

**Transportation Standing Committee
October 2, 2013**

TO: Chair and Members of the Transportation Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: Original signed
Brad Anguish, Director, Community and Recreation Services

DATE: September 23, 2013

SUBJECT: Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group Review

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

January 24, 2013, Motion of the Transportation Standing Committee (TSC):

MOVED by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Fisher, that the Transportation Standing Committee request a staff report for a full review of the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group and how it is working, in response to concerns from taxi drivers. Motion Put and Passed.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

On July 5, 2011, Halifax Regional Council approved the TSC's recommendation to implement an Industry/Staff Liaison Committee (terms of reference attached as Appendix A).

BACKGROUND

On July 5, 2011, Regional Council approved the development of a Taxi and Limousine Liaison Group (TLLG). A summer time call by the Municipal Clerk seeking volunteer members for the TLLG did not receive a sufficient response. A second posting seeking volunteers in November 2011 was successful and the TLLG members were selected. The first meeting was held on December 13, 2011.

At the first meeting of the TLLG, members were advised of the Industry Proposed Rate Increase Report and the Request to Extend Open Taxi Zones Report which were already before the TSC. Subsequent meetings of the TLLG were held in January, March, May, and November of 2012. Discussions during these meetings consolidated industry and regulatory policy which facilitated legislative amendments that were subsequently approved in November 2012 by Regional Council in By-Law T-1000. Issues discussed included:

- Roof light illumination,
- Enabling drivers to request cost recovery for cleaning or damages caused by passengers,
- Vehicle standard changes to permit 5 or more door vehicles,
- Permitting the use of winter rims, and

- Permitting owners in one zone to place their names on another zone waiting list while holding an existing owner license.

On January 24, 2013, in response to concerns regarding the effectiveness of the TLLG by taxi drivers, a motion from the TSC requested a staff report and review of the TLLG. At that meeting, TSC members also suggested that HRM should consider transferring responsibility for regulating the taxi industry to the Nova Scotia Utility & Review Board.

On February 21, 2013, TLLG members were advised of the TSC's request to review how the group is functioning. The Liaison Group members were asked specific questions in response to specific concerns identified by the TSC.

DISCUSSION

As part of its review, the TSC asked staff to query the TLLG regarding specific issues raised by various sources; responses to the questions are as follows:

- Is the current structure of the TLLG the right structure?
The majority of the membership of the group feels its structure is adequate to address the issues it reviews.
- Who should be a member of the TLLG? Should a Councillor be a member?
Refer to response above. The TLLG is not a Standing Committee of Council and therefore would not provide Council members with Council status at its meetings. The Chair has the option to invite comment from individual Regional Council members as required when issues arise that require specific clarification.
- Is the TLLG meeting the needs of the Industry?
The TLLG's mandate is to focus on the customer and "common client", however, the taxi industry representative also needs to be heard and the TLLG endeavours to facilitate and continually improve its communication back to the taxi group.
- Concerns with a lack of engagement with drivers and how can they be heard?
An effective communication system is required to get messages out and opinions heard; utilization of a Taxi Website, Brokers, Airport, blogs and Driver Owner Associations are being discussed.
- How are complaints heard such as driver issues with By-Law T-1000?
Drivers must communicate issues to staff and/or Liaison Group members or through their respective associations who are represented at the TLLG.
- Can the TLLG minutes be made more widely available?
Since this report was requested, Liaison Group Minutes have been made available. They are accessible on the HRM.ca website at <http://www.halifax.ca/TaxiServices/Minutes.html>.
- Complaints regarding lack of communication. What is the communication plan?
Communication strategies of the TLLG include the utilization of a Taxi Website, Brokers, Airport, blogs and Driver Owner Associations. Liaison Group members are expected to

distribute information and minutes of regular meetings as representatives to their respective associations at those industry specific locations.

