair distribution of fares” will be “easy and fast” will “avoid unnecessary cancelations due to delays” and will “improve customer service”
- Enhanced Training (Option E): noted that training does improve safety and customer service but felt that most accessible drivers have had “proper and required intensive training and are up to date with it.”

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In the adjustments and clarifications section of the comment sheet, Unifor 1688 noted that options A and C (grant and per trip surcharge) should be combined, and the amounts increased (noting that the grant in Calgary is \$1,500 per licensed accessible cab and the Hamilton surcharge is \$5 per trip).

In the additional/alternative incentive options section of the comment sheet, Unifor proposed that there should be a \$7 cancellation fee applied to cancelled requests for service (this recommendation was also included in Unifor's 2019 position paper) and also requested a reduction in Plate Holder transfer fees.

As part of the follow-up video call Unifor 1688 and its Accessibility Committee members elaborated on some of the feedback provided in the comment sheet and provided additional suggestions as follows:

- With respect to the centralized dispatch option, the union does not believe there are any collective agreement restrictions to taking accessible calls via the centralized dispatch option noting that the language in the by-law is all about prioritizing accessible calls no matter who is dispatching.
- With respect to the proposed reduction in plate holder transfer fees, Unifor believes that will ease transfer between owners relinquishing plates and new owners coming online, noting that the current process is too cumbersome and can take up to a year and a half to action persons on the Accessible Priority waiting list.
- Unifor also wanted to revisit vehicle age limits and recommended that the age limit for accessible vehicles be increased beyond 10 years (Unifor's 2019 position paper proposed an increase to 12 year old model). Unifor advised that under the present rules an accessible plate holder will never purchase a used vehicle (e.g. a 5 year old van) as the \$20,000 fit-up costs mean they will never make their investment back, modification costs are too significant, and vehicle owners are forced to purchase a brand new \$60K vehicle. It was noted that a sedan driver can purchase an inexpensive 5-year-old car with no fit-up costs, and make ownership of a used vehicle cost effective even when they retire the vehicle at 10 years.
- One Committee representative suggested that the fare box should be permitted to be turned on prior to commencement of the actual trip to reflect the time and effort required to facilitate the on-boarding of the client.

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- One Committee representative added that drivers should be able to start the fare meter earlier for Para Transpo pre-scheduled calls as the cost of that supplement is paid for by Para Transpo and not the client. It was noted that taxi plate holders do not presently receive any portion of the 15% surcharge (displayed fare plus 15%) paid by Para Transpo to the contracted company. According to Unifor, plate holders / drivers receive the displayed fare less an amount (1 or 2%) charged by the broker, dependent on the specific collective agreement with the specific brokerage company.
- Unifor indicated that it assumes that brokers will probably want control of centralized dispatch as well as the plates that are currently on the priority list. The union noted that the by-law does not presently permit “multiple plate holders” to be on the priority list [see Section 95(4)]. Unifor indicated that brokers should not be allowed to acquire those plates and the status quo should prevail. Priority list plates should not go to brokers or other multiple plate holders.
- Unifor clarified that an accessibility surcharge, if implemented, should go 100% to plate holders / drivers and not to the broker and that there should be no service charges applied by the dispatcher to the plate holders and drivers on top of the surcharge.

It is noted that Unifor’s recommendations are largely consistent with the position paper, referenced previously in this report, that it submitted to the City in July of 2019.

7.2 Taxi Brokers

A consolidated comment sheet was submitted on behalf of Blue Line, Capital, West Way and Coventry Connections.

Options in order of preference, including rationale, were:

- Annual Incentive (option B): “This is the best option; driver should be the owner of the plate in this case. Great milestones to meet and rewarding for the drivers trying their best.”

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- Annual Grant (option A): “This option does not motivate a driver to be a better driver and more service oriented. Driver does not need to do much effort to access the funds.”
- Per Trip Surcharge (option C): “Gives drivers a little incentive, they will ask for \$10.00”
- Centralized Dispatch (Option D): “Difficult to achieve, drivers will be pushing back on this initiative. Our fleets are all unionized, and this would need significant change to a CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement)”.
- Enhanced Training (Option E): “Not much is achieved with this option. Training is done in house, and we offer refresher course at no charge presently.”

In terms of additional or alternative incentive option, the Brokers commented as follows:

- “Plates should be assigned to the company for better controls and better hiring practices.”
- “Receiving a free accessible plate does not make you a good driver for the accessible community. You need drivers that have some level of dedication.”

