

ITEM 21
MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 51
COUNCIL MEETING 85/07/29

RE: TAXICAB SERVICE: ROLE IN TRANSPORTING THE HANDICAPPED
MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the recommendation of the Director Planning & Building Inspection be adopted.

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TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER
FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING INSPECTION
SUBJECT: TAXICAB SERVICE: ROLE IN TRANSPORTING THE HANDICAPPED

1985 July 24
Our File: 08.813

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Council approve in principle that taxicabs with accessibility for wheelchair passengers be provided as part of the taxicab service in Burnaby.
2. THAT Council, when considering additional taxicab licences or a change in policy regarding existing licences, consider requiring that 3-5% of the taxicab licences issued in Burnaby, or serving Burnaby, be wheelchair accessible, and
3. THAT Council present this position to the Motor Carrier Commission (MCC) and the Greater Vancouver Regional District.

SUMMARY

Existing handyDART and taxicab services provide for many of the essential trip needs of the disabled in Burnaby. The provision of taxicabs which meet the accessibility requirements of wheelchair users would be a positive addition to the overall transportation services in Burnaby, and would serve to provide mobility opportunities which would otherwise be limited.

R E P O R T

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report responds to Council's enquiry regarding the potential role of taxicab service in transporting the handicapped/disabled. The enquiry arose from Council's consideration of Manager's Report No. 48, Item #17 on Taxicab Service at their meeting on 1985 July 15. This report briefly reviews the transportation options for the handicapped including the service currently being provided by taxicab operators and the potentials for expansion of the service.

2.0 EXISTING SERVICE IN BURNABY

Regular taxicab services are available to the ambulatory and semi ambulatory disabled. These services are not, however, adapted to the accessibility requirements of all wheelchair users. In order to use the existing service a wheelchair user would have to leave his/her chair and use the standard taxicab seats.

3.0 CUSTOM TRANSIT

Disabled users who find conventional bus transit or the existing taxicab service to be inaccessible can use the Vancouver Regional Custom Transit System. Custom Transit or "handyDART" as it is often called, is the responsibility of B.C. Transit. B.C. Transit contracts on an annual basis for delivery of the service through a number of local operators. The Western Society for Senior Citizens operates the custom transit system serving Burnaby, as well as Coquitlam, New Westminster, Port Moody and Port Coquitlam. This society uses Royal City Taxi as a supplement, to carry approximately 11-1/2% of its users. The use of taxicabs by the Western Society is unique to that operator and apparently B.C. Transit is in the process of evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of this strategy.

The demand for travel using handyDART exceeds the capacity of the system. As a result operators are required to accept trips in accordance with the priority of the trip purpose. The highest priority trips are those with a non-discretionary purpose, i.e. work, medical and educational. A recent survey has indicated that only 6% of handyDART patrons use the service for discretionary travel purposes such as shopping or personal business.

While handyDART provides the necessary convenience of door to door travel, it is otherwise not comparable to a taxicab service. Trips must be booked well in advance with the operator who schedules trips. This requires some accommodation by users in terms of foregoing trips, rescheduling appointments, waiting for appointments and spending extra time in a vehicle as other users are picked up and dropped off.

While the handyDART system works quite well, it is apparent that there is more demand for travel than the system can handle. In addition, the need to book trips ahead and the priorities for system use result in many "optional" yet desired trips not being taken.

4.0 TAXICAB SERVICE FOR THE HANDICAPPED IN THE CITY OF VANCOUVER

To meet the mobility demands of wheelchair bound disabled the City of Vancouver has created thirty (30) Class D (for dual) taxicab licences. These special taxis give preference to disabled users but are allowed to carry the non-handicapped. A recent survey by the City indicates that 14% of Class D trips consist of wheelchair users although the cab company operating the service indicates a more typical average of 20%.

The Class D cabs are specially modified "bubble top" checker vehicles. Wheelchair users gain access to the taxi via a steel ramp. There is no requirement to transfer from the wheel chair since it is secured to the cab. The standard seating in the cab also allows

the wheelchair user to be accompanied by up to three ambulatory companions. These taxis are allowed to operate in Burnaby provided that trips originating in Burnaby are prebooked and that the trip ends in Vancouver. Our discussion with Staff at the City's Licensing Department confirms that they are well satisfied with the Class D taxi operation.

The only competition to the "bubble top" dual cabs is a new service called Handicab which is licensed to operate in the City of Vancouver, Port Moody, and Washington State as a "car for hire". At present this service has one vehicle for hire which is a specially modified luxury van that can carry a number of wheelchairs as well as attendants. Trips are prebooked and charged out at the same rate as regular taxi trips. The operator of the service is optimistic that the service will expand when licenced in other areas of the Lower Mainland including Burnaby. This operator also believed there is sufficient market to increase the Handicab fleet.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF TAXICAB SERVICE FOR THE HANDICAPPED IN BURNABY

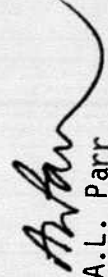
While the existing taxicab and handyDART services provide for many of the essential trip requirements of the ambulatory disabled, it would appear that there is considerable room for improvement especially in relation to discretionary travel and travel for persons unable to afford standard taxicab costs. In both of these circumstances, a taxicab service adapted to provide accessibility to those who are wheelchair bound would complement existing services and work to reduce the mobility barriers.

This service could be offered in a similar way to the City of Vancouver, through "special class" licences and "bubble top" taxicabs.

At such time as Council is considering additional taxicab licences in Burnaby or a change in policy regarding existing licences it would be opportune to introduce new requirements for handicapped accessibility in taxicabs. An initial requirement of 3% to 5% of Burnaby's taxicab licences or 2 to 4 taxicabs would likely be adequate to meet Burnaby residents' needs.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The introduction of taxicabs which meet the accessibility requirements of wheelchair passengers would be a positive addition to the overall transportation services in Burnaby.


A.L. Parr
DIRECTOR PLANNING &
BUILDING INSPECTION

RE/PL/mcb

cc: Director Finance

