



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: January 9, 2012
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Meeting Date: January 17, 2012

TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services

FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services, in consultation with the Director of Legal Services

SUBJECT: Taxis in Bus Lanes

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council adopt a resolution as required under sections 124.2(2) and 124.2 (3) of the Motor Vehicle Act, expressly permitting taxis to travel but not stop in bus lanes for the purposes of a trial project.

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to request Council to adopt a resolution permitting taxis to travel but not stop in bus lanes for the purpose of a trial project. Staff will monitor the pilot program to determine if the change can benefit taxis in terms of travel time savings without causing significant delay for transit operations.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY

On October 18, 2011, the following motion was approved by Council:

WHEREAS

1. Taxis are a vital part of the city's transportation system.
2. Other jurisdictions have increased the efficiency of the taxi fleet by allowing cabs to travel in bus lanes.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council direct staff to implement a pilot program, in consultation with the Taxi Roundtable and TransLink, to allow taxis to travel in bus

lanes within the city of Vancouver as soon as practicable and report to Council by way of a memorandum as to what the trial will entail.

REPORT:

Background

In support of the October 18th motion, the Mayor wrote the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure requesting his support for the pilot program. Section 124.2 of the Act requires approval in writing by the Minister for regulating the use of traffic lanes within 800m of Highway 1 and thus such segments of the bus lane network require the Minister's approval prior to allowing taxi's within these segments.

On December 7, 2011, the City received a response from the Minister that suggested City staff contact Ministry policy staff to discuss the proposed routes. Staff are currently in discussion with Ministry staff.

Strategic Analysis

Vancouver has developed a network of reserved lanes, primarily for providing transit priority on key bus corridors (see map of reserved lanes- Appendix 1). There are a total of seven streets with bus lanes in the City of Vancouver (McGill, Pender, Hastings, Burrard, Broadway, Georgia and Granville). The network also contains a shared HOV/Bus/Bike lane on Georgia Street in the downtown.

The City of Vancouver's update to its Transportation Plan is currently underway, and may include new policy that defines the role of taxis. However, in advance of any new policy, Staff note that taxis are a vital part of the City's transportation system. Taxis are a flexible travel choice for people who don't own a car, or choose not to drive for certain trips (such as airport connections, trips to home from restaurants, etc). Many citizens rely on taxis to get around the City as an extension to transit and walking trips. Taxis also serve as a supplementary on demand service to TransLink's HandyDART, for people with permanent or temporary disabilities, and for whom walking, cycling and conventional transit are not feasible.

Council directed staff to implement a pilot program to allow taxis to travel in bus lanes within the City of Vancouver. The Motor Vehicle Act expressly requires that Council adopt a resolution to permit taxis to travel in bus lanes. The trial will allow taxis to travel but not stop in bus lanes because allowing taxis to stop in bus lanes could cause a significant delay to transit operations.

The taxi industry was very appreciative of this initiative and they believe that permitting taxis to travel on bus lanes should enable taxis to operate more efficiently particularly in congested areas.

TransLink and city staff have agreed to jointly monitor the bus lanes for any impact to bus travel times to ensure those lanes continue to meet the needs of transit. The taxi industry will also help monitor bus lanes.

The pilot program would be in place at least a year before making a decision to have the changes made permanent. The taxi industry and TransLink have requested that signs be changed on all bus lanes. The cost of changing the signs is \$60,000. Due to high cost, changing the signage is not proposed to be included in the initial trial but could be implemented at a later date. However, VPD will ensure appropriate communication with the taxi industry.

The purpose of the monitoring plan is to determine if the change can provide benefit to taxis in terms of travel time savings without causing significant delay for transit operations.

Implications

Financial

The cost of monitoring the pilot program is estimated to be \$15,000. Funding for this program is available from Engineering's capital budget, 2010 Arterial Improvements, CER-00113.

Legal

Work on the pilot program can be implemented on the full-length of the four bus/bicycle lanes on Pender, Burrard, Granville and Broadway, and the HOV/bus/bicycle lane on Georgia. Expanding the pilot project to the segments within 800m of Highway 1 can proceed, once written approval from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is received. This affects the eastern portion of the Hastings and McGill bus lanes.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommend that Council adopt a resolution expressly permitting taxis to travel but not stop in bus lanes for the purposes of this trial project.

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