

Vehicle for Hire Data - Wait Time Analysis

ISSUE

Through Bylaw No. 9651, Vehicles for Hire Bylaw, 2019, the City of Saskatoon (City) maintains licensing programs for taxis and transportation network companies (TNCs). Under these programs, the City reviews wait time for taxi and TNC service to assist in monitoring whether an adequate level of vehicles for hire for service is available.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on February 1, 2021, The Standing Policy Committee on Transportation received a report from Administration on engagement with the vehicles for hire industry concerning parity between taxi and TNC regulations. The Committee resolved:

“That the Administration report back on wait times and other available data from the Taxi and TNC industries that resulted from bylaw amendments made in past.”

This report addresses this resolution.

CURRENT STATUS

The Vehicles for Hire Bylaw, 2019, (Bylaw) requires taxi brokerages and transportation network companies (TNCs) to provide monthly trip data to the City. Data reporting requirements include documentation of the following:

- 1) the time a request for dispatch was received by the taxi dispatch or transportation network;
- 2) the time the trip is accepted by the taxi or TNC driver;
- 3) the time the trip begins;
- 4) the time the trip concludes; and
- 5) passenger wait time.

In 2019, an amendment to the Bylaw was adopted, which added passenger wait time to the data reporting requirements. The amendment included other operational and administrative changes which did not result in further data collected.

The Bylaw also requires taxi brokerages and TNCs to report:

- 1) whether the trip involved the conveyance of a person with a disability related to mobility; and
- 2) the number of trips per month for each wheelchair accessible vehicle.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

TNCs have been operating in Saskatoon since February 2019 and the introduction of this form of rideshare service has assisted in reducing wait times. TNCs are not

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required to provide accessible service. At this time there are no TNCs offering accessible service in Saskatoon.

COVID-19 had a substantial impact on businesses and the movement of people on a global and local scale. With people following public health orders to stay at home and limit non-essential travel, the 2020 and 2021 business years have been very difficult for the vehicle for hire industry, with some drivers opting not to continue driving.

Table 1 provides an overview of wait times between period of October 2019 (when wait time reporting requirements came into effect) and March 2021. Two reporting periods are provided below to reflect changes to operations and resulting wait times pre-pandemic (October 2019 to March 2020) and during the pandemic (March 2020 to current).

Table 1 - Vehicle for Hire Wait Time comparison

Service Provided	October 2019 to March 2020 (pre-pandemic)		April 2020 to March 2021 (during pandemic)	
	Meets Standard	Wait time – 20 min or more	Meets Standard	Wait time – 20 min or more
Accessible Taxi trips (service standard: 15 min or less)	54.04%	12.43%	89.72%	2.45%
Taxi trips (service standard: 10 min or less)	86.69%	12.92%	84.70%	2.19%
TNC trips (service standard: 10 min or less)	86.02%	6.46%	77.64%	6.14%
Combined - All non-accessible vehicle for hire trips	86.35%	9.69%	81.17%	4.17%

A taxi wait time review was previously completed in December 2018. The review analyzed the period of September 2017 to June 2018, in advance of TNCs operating in Saskatoon. The percentage of accessible taxi trips meeting the service standard (a wait time of 15 minutes or less) was 57% in 2017-2018 and 54% in 2019-2020, with an increase in 2020-2021 to 90%. During this same period, wheelchair accessible trips with more extensive wait times (20 minutes or more) decreased from 29% to 12% to 2% respectively. The improvement in wait time for wheelchair accessible service during this period can be attributed to decreased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also operational efficiencies put in place by taxi brokerages in providing service to large multi-unit residential buildings.

Other factors may have also contributed to the improvement in wait time. Beginning in 2020, an incentive for wheelchair accessible taxi owners, funded by a \$0.07 per trip charge for all TNC trips, was provided. A required sensitivity training session for all wheelchair accessible taxi drivers was provided by Saskatoon Transit and Community Standards, included information on bylaw obligations such as prioritizing call for wheelchair accessible service. Additional inspections of wheelchair accessible taxis, to ensure the drivers are doing so has been implemented.

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The percentage of standard taxi trips meeting the service standard (a wait time of 10 minutes or less) improved from 81% in 2017-2018 to 87% in 2019-2020, and 85% in 2020-2021. Over this same period, the percentage of trips with a wait time 20 minutes or longer increased from 2% to 13%, returning to 2% the following year. The increase in number of trips with longer wait times in the 2019-2020 period may be attributed to an increase in the number of taxi brokerages and a move away from the brokerages using a shared dispatcher. As a result, duplicate bookings made by customers could no longer be identified, and the nearest available taxi operated by any one broker may not have been the closest available taxi (from a different company) dispatched to respond to a call. Very few trips exceeded a 20-minute wait time in 2020/2021 due to a significantly reduced demand for service as a result of the pandemic.

The percentage of TNC trips with a wait time 10 minutes or less decreased from 86% in 2019-2020 to 78% in 2020 to 2021. The percentage of trips with a wait time greater than 20 minutes remained unchanged over this period, at 6%.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications at this time.

REPORT APPROVAL

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