Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – June 11, 2019

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – May 28, 2019

Item No. 1 Taxis in Diamond Lanes

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works and submitted the following to Council:

1. That pursuant to section 90(1) (l) of the Highway Traffic Act, Council expressly permit taxis to travel but not stop in diamond lanes, which allows the pilot project to become permanent.

2. That the Transit Department and Winnipeg Parking Authority Vehicles for Hire office continue to monitor taxi usage and remedy any operational issues.

3. That the Transit Department be directed to provide an update on the program to the November 19, 2019 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works, to align with the Vehicles for Hire Annual Report;

4. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – May 28, 2019

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Allard,

That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works be concurred in and forwarded to Council.

Carried

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On May 28, 2019, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, with the following amendment:

- Add the following new Recommendation 3, and renumber the remaining accordingly:

  "3. That the Transit Department be directed to provide an update on the program to the November 19, 2019 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works, to align with the Vehicles for Hire Annual Report;"

and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

Mark Cohoe, Executive Director, Bike Winnipeg, submitted a communication dated May 28, 2019, with respect to the matter.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: **Taxis in Diamond Lanes**

Critical Path: **Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works – Executive Policy Committee – Council**

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
A. Regiec	G. Ewankiw	N/A	D. McNeil

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its meeting on December 13, 2017, City Council adopted a resolution permitting licensed taxis to travel in diamond lanes, effective March 1, 2018, on a one-year trial period. The Transit and Public Works Departments coordinated the implementation of the trial and worked together with the Winnipeg Parking Authority, who consulted with the taxi industry regarding operational regulations.

The Transit Department monitored the diamond lanes during the period of the trial to assess if taxis using the diamond lanes caused any significant delay to Transit operations.

Based on data analysis, as long as taxis continue to respect the “no stopping in the diamond lanes” provision, the Transit Department is supportive with taxis sharing the diamond lanes. There is a risk that other personal transportation providers and private high-occupancy vehicles might desire the same access to, and use of, the diamond lanes as taxis. Expanding access to diamond lanes diminishes the effectiveness of a reserved lane originally intended to maintain and improve the operation of mass public transit in congested traffic areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That pursuant to section 90(1)(l) of the Highway Traffic Act, Council expressly permit taxis to travel but not stop in diamond lanes, which allows the pilot project to become permanent.

2. That the Transit Department and Winnipeg Parking Authority Vehicles for Hire office continue to monitor taxi usage and remedy any operational issues.

3. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

At its meeting on December 13, 2017, City Council authorized licensed taxis to travel in diamond lanes effective March 1, 2018 on a one year trial period.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Allowing taxis to travel in diamond lanes provides operating efficiency within the taxi industry and a greater incentive for taxi use.

There is a risk that other personal transportation providers and private high occupancy vehicles might desire the same access to and use of the diamond lanes as taxis, diminishing the effectiveness of a reserved lane originally intended to maintain and improve the operation of mass public transit in congested traffic areas.

There are no financial implications.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Diamond lanes are reserved lanes for authorized vehicles. These lanes have been established by the City of Winnipeg under delegated authority for traffic regulation as defined under Section 90 (1) of the Province of Manitoba Highway Traffic Act. The intent and purpose of the “diamond” or reserved lanes is to ensure that designated vehicles (before March 1, 2018 only public transit buses and bicycles) operate reliably and efficiently during the specified time period (in most cases on weekday rush hour time periods), and therefore deliver quality service to citizens of Winnipeg who use these modes of transportation.

Taxis are also an important component of the City’s transportation system. They provide a flexible travel choice, serve as an extension of transit and walking trips. It was anticipated that allowing taxis to travel in diamond lanes would enable them to operate more efficiently, particularly in congested areas.

On December 13, 2017, Council adopted a resolution expressly permitting taxis to travel but not stop in diamond lanes for the purposes of a trial project. It was determined that the trial would be in place for one year in order to evaluate before making any decision for a permanent change.

The trial project allowing taxis to travel in diamond lanes officially began on March 1, 2018. Prior to the official launch, the Transit Department notified all bus drivers of the change in use of the diamond lanes, and the Winnipeg Parking Authority held meetings with the taxi industry to ensure that their taxi drivers were aware of, and understood, the policy and rules of operation.

