

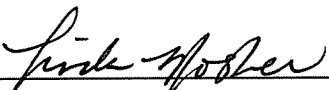
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Halifax Regional Council
January 11, 2005

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Councillor Linda Mosher, Acting Chair of the Taxi and Limousine Committee

DATE: January 4, 2005

SUBJECT: Accessible Taxis

ORIGIN

The Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee meeting of December 20, 2004.

RECOMMENDATION

The Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee recommends that accessible taxis be provided through Metro Transit and further that HRM look to all levels of government to assist with the establishment of such a service for disabled persons throughout Nova Scotia.

BACKGROUND

The issue of accessible taxis was referred by Regional Council to the Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee. The Committee considered the matter at its December 20, 2004 meeting.

DISCUSSION

In support of the recommendation, the following points were made during discussion of this matter:

- No limitation has been placed on accessible taxis
- Accessible taxis are not subject to zone requirements
- Accessible taxis can sit on the common stands anywhere in the municipality
- Accessible taxis can transport both disabled and able bodied passengers
- Accessible taxi drivers are not required to complete national certification

- The larger companies have operated accessible taxis and have found they are not financially viable. Given this, individual members of the industry are reluctant to assume this business

Note was also made that regulation of accessible taxis is covered in the Motor Vehicle Act and does not fall within the responsibility of the Taxi and Limousine By-Law (By-Law T-108).

Generally, the Committee does not believe that the provision of accessible taxis is the responsibility of the taxi industry. In HRM, the taxi industry is private and operation of accessible taxis has proven to not be profitable. The onus to provide guaranteed private accessible taxi service must be on government.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

As the provision of accessible taxis through Metro Transit would represent a new service, there would be a cost associated. However, this information is not available to the Taxi and Limousine Committee.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

N/A

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

1. Extract of the draft minutes of December 20, 2004 meeting of the Regional Taxi and Limousine Committee

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.
Report prepared by: Sherryll Murphy, Legislative Assistant, 490-6517.

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5.2 Accessible Taxis

- This matter was referred to the Committee from the December 14, 2004 meeting of Halifax Regional Council.

Mr. Dave Withrow addressed the matter noting that accessible taxis are not subject to limitation or zone requirements and can sit on the common stands anywhere in the municipality. Additionally, drivers of accessible taxis are not required to complete the national certification program.

Mr. Withrow went on to note that accessible taxis are regulated under the Motor Vehicle Act and not By-Law T-108. He pointed out that the larger taxi companies have attempted to provide the service and found it to not be profitable. Given that no restriction has been placed on accessible taxis and the larger companies were not able to realize a profit, individual drivers are not willing to take responsibility for this service.

Councillor Mosher referring to the accessible taxi service in Ottawa indicated that she would looking into whether or not this service was subsidized.

A brief discussion ensued with regard to the possibility of HRM subsidizing accessible taxis, with Mr. Anstey noting that HRM is not permitted under the Municipal Government Act to subsidize private business. Mr. Anstey went on to note that he understands that Metro Transit has an arrangement with at least one of the local companies regarding accessible taxis.

Mr. Hindle noted that the arrangement referred to by Mr. Anstey is a program to augment the access-a-bus service through the taxi industry. He advised that the Provincial Department of Social Services also provides a mini-bus. Mr. Hindle stated that the service provided by Yellow Cab was a similar to access a bus and noted that it does not appear there is a great demand for individual accessible taxi service. Mr. Hindle advised that Metro Transit is preparing a report in response to Council's request for a report regarding the possibility of Metro Transit assuming responsibility for accessible taxis.

Mr. Shannon addressed the matter pointing out that the taxi industry in HRM is private. As it appears there is no profit in accessible taxis, it is reasonable that government be responsible for the provision of guaranteed accessible taxi service. Mr. Shannon commented that HRM, through Metro Transit, probably has the required information to provide accessible taxi service. Mr. Shannon stated that the provision of accessible taxis is not the responsibility of the taxi industry.

Following a further short discussion it was **MOVED by Mr. Richards, seconded by Mr. Shannon the Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee recommend to**

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Halifax Regional Council that HRM look to all levels of government to assist with the establishment of such a service for disabled persons throughout Nova Scotia.

MOVED by Councillor McCluskey, seconded by Mr. Richards that the motion be amended to provide that accessible taxis be provided through Metro Transit.

Councillor McCluskey noted that the information she has received indicates that more than 900 accessible trips cannot be accommodated within the present system. The Councillor stressed that this is an unacceptable situation.

The motion to amend was **PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The amended motion, as follows, was **PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

MOVED by Mr. Richards, seconded by Mr. Shannon the Regional Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee recommend to Halifax Regional Council that accessible taxis be provided through Metro Transit and further that HRM look to all levels of government to assist with the establishment of such a service for disabled persons throughout Nova Scotia.

Mr. Hindle noted that the Taxi Office has received a number of calls praising the professional and helpful manner of taxi drivers when assisting disabled persons.

Mr. Withrow requested that the Taxi Office re-issue their letter regarding assistance to and transportation of disabled persons. Mr. Withrow also requested that the letter include a suggestion that the brokers develop a procedure for the dispatching of taxis that are able to handle wheelchairs.