

**Regional Taxicab Regulators Task Force
Meeting Summary
12:00pm to 2:00pm, Thursday, March 27, 2008
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments**

Attendance:

A. **Members:**

Chris Aquino, WMATC
Tom Culpepper, City of Alexandria
Naomi Klaus, MWAA
Jeffrey Lehman, WMATC
Tom Patton, Loudoun County
David Reidenbach, Fairfax County
James Ryan, Montgomery County
Henri Stein McCartney, Fairfax County
Leon Swain, Jr., D.C. Taxicab Commission
Sherry Tillman, D.C. Taxicab Commission

B. **TPB Staff:**

Monica Bansal, Department of Transportation Planning
Jerry Miller, Department of Transportation Planning

C. **Members of the Public**

Two members

Opening:

The task force chairman, Dave Reidenbach welcomed everyone. Members each shared relevant jurisdictional updates.

Alexandria is still undergoing enforcement action against three taxicab companies. New companies will be formed, one of which may be environmentally friendly. The city is also looking to implement a taxi-driver sensitivity program, for which they would like support from other jurisdictions.

In DC, they are moving forward with accessible taxicabs with a press conference on the issue next week. They are also waiting for the final judgment on whether DC has the right to mandate meters. Other issues include problems with access to National Harbor and a new pick-up and drop-off zone proposed in Adams Morgan, with a separate location for Maryland and Virginia cabs.

Montgomery County is currently looking at a regulation to reduce the number of accessible cabs on the road since demand has drastically reduced since MetroAccess began. There will also be a drivers meeting to survey the drivers for problems that industry owners could potentially work on. Mr. Ryan indicated that the form will be available for other jurisdictions to use as an example for their own work.

Prince George's County is currently working on a driver orientation program and on a sticker or barcode system to keep track of the county's cabs. They are currently having problems with shuttles, the operations of which can be used to escape taxi and limo regulations. They are also having a variety of problems with the National Harbor development, particularly regarding the issue around public streets and private property.

WMATC is monitoring the progress on the DC meter conversion and will determine whether changes need to be made to their interstate fares based on the new DC fares.

Fairfax County still has a fuel surcharge of \$1, which will be in effect until October 31, though this may change.

Public Comment:

There were no public comments.

Discussion:

A. Discussion of Comments Received on Draft Regional Reciprocity Agreement

The task force discussed several issues of detail regarding the eventual finalization of the agreement. Issues of signatories were discussed, particularly whether MWAA and Loudoun County would be included as formal signatories. It was decided that Loudoun would not be eligible since they do not currently regulate taxis. MWAA would be allowed to sign if they choose to do so. Therefore, in order to make the issue of signatories more flexible, the agreement will be changed to reflect a more fluid "sign-on" structure. In this structure no official signatories will be named, but all interested jurisdictions and entities may sign on when the document is finalized. Naomi Klaus agreed to revise the text and to create a sign-on page within 3-4 weeks. This will be reviewed by the task force at the next meeting.

The agreement will also continue to hinge on the premise of "prearranged" trips. The idea of allowing hails after a cab drops off in a non-home jurisdiction so long as it was not loitering was struck from consideration. Although the idea would reduce dead-heading and associated emissions, it would be too difficult to enforce.

B. Discussion of Green Taxi Use in the Region

Hans Hess, owner of EnviroCab, a new environmentally focused taxicab company operating in Arlington County, presented an overview of his company's operations, including the green vehicles chosen, their performance, and any impacts on drivers. For instance, he stated that the typical Crown Victorias use \$40-\$50 in gas per day, while a Prius only uses \$10 in gas per day, which amounts to a \$9000 per year savings. Task Force members discussed the issue of size of vehicles and the implications for passenger needs. Mr. Hess stated that while the Prius appears small it actually has more leg room than the Crown Victoria. In addition, EnviroCab also employs Ford Escape hybrids for trips requiring greater room, such as airport trips. Other issues discussed were issues of cost of purchasing and operating a hybrid vehicle. One member brought up the question of how to sell the idea of using hybrid vehicles when the capital costs are so much higher than a conventional vehicle. Mr. Hess explained that not only was the vehicle easier and cheaper to operate, but the incentives were nicely aligned when considering financing options and fuel savings taken together. Another question on this topic was if the hybrid insurance is twice as high as that of a conventional vehicle, as has been heard by taxi drivers. Mr. Hess stated that the insurance for hybrids and conventional vehicles is exactly the same.

Comments from the Public

There were no comments.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be Thursday, May 22 from 12pm to 2pm at COG.