In 2013, the TLLG has held monthly meetings. The group feels it functions adequately to address the issues of taxi drivers. It continues to explore options on ways to improve its communications to industry and to develop policy in support of regulatory initiatives, some of which include:

- The development of a Passenger/Operator Code of Ethics,
- Rate increase review policy,
- The relocation of taxi stands in consultation with Traffic Services,
- Posting TLLG minutes to the HRM website,
- Curb side loading and unloading at fire hydrants and taxi stands,
- Review of bridge toll charged by taxis, and
- Options for displaying public information in cabs.

Based on the feedback provided by the individual members of the TLLG, it is staff's perspective that the work of the group benefits both staff and key stakeholders including customers and industry members. Given the significant work being undertaken by the TLLG outlined above, staff would not recommend a change to the current approach at this time. Staff would recommend, however, that an annual review be completed just prior to the end of each TLLG term (terms are currently one year in length).

Regarding the inquiry for information that HRM should transfer responsibility for the taxi industry to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (UARB), the UARB advises it does not have jurisdiction. A communication from the UARB relative to that option is attached as Appendix B.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This report was prepared in consultation with the Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group Terms of Reference

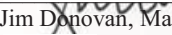
Appendix B: Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board Letter dated January 22, 2013

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Kevin Hindle, Regional Coordinator, License Standards & Taxi/Limousine, 490-2550

Original signed

Report Approved by:



Jim Donovan, Manager, Municipal Compliance, 490-6224

Terms of Reference

Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group

Mandate:

The Taxi & Limousine Liaison Group develops and maintains business processes, business practices, and legislation which facilitate a positive, productive working relationship between staff of Municipal Compliance, Community & Recreation Services, Taxi & Limousine Industry and related stakeholders. The focus of which shall be the impact on the "common client", the citizens, businesses and visitors to the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Guiding Principle:

Client Focus: all participants maintain a focus on the impact of the practises and legislation on the "common client", the Taxi and Limousine users.

Clarity: ensures the industry knows their roles and responsibilities; HRM's business practices and regulations promote services to the "common client".

Efficiency: realizing maximum benefits with minimal resources and regulation.

Effectiveness: providing the highest degree of client service.

Accountability: identifying what the "common client" expects from HRM staff and industry.

Consistency & Fairness: in terms of approach, practises and regulations throughout HRM.

Responsibilities:

- Promotes and encourages a safe, accessible, friendly and professional service to the "common client".
- Promotes and encourages an adequate level of service which meets the demands of the "common client" and visitors to the Halifax Regional Municipality.
- Promotes a standard for quality service and professionalism.
- Provide advice to Municipal Compliance staff, respecting business practices, processes and legislation.

Membership:

- Municipal Compliance Staff
- One member who is a Taxi Broker
- One member who is a taxi driver and taxi owner from Halifax zone
- One member who is a taxi driver and taxi owner from Dartmouth zone
- One member who is a taxi driver and taxi owner from County zone
- One member who is a limousine driver and limousine owner
- One member who is an accessible taxi driver and accessible taxi owner
- Three members who are citizens at large and users of the taxi and /or limousine industry in HRM (a citizen from each zone if possible) and who do not have a financial interest in the taxi or limousine industry.
- One member who is a representative from HRM's Accessibility Advisory Committee



Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board

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January 22, 2013

Mr. Kevin Hindle
Regional Coordinator
License Standards & Taxi, Limousine Services
Municipal Compliance
Halifax Regional Municipality
PO Box 1749
Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Dear Mr. Hindle:

HRM Taxi and Limousine Industry

Thank you for your letter of January 17, 2013.

You inquire as to the Board's position regarding the regulation of the taxi and limousine industry in Halifax Regional Municipality.

The Board does not have jurisdiction under motor carrier legislation to regulate the taxi and limousine industry or to set rates.

As a statutory tribunal the Board may only exercise those powers and do those things that the Board is directed to do by legislation passed by the Legislature of Nova Scotia.

Whether the taxi and limousine industry is to be regulated is a matter of provincial public policy to be decided by Government and the Legislature.

I suggest your inquiry may more appropriately be addressed to the Province of Nova Scotia.

Yours very truly,

Original signed

Peter W. Gumham, Q.C.
Chair