7.3 City of Ottawa - Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

The consultant, with By-law and Regulatory staff in attendance, presented to the AAC at its meeting of November 16, 2021.

Given that the AAC was represented on the Accessibility Fund Steering Committee it was well positioned to provide feedback on this subsequent on-demand accessible taxicab study.

The same option chart and comment sheet were presented to the Committee. The AAC determined to receive the report at its November 16 meeting with a commitment to provide a follow-up consolidated response.

At the November 16 AAC meeting, two delegations were present to speak, one was an accessibility issues representative as well as an Accessible Taxicab Plate holder.

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The accessible issues advocate noted that the 10 cents per trip charged to PTC is insufficient, that a \$1,500 grant (per Calgary) would “pay for gas but nothing else” and that issuing fines for failing to provide sufficient hours is “ridiculous.”

The accessible taxicab owner noted that the per trip surcharge should be 90 cents or a dollar and noted that plate transfer fees need to come down to facilitate transition to new accessible vehicle owners. He also noted that fees paid to brokers are excessive and that brokers are requesting payment of stand fees for months that they did not work. Plates, it was noted, are “worth nothing”.

One AAC member noted the test has to be “equity of service” as provided for in AODA. There is a need for equity between the pre-scheduled Para Transpo service and on-demand service; equity of service with comparable funding. With respect to Private Transportation Companies (PTCs) the argument was made that PTCs should be mandated to “provide” or “pay”. The AAC chair questioned why the PTC surcharge is “optional” and “negotiable” and not mandatory. There is a risk that an optional levy could be discontinued and jeopardize the sustainability of the fund and the service.

“...there needs to be a focus or ensure a long-term solution as well. One that ensures whatever accessible on-demand 24 hour a day service (same as regular taxi and Uber service etc.) solutions/options result from this study must guarantee that the fully accessible service model is achievable, sustainable over the long run, and adaptable to meet future interruptions (like COVID).**40**

The AAC provided a formal response via memorandum dated December 20, 2021 (attached as Annex B)

40 Submission from the Accessibility Advisory Committee via the Committee Coordinator, received December 7, 2021.

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That correspondence set out four core principles that the AAC feels to be central to the on-demand accessible taxicab study:

First, the provision of on-demand accessible taxicab services in Ottawa is essential to the full inclusion of disabled residents and visitors. No matter what incentive option is chosen, the City must ensure that adequate service levels are maintained.

Second, the City has a responsibility to resolve the challenges presented to the provision of on-demand accessible taxicab services due to the licensing of Private Transportation Companies (PTCs). Ottawa chose to license PTCs and allowed that PTCs not provide wheelchair-accessible service in Ottawa. Regardless of City Council's intent in doing so, it is evident that the decision to not impose accessible service requirements on PTCs has had a negative impact on disabled residents of our City by reducing their private transportation options and destabilizing the accessible taxicab industry and responsibility for this falls squarely with the City as the regulator of private transportation services.

Third, any private transportation provider in Ottawa, whether a PTC or taxicab, should be required to provide services that are accessible to disabled clients who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Anything short of this creates an unequal playing field for disabled residents and visitors and simply sustains the presence of systemic Ableism in our City.

Fourth, although changing the Voluntary Per-Trip Surcharge paid by PTCs for not providing accessible services is not part of the scope of your study, the AAC is of the position that a per-trip surcharge is not a solution to the challenges facing the accessible taxicab industry.

In terms of option assessment, the AAC favoured the annual grant as the only option that explicitly recognizes that taxicab operators bear higher costs to participate in Ottawa's taxicab market while serving disabled residents and visitors. It was noted that the proposed amount (\$1,500 used in Calgary) is "woefully inadequate".

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The annual incentive, per trip surcharge, and enhanced driver training were characterized as not appropriate “as they fail to address the reality that taxicab operators face higher costs.”

With respect to centralized dispatch, the AAC was of the position that:

“Regardless of whatever incentive option is implemented, the AAC feels that a centralized dispatch should also be implemented, as it would significantly increase the quality of service provided to disabled residents and visitors who need an accessible taxicab. This would reduce the burden on disabled customers by improving booking options and by also providing better tracking of ride requests to ensure that accessible taxicab requests are not being declined by operators (in favour of a non-accessible ride request).”

Finally, in recognizing the costs of providing accessible service, “the AAC feels that the City should cover the costs of retrofitting a taxicab to make it accessible, as well as the administrative costs related to the transfer of accessible taxi plates.”

