

Extension of the Enterprise Taxi Licence Program

ISSUE

The Enterprise Taxi Licence Program commenced on June 29, 2019, awarding temporary taxi licences to experienced taxi drivers for a four-year term, through a lottery. The program is set to expire on June 28, 2023. Should Bylaw No. 9651, the Vehicles for Hire Bylaw, be amended to permit the Enterprise Taxi Licence Program to continue?

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommend to City Council that the City Solicitor be requested to prepare an amendment to Bylaw No. 9651, the Vehicles for Hire Bylaw, to extend the term of Enterprise Taxi Licences to June 28, 2024.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its Regular Business meeting held on May 2019, [resolved](#) to adopt amendments to the Vehicles for Hire Bylaw, to permit temporary Enterprise Taxi Licences to be awarded to drivers through a lottery, for a four-year term from June 29, 2019 until June 28, 2023.

This report addresses the upcoming expiration of the program term and provides recommendations on its continuation beyond the period originally approved by City Council.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

The Enterprise Taxi Licence Program was introduced to replace Seasonal Taxi Licences in 2019. The purpose of the replacement was to balance improvement in wait time for service, while helping to ensure that the taxis are not over supplied during off-peak periods. Only one driver was permitted to operate the taxi, to encourage drivers to choose to operate during peak demand periods, and to help ensure that taxis would not be over supplied during off-peak times. The number of temporary taxi plates was increased from 24 to 35; licences were also permitted to operate year-round instead of seasonally.

Engagement

Engagement with the taxi industry was conducted over two phases and began early in 2022. Stakeholder input demonstrated mixed opinions on the continuation of the program. In the first phase, discussions were held with taxi brokerages and the union representing most taxi drivers. The second phase was conducted with taxi drivers, permanent plate holders and Enterprise Taxi plate holders.

Following engagement in the first phase, all six taxi brokerages, as well as union leadership were in support of a one-year extension of the Enterprise Taxi Licence

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Program. Doing so would allow for additional trip data to be collected and further engagement within the industry to build consensus on the program. The group also concluded engagement should focus on the number of temporary wheelchair accessible taxis and if more permanent taxi licences were needed.

Results from an industry-wide survey indicated that a majority of permanent taxi plate holders preferred the program be allowed to expire. A portion of the feedback indicated a temporary licence program is required, but more research and data was needed to re-establish how the program should operate. Enterprise Taxi Licence holders were in favor of an extension, with no new lottery. Taxi drivers who participated in the survey preferred the program be extended for four or more years and a new lottery be initiated. The complete results of the survey including votes cast, by type of stakeholder, is outlined in the table below. Individuals and corporations which own multiple permanent plates were able to submit separate survey responses for each plate they own.

Question	Enterprise Taxi Licence Holders	Taxi Drivers	Permanent Plate Owners	Total
1) Should the Enterprise Taxi Licence Program be extended?	Yes: 22 No: 0	Yes: 124 No: 65	Yes: 3 No: 97	Yes: 149 No: 162
2) (If Yes) How long should the Program be extended?	1 Year: 0 2 Years: 7 3 Years: 6 4 Years: 9	1 Year: 4 2 Years: 14 3 Years: 21 4 Years: 85	1 Year: 1 2 Years: 0 3 Years: 0 4 Years: 2	1 Year: 5 2 Years: 21 3 Years: 27 4 Years: 96
3) (If Yes) Should there be a new lottery distribution?	Yes: 5 No: 17	Yes: 98 No: 26	Yes: 1 No: 2	Yes: 104 No: 45

Analysis

Administration recommends that an additional year of data collection is needed to project longer-term trends, as well as the applicability of the program for future years. As the Enterprise Taxi Licence Program primarily occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, the taxi trip and wait-time data collected during this period is not sufficient to help project the future long-term demand for taxi and wheelchair accessible taxi service, as well as the optimal number of temporary taxi licences across both programs. Additional engagement within the taxi industry is also needed to address differences in feedback received from taxi drivers and plate owners.

Current lottery winners were also unable to utilize their licence to its full potential during the public health emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While taxis are an essential service and operated during this time, demand for taxi service was significantly affected and many drivers were unable to operate, even part-time. In response to this, a bylaw amendment was adopted by City Council in July 2020, which

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removed the minimum operating requirements for Enterprise Taxis during a public health emergency.

Recommendation

Administration is recommending the Vehicle for Hire Bylaw be amended to extend the current Enterprise Taxi terms from its current expiry date of June 28, 2023 to June 28, 2024. This approach is supported by taxi brokerages and union leadership. While feedback from taxi drivers and plate owners was mixed, the one-year extension will provide additional data to help evaluate future program needs and affords additional operating time for licence holders impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Current Enterprise Taxi plate holders' will continue to hold their respective licences. A new lottery to award the plates for the duration of the extended term is not recommended due to logistical concerns related to new drivers obtaining a vehicle and potentially changing taxi brokerages for a limited one-year term. The process of existing licence holders retaining the licence for the extended term was also followed in 2019 when Seasonal Taxi Licences were extended.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial impacts identified. While the term length will be extended, current Enterprise Taxi Licence holders will still be required to obtain a new annual licence in June 2023.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal, social or environmental impacts identified

NEXT STEPS

Should City Council resolve to adopt the bylaw amendment, information about the extension will be communicated to stakeholders in the taxi industry. Should this amendment proceed, further stakeholder consultation will occur throughout the next year and a report will be tabled at a Transportation Committee agenda in Q1 2024 on the future of this program.

REPORT APPROVAL

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