Two weeks prior to the March 1, 2018 start of the trial period, 175 regulatory and 115 informational diamond lane traffic signs were modified to include taxis.

The Transit Department monitored the diamond lanes during the period of the trial to assess if taxis using the diamond lanes caused any significant delay to Transit operations affecting its people moving capacity.

Strategic Analysis

Diamond Lane Travel Times

The Transit Department conducted travel time surveys to assess the travel times of buses using the diamond lanes, and determine if taxis were affecting Transit Operations. With the use of a Chartered Transit bus, the two surveys were conducted before taxis were allowed to use the lanes and half way through the trial period. The average bus travel times in the diamond lanes were not affected.

Impacts to Transit and Cyclists

Prior to and at the onset of the trial, the primary concern pertaining to transit was about taxis stopping in the bus lanes, due to potential impacts to bus travel times and schedule reliability.

During the first month of the trial, the Transit Department raised concerns about the high number of taxis observed stopping in diamond lanes.

As a result of this, the Winnipeg Parking Authority met with the taxi industry to raise awareness and address this concern. These efforts proved successful as the number of offences dropped significantly as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Number of Taxis Reported Stopping in Diamond Lanes to Load/Unload

MONTH	TOTAL NUMBER OF INCIDENTS
February 1 – 28, 2018	1
March 1 – 31, 2018	10
April 1 – 30, 2018	14
May 1 – 31, 2018	15
June 1 – 30, 2018	5
July 1 – 31, 2018	3
August 1 – 31, 2018	3
September 1 – 30, 2018	6
October 1 – 31, 2018	5
November 1 – 30, 2018	7
December 1 – 31, 2018	2
January 1 – 31, 2019	0
February 1 – 28, 2019	3

Notes:
Incidents involving taxis stopping in diamond lanes reported by bus operators and recorded by the Transit Control Center.

Transit's Client Services Division reported that there were no complaints received with respect to cyclists during the taxis in diamond lanes trial period. In consultation with Bike Winnipeg, they indicated that their group received two complaints of a minor nature, and referred these members to report to 311, City of Winnipeg.

Overall, Bike Winnipeg felt that there were no major issues or incidents regarding cyclists and taxis during the diamond lanes trial period. The group indicated that they support Transit's ongoing effort to monitor diamond lane operations, and also support continued education and consultation with the taxi industry and its stakeholders.

Taxi Use of Diamond Lanes

The Winnipeg Parking Authority held discussions and information sessions with the taxi industry in the time period from late February until May 2018. An intensive communication strategy was deployed, which included development of a “Do’s and Don’ts” information sheet that clearly outlined the rules of usage. This sheet was attached to each license issued, and distributed to taxi dispatchers and stakeholders.

The Winnipeg Parking Authority also met on a regular basis with taxi industry representatives about every six weeks and continued to remind them about the pilot project and the “Do’s and Don’ts” of using the diamond lanes.

The taxi industry itself broadcast driver notifications as a reminder of the “Do’s and Don’ts”, and self-imposed fines applied to their own drivers who disobeyed the rules.

Overall, the taxi industry has expressed an appreciation to the City for allowing their taxis to operate in the diamond lanes. They indicate this action has saved time and money for the consumer and increased efficiency in their overall service. The taxi industry has expressed that they will continue to educate all taxi drivers on the importance of safety and the rules when using the diamond lanes.

Conclusion

Based on data analysis, as long as taxis continue to respect the “no stopping in the diamond lanes” provision, the Transit Department would be supportive of taxis sharing the diamond lanes and that the pilot project would become permanent.

The Transit Department will continue to monitor and collect data related to incidents of taxis stopping in diamond lanes and the Winnipeg Parking Authority’s Vehicles for Hire office will continue to liaison between Transit and the taxi industry.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement **Date:** May 13, 2019

Project Name:

Taxis in Diamond Lanes

COMMENTS:

There are no financial impacts from the recommendations in this report.

Original Signed by:
Laurie Fisher, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance & Administration

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

Public Works – Traffic