7.4 Correspondence on File with the City

In addition to the targeted stakeholder consultation, the consultant was furnished with correspondence from accessibility advocates comprised of accessible plate holders and on-demand taxicab users that had previously been forwarded to City elected representatives and staff.

Various correspondence consistently cites the increased cost to purchase an accessible van (\$33,000-\$45,000) conversion costs (\$16000-\$18000) meter radio and security cameras (\$2700-\$3600), insurance (\$10950-\$15000) and dispatch fees (\$6600) as well as other transfer fees, renewal fees, arbitrary tickets and fines, and costs related to fueling, maintain and repairing the vehicles. All of the above costs are making it untenable to continue providing this service resulting in more and drivers returning their plates to the city because it is not financially viable for them to continue.

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The loss of accessible taxis in Ottawa would be an injustice, would deprive persons with disabilities of their independence and their right to exercise freedom of choice.

Recommendations consistently put forward included:

- 1) Full incremental reimbursement of vehicle conversion costs
- 2) \$20.00 Levy from the VFH accessibility Fund for each on demand accessible call.
- 3) Eliminate the Transfer Fee of \$4033.00 for Accessible Taxis as well as plate renewal fees of \$622
- 4) Eliminate the by-law condition that accessible taxicabs be on the road "10 hours a day 5 days a week" as unfair, counterproductive, and unlawful.
- 5) Extend the age limit of accessible vehicles from 10 years to 12 to help extend the amortization payments to a more reasonable period with any issues with the safety of the vehicle easily corrected as part of vehicle inspections.
- 6) Eliminate the 5 year non transferability. Accessible plates should be easily transferable to the new drivers who want to take over from the retiring older drivers. This will allow the seamless continuity of wheelchair accessible service for our community who need it the most.

7.5 Ranking of Options

The following table summarizes the ranking of options based on comments received and correspondence on file with the City.

Ranking	Taxi Union	Taxi Brokers	Accessibility Advisory Committee	Correspondence on File
1	A	B	D	A
2	C	A	A	C
3	B	C	B, C, E	N/A
4	D	D		N/A
5	E	E		N/A

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- A) Annual grant to taxi owners
- B) Annual, graduated incentive to upset limit paid to owners or drivers based on criteria
- C) Per trip surcharge paid to drivers for each accessible fare
- D) Centralized dispatch of calls for wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs)
- E) Investment in enhanced driver training/reimbursement of costs.

There was broad agreement that owners and drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) should be remunerated in recognition of the higher cost of owning and operating a WAV as represented by Option A.

There was mixed consensus on the rating of performance related incentives (Options B and C) but agreement that criteria-based incentives (B or C) are required.

Centralized Dispatch (Option D) was considered by the AAC to be a fundamental building block to “significantly increase the quality of service provided to disabled residents and visitors” regardless of whatever (other) incentive options are implemented.⁴¹

Option E (enhanced training / reimbursement), while important, was not prioritized as an incentive that will enhance the availability and timeliness of WAV service; which was the focus of the original motion approved by the Community and Protective Services Committee.

⁴¹ Appendix D. Submission from the Accessibility Advisory Committee dated December 20, 2021.

8 Overall Findings and Common Themes

Based on literature review, inter-municipal review, and stakeholder consultations the following provides highlights of overall findings and common themes.

Costs

All cities, stakeholders and documents reviewed consistently acknowledged the higher costs associated with purchasing, retrofitting, maintaining, and operating a wheelchair accessible taxicab including higher insurance and fuel costs as well as the increased time and effort required to complete wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) requests per regulated service standards set out in respective by-laws.

Incentives

All cities developed strategies intended to increase the availability, timeliness and quality of on-demand accessible taxicab service. Most (Toronto, Hamilton, Calgary and Winnipeg) had developed programs with a remuneration component in recognition of the increased costs to own and operate a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

Criteria

All cities recognized the importance of performance standards to incentivize service (e.g., minimum hours of service per month; overnight shifts; surcharge paid per accessible call, etc).

Municipal officials contacted generally, conceptually, favoured a per trip surcharge for completed accessible calls, as being the best ongoing motivation for the prioritized provision of accessible service characterizing it as a “pay-as-you play” or commission-oriented incentive, which, recognizes the higher per trip costs borne by accessible taxicab drivers.

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Appropriate performance thresholds and remuneration are imperative. If the threshold is too low (i.e., easy to fulfill) then the remuneration paid out will not necessarily be linked to improved availability or timeliness of services. At the same time, remuneration that is too low (i.e., does not cover costs of providing the service) will also not incent improved service.

Quality of Data

All municipal staff contacted noted the importance of accurate and detailed accessible fare data being relayed to the City on a regular basis to properly administer an effective incentive program. Programs based on periodic unaudited data will not work. Ideally, data should be reported regularly with precise data respecting the dispatched calls (time received, time picked up, dropped calls, proximity, response times, etc.).

Numbers of Accessible Vehicles

Availability and timeliness of service had less to do with fleet size than appropriate incentives. Presently, full fleets of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV) vehicles are not on the road. Responding to WAV calls has to be linked to appropriate compensation. No respondents (industry of city staff) believed that the higher cost should be passed on to clients with disabilities, only that the driver should be adequately reimbursed in order to prioritize the response to accessible calls. A smaller fleet size can outperform a larger fleet if the appropriate incentive program is put in place.

Funding Sources

All cities endeavored to cover all (or most) incentive program costs through an accessibility fund supported by fees and charges applied to the taxicab industry.

Some (e.g., Toronto, Calgary, Winnipeg) charged multiple industry stakeholders (e.g., brokers, owners, drivers of standard taxicabs and PTCs while exempting accessible taxicabs) while others (Ottawa, Hamilton) applied charges to PTC companies only.

9 Recommendations

As noted previously, all proposed incentives are based on stakeholder feedback considered within the context of feasibility, affordability as well as the reported effectiveness of options implemented in other municipal jurisdictions.

In short, which incentives have worked empirically to: increase the number of total accessible fares; increase total hours of service; increase hours of off-peak hours of service; improve the timeliness of service; decrease the number of refusals, cancelled fares and no shows; and, decrease the number of complaints.

9.1 Centralized Dispatch Pilot for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

That the City consider developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the purpose of awarding a centralized dispatch contract respecting on-demand wheelchair accessible vehicles to a third-party vendor for a three-year period.

Centralized 24/7 dispatch via a dedicated third-party administered app, website and telephone number has been fully implemented in Calgary, is presently being put in place in Winnipeg and is on the workplan for Edmonton.

Centralized Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) dispatch would ensure that all requests for WAVs are routed through a dedicated app/website/telephone number and dispatched to the closest available WAV to the benefit of both the client and the driver.

Such a system is exclusive to persons requiring and requesting a WAV and avoids the cancellation of duplicate calls sent to multiple taxi companies while reducing travel distances for accessible taxicab drivers resulting in the most efficient deployment of the fleet of accessible vehicles.

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As noted in the findings section of this report, the capture of complete and accurate trip data is a fundamental component to any accessibility incentive program as it allows for timely, transparent, auditable data regularly transmitted to the City pursuant to the terms of the RFP which is essential to tracking and remunerating for cost and performance. Because it is a dedicated service, WAV dispatch only captures data from persons who have specifically requested a wheelchair accessible vehicle. There is no requirement to separate regular fares and accessible fares as 100% of the calls transmitted via the central app are classified as accessible fares.

As such, Centralized Dispatch offers “one stop shopping” for clients requiring a wheelchair accessible cab and “one stop” source of accessible vehicle data for the City to monitor, evaluate and reimburse for cost and performance.

Toronto’s recent update report⁴² noted trip data to be “crucial to the evaluation and validation of service standards, and to determine the supply and demand of vehicle-for-hire accessible service” and noted the challenges associated with manually validating and auditing information provided by WAV owners and drivers through the declaration process. “In the absence of data, significant staff resources are required to review and verify declarations.” Further, although Toronto, like other municipalities, requires brokers to submit trip data to the City, there is not presently satisfactory compliance. Toronto noted that some brokerages do “not wish to comply for various reasons, while other noted capacity concerns.” Toronto is exploring “technology and enforcement efforts to ensure compliance”.

As was noted in the discussion relating to approval of the motion authorizing the Ottawa study, the focus is on incentivizing good service rather than expending staff time and resources on administration and enforcement.

⁴² Update on Outstanding Vehicle-for-Hire Directives, to General Government and Licensing Committee, from Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards, dated Nov 16, 2021

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Calgary recognized the administrative costs and technical challenges inherent in obtaining consistent, regularized, consolidated data required for ongoing monitoring and oversight of centralized dispatch and recommended third party RFP as the preferred process.

Winnipeg made similar findings, noting all the same benefits to the client associated with a centralized dispatch (single access point for clients; display of all vehicles signed on and available for service; allocation of trip to nearest available WAV) while providing all the data sets required to monitor and remunerate performance (trip duration, time of day, route taken, numbers of trips completed or declined, client rating, etc.). Winnipeg, like Calgary, notes the “improved tracking and reporting...will lead to better data driven decision-making regarding accessible on-demand service in the future” to help find “opportunities and ways to continue to improve the overall program”.⁴³

In both Calgary and Winnipeg the centralized dispatch is a “voluntary” program with qualified WAV owners and drivers signing up for participation in the program.

Both cities are moving towards a model where most of the incentives will be tracked via centralized dispatch data and not by cumbersome self-declarations and data submissions.

⁴³ Winnipeg. Annual Update on the Vehicle for Hire Industry and Amendments to the Vehicle for Hire By-law. Approved by Winnipeg Council on April 29, 2021, Appendix B “Framework”.

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As noted previously in this report, the Calgary WAV was launched on December 4, 2019 and staff provided an update report to Calgary's Community Development Committee on November 17, 2021. Before Council approved the Accessible Taxi Incentive Program and WAV Calgary, many customers expressed frustration respecting hours-long wait times and uncertain arrival times. Since the programs launched, the average wait time for an accessible taxi is less than 22 minutes and staff engagement with customers through the City's Advisory Committee on Accessibility and the Calgary Ability Network found that 90 per cent of those surveyed felt confident that a taxi will arrive when requested through WAV Calgary with 100% of respondents indicating that they were likely or very likely to continue using the service.⁴⁴

Calgary's two year central dispatch pilot WAV program was implemented at a cost of \$350K per year which included dispatch technology, driver outreach and training, customer marketing as well as City costs associated with developing an RFP, gathering stakeholder feedback and evaluating the pilot. The pilot will be moving to a full-time program funded by the 10 cent regulatory fee effective January 1, 2022.

For Ottawa, using a third-party vendor would enable the City to test its effectiveness in improving on-demand wheelchair accessible taxi service while leveraging staff's experience in design/specification of an RFP and ensuring ongoing oversight from the City. At the conclusion of the pilot, the City would evaluate the most feasible approach to continuing such a service over the long term.

Even though calls specifically for wheelchair accessible vehicles comprise less than 1 percent of all taxicabs trips, the accessible taxi fleet is an essential adjunct to the public transportation system as the only on-demand option for persons requiring a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Centralized dispatch will benefit both the users and providers of accessible taxicab services.

⁴⁴ Calgary. Update on Accessible Taxi Incentive Program (CD2021-1559). Briefing to Community Development Committee, dated November 17, 2021.

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Although detailed requirements can be clarified during RFP development, at a minimum the technology will be able to:

- Register user requests, as received, in a systematic database
- Allocate trips to the nearest available WAV
- Allow for storage of customer profiles for more efficient booking
- Shows the vehicles that are signed on and available to provide service
- GPS tracking of each full trip from time of request, duration of trip and route taken, to drop off location and payment
- Provide reporting to the city administration on active and available vehicles, including the number of trips completed or declined, time of trips, etc.
- Based on defined service levels and availability, the system will be able to provide financial incentives to vehicle owners and drivers.

It is proposed that the details of the Calgary and Winnipeg RFPs should be reviewed as part of Ottawa's development of its own RFP.

9.2 Annual Incentive with Upset Limit

That the City consider implementing an annual incentive plan that recognizes the higher cost of owning and operating a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) with the goal of increasing the availability of WAVs on the road.

Toronto, Calgary and Winnipeg all provide an annual incentive ranging from \$2,200 (Winnipeg) to \$4,796 (Toronto) per plate holder and from \$2,000 (Calgary) to \$2,200 per driver. Plate holders who are also drivers are eligible to receive both incentives.

It is noted that Calgary, based on its program update provided to Committee on November 17, 2021, reallocated its annual \$1,500 grant to plate holders into the annual incentive program so that plate holders are now eligible for up to \$3,000 per year as part of the incentive program. The driver incentive has been retained at \$2,000 so that plate holders who are also drivers are still eligible for up to \$5,000 per year.

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Calgary discontinued the grant component as it identified a “small number of ATPL holders receiving the grant without having a vehicle on the road. These individuals met the qualifying criteria by virtue of being ATPL holders but did not deliver accessible taxi trips and incurred no operational expenses. To better meet the ATIP objective of offsetting the higher cost of operating an accessible taxi, funds will be reallocated to the annual ATPL incentive which has eligibility criteria tied to service delivery.”**45**

This study agrees that incentives should be tied to service delivery and not be a simple grant provided as part of the plate holder license renewal process.

45 Update on Accessible Taxi Incentive Program (CD2021-1559), Community Services Briefing to Community Development Committee, November 17, 2021.

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With respect to criteria, the following is a summary of criteria in the three jurisdictions reviewed that provide an annual incentive:

City	Toronto	Calgary	Winnipeg
Plate Holders	<p>Up to \$3,625 per year for rear-entry vehicles.</p> <p>Up to \$4,796 per year for side-entry vehicles.</p> <p>Vehicle operating and available for dispatch (e.g., 1,300 hours annual or 25 hours per week)(weighted 95%; and, provision of cordless POV (weighted 5%)</p>	<p>Up to \$1,500 per year.</p> <p>Vehicle on the road a minimum of 250 days per year (up to \$500);</p> <p>Vehicle driven a minimum of 981 hours per year (up to \$500);</p> <p>Mechanicals submitted on time (up to \$125);</p> <p>Inspectors orders submitted on time (up to \$125);</p> <p>Minimal complaints re., vehicle condition (up to \$125);</p> <p>and, Cordless debit machine installed (up to \$125)</p>	<p>Up to \$2,200 per year.</p> <p>Annual sign-up bonus to Winnipeg WAV program (\$200); available a minimum of 250 days per year (\$500); minimum of 120 hours per month (\$500); overnight shift premium - minimum of 120 overnight shifts (10 p.m. to 4 a.m.)(250); less than 5 customer complaints per year (\$250); Inspection rate of 90% or better on critical items (securement, ramps, etc.)(500)</p>
Drivers	<p>Up to \$2,188 per year.</p> <p>Drivers keep vehicle operating and available for dispatch (e.g., 1,300 hours annual or 25 hours per week)(weighed 50%); and accept all accessible trips dispatched by brokerage (weighted</p>	<p>Up to \$2,000 per year.</p> <p>Driver accepts all wheelchair accessible trips (up to \$1,000);</p> <p>minimum 4 wheelchair accessible trips per month (up to \$200);</p> <p>daily maintenance of harness ramps (up to \$200);</p> <p>minimal incidents or service complaints (up to \$200);</p> <p>available between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m.</p> <p>minimum of 10 nights per month (up to \$200); on</p>	<p>Up to \$2,200 per year.</p> <p>Annual sign-up bonus to WAV program (\$200);</p> <p>Annual trips – graduated – from 20 to over 150 – (\$200 to a maximum of \$800);</p> <p>maintaining a 4 star or better customer average rating (\$100);</p> <p>overnight shift premium – minimum of 10 overnight shifts per month – logged in at least 4 hours between 10 p.m. and 4</p>

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City	Toronto	Calgary	Winnipeg
	50%)	time license renewal (up to \$200)	a.m. (\$500); trip acceptance rate of 90% or better via the WAV app (\$500); daily vehicle safety and maintenance checks (\$100).
Information is provided via a combination of: brokerage data, Inspections, plate holder / driver declarations and WAV program data (Calgary and Winnipeg)			

Given Calgary’s recent update and review, as noted above, effective January 1, 2022, the grant portion is being reallocated to the annual incentive, increasing it from \$1,500 to \$3,000 with the criteria being reduced from six to the following two: vehicle on road a minimum of 250 days per year, and, mechanicals submitted on time. Similarly, the criteria for the \$2,000 in annual incentives for accessible drivers are being reduced from six to the following three: accept all wheelchair accessible trips; daily maintenance of harness/ramps; minimal incidents or customer service complaints. This change was compelled in part for reasons of streamlining processes to reduce costs associated with managing and disbursing the different funds, but also because Calgary is introducing a per trip surcharge for every accessible trip completed through the WAV Calgary platform, effective January 1, 2022. This will be elaborated upon as part of the next recommendation respecting surcharges.

- Based on the annual incentives provided in other jurisdictions, this study recommends an annual incentive to plate holders of up to \$3,000 per year with an annual incentive to accessible drivers of up to \$1,000 per year. Accordingly, an accessible plate holder who is also a driver will be eligible to received up to \$4,000 per year or \$40,000 over the ten-year life of the wheelchair accessible vehicle.

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Mindful of criteria in place in other jurisdictions, this study proposes that Ottawa consider:

- Accessible plate holders have vehicles be available a minimum of 250 days per year (up to \$1,000), 120 hours per month (up to \$1,000), 120 overnight shifts (10 p.m. to 4 a.m.)(up to \$500) and an inspection rate of 90% or better (securement, ramps, etc.)(up to \$500).
- Accessible drivers accept all wheelchair accessible trips (up to \$500); minimum incidents or complaints (up to \$250) and daily maintenance of harness / ramps (up to \$250)

It is recommended that the criteria be evaluated based on data emanating from the voluntary Centralized WAV program proposed pursuant to recommendation 9.1 for ease of administration and auditability. As noted previously, a dedicated centralized WAV program administered by a third-party, subject to RFP, deals exclusively with requests-for-service relating to wheelchair accessible taxicabs, via dedicated phone number, website or app. As such, the WAV program provides detailed, granular data which can be applied to precise and sophisticated incentives (e.g., overnight shift premiums, client ratings via app, per trip surcharges) with minimum staff resources required for program oversight and no requirement for separate information to be provided by individual taxi brokers.

9.3 Per Trip Surcharge paid to Drivers

That the City consider implementing a per trip levy of \$15 paid for each completed WAV fare.

The cost for a WAV to respond to a regular fare is higher than it is for standard taxicabs (given higher fuel costs) and the cost for a WAV vehicle to respond to accessible calls represents the highest cost when increased travel distances as well as time required to onboard and offboard the client is taken into account.

This recommendation recognizes the higher costs associated with accessible calls and incentivizes drivers to treat such calls as a priority.

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Presently, response to accessible calls represent only 16% of calls undertaken by WAVs (i.e., 84% of fares are regular fares).

Accordingly, it is imperative for any successful, sustainable incentive program to prioritize and remunerate accessible calls. A surcharge represents the most direct, effective ongoing incentive as it remunerates each on-demand accessible fare on an ongoing per call basis. It encourages response to accessible calls while recognizing the increased time and effort associated with accessible fares.

The challenge is to set remuneration sufficient to cover costs and incentivize service while being mindful that there is no upset limit on the number of fares that may be dispatched so careful consideration has to be given to the budget envelope available to fund this option.

Given feedback received during consultations as well as review of other cities, an amount of \$15 for each completed WAV call is proposed as a blend of the Calgary daytime/night-time rate and triple the levy presently in place in Hamilton.

This recommendation, like recommendation 9.2 (the annual incentive) is predicated on the City approving a centralized WAV dispatch as outlined in recommendation 9.1.

It is proposed that the whole incentive program be reviewed at the conclusion of the pilot program with updates to Committee and Council as requested or required.

9.4 Stakeholder Suggestions for Further Consideration

In addition to a core program that includes centralized dispatch, an annual incentive and a per trip incentive, the City should consider the following recommendations, brought up as part of the consultation process, to enhance on-demand accessible service:

- That accessible plate holder license renewal fees (\$578) and transfer fees (\$4,196) as well as the 5 year non-transferability limit be reduced or eliminated to ease transfer between owners relinquishing plates and new owners coming online as part of the Accessible Priority waiting list.

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The City should review any suggestion that streamlines or simplifies the transition of accessible vehicles out of and into the market.

- Accessible Vehicle Age: request to extend the accessible vehicle age limit from a 10-year-old model to 12-year-old model, to ease costs for accessible taxi drivers whose vehicles are still

The City has been tasked to review taxi vehicle age a number of times and has the operational experience to understand and appreciate the condition of the fleet of vehicles on the road. Of the cities with age limits, Ottawa, Hamilton and Calgary each have an age limit of 10 model years. Toronto has an age limit of 7 years that has been increased to 9 model years as a temporary Covid measure. Winnipeg and Edmonton do not limit vehicle age but mandate vehicle inspection and certification as required. This study defers to the operational experience of the City of Ottawa.

- Taxicab and user stakeholders requested that the City reconsider the minimum service requirement set out in the current Vehicle for Hire bylaw that requires accessible drivers to be on the road (10) hours a day, (5) days a week.

This study is predicated on incentivizing the improved availability and responsiveness of WAVs and not on punishing vehicle owners and drivers who do not feel that they can recoup the costs of owning and operating their wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV).

It is hoped that the incentives set out in this report will negate the need for enforcement of a provision penalizing lack of service.

9.5 Stakeholder Suggestions not Recommended

- Taxicab union request that City implement a \$7 cancellation notice whereby clients are given notice, prior to accepting service, that a \$7 fee will be applied to fares cancelled by the client in recognition of the cost in time and gasoline to drive to a pick-up address only to find that the customer has changed their mind or got a ride using another taxi company.

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As noted above, this study is focused on incentivizing improved service delivery and not on penalizing behaviour that is often considered logical and reasonable by the client. Review of Ottawa and other cities found that clients sometimes direct requests for WAVs to multiple taxi companies in the hopes of increasing their chance of receiving a WAV in a reasonable amount of time. This would result in cancelled requests or no shows. Subject to approval of centralized dispatch for WAV calls, duplicate calls should be eliminated and cancelled calls minimized to the benefit of both client and driver.

- Taxicab Union consultation suggestion that the fare box should be permitted to be turned on prior to commencement of the actual trip to reflect the time and effort required to facilitate the on-boarding of the client.

This study agrees that the WAV driver should be appropriately compensated for the additional time and effort required to administer a WAV call as reflected in the proposed per trip surcharge of \$15. This study does not recommend that the cost of service be passed on to the client.

- Taxicab Brokers proposed that plates should be assigned to the company for better controls and better hiring practices.

As noted by the taxi union in their comments, section 95(4) of the Vehicle for Hire By-law 2016-272 provides that “a person applying to be placed on the Accessible Priority List is only entitled to be placed on the list once at any one time, and may not be a standard or accessible taxi plate holder.” This study does not recommend that multiple accessible plates be issued or assigned to companies or individuals.

10 Financial Considerations

As outlined in the summary of the VFH Accessibility Fund report, the City of Ottawa originally supported enhanced accessibility initiatives via a \$.07 per trip voluntary fee paid by Private Transportation Companies (PTCs) operating within the City of Ottawa.

That fund was estimated to yield an average annual fund of \$720,000 based on historical trip data.

The City, to date, has not received any authority from the Province of Ontario to set a mandatory per trip rate, but the Emergency and Protective Services Department was successful in negotiating a 3 cent (43%) increase of the per trip fee with the voluntary fee now at \$.10 per trip as of August 1, 2020.

At the same time, PTCs have also been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which impacts revenues accruing to the City's Accessibility Fund.

In 2019 PTCs averaged 1,160,484 trips per month. In 3 post (first wave) Covid-19 months (Jun through Aug 2020) trips averaged 447,930 per month; a 61% reduction in trips.

Accordingly, pre-covid trips were tracking for revenues on the order of \$1.39M at \$.10 per trip whereas, post trips were tracking for revenues estimated at \$538K (representing the 61% reduction cited above). As was noted in the section referencing accessible taxi fares, the trips will be expected to vary with different covid waves and the local regulations in place to curb those outbreaks.

Similarly, as noted previously in this report, accessible taxicab fares were averaging 2,960 per month prior to Covid (tracking for 35,520 per year) and were averaging 1,305 per month for a sample 3 month period post first wave Covid (tracking for 15,660 per year). These statistics help inform cost estimates associated with the per trip surcharge.

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Annual Cost estimate to Implement Recommended Incentive Program

Cost of WAV RFP (per Calgary)	\$350,000
Annual subsidy for eligible accessible taxi plate holders (191 X \$3,000 max.)	\$573,000
Annual subsidy for eligible accessible taxi driver (191 X 2 shifts X \$1,000)	\$382,000
Surcharge (15,660 to 35,520 trips per year X \$15)	\$235,000 - \$532,800
Grand Total Cost Estimate	\$1.54M to \$1.837M

City costs to administer program should be minimal under the packaged centralized dispatch model which is largely administered by the third-party successful proponent to the RFP.

Industry costs should be minimal given that the technological centralized dispatch model does not require that data be provided by the taxicab industry.

Projected costs should be considered within the context of projected revenues including any balance that presently exists in the City's Accessibility Fund.

Disclaimer / Considerations

This document has been prepared by 6226051 Canada Inc for the City of Ottawa pursuant to the terms of our engagement agreement with the City dated August 25, 2015 (the "Engagement Agreement").

6226051 Canada Inc methodology consisted of inquiry, facilitation, comparison and analysis of stakeholder provided information. It was augmented by research associated with publicly available information as well as industry statistics and data provided Ottawa industry stakeholders. Information provided as part of study was not audited or corroborated for accuracy or completeness.

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The City, through its own legislative agenda processes, will be responsible for the assessment of consultant observations and recommendations considering its own operational impacts, financial and legal review.

Annex A – Option Assessment – Summary Table

Annex B – Accessibility Advisory Committee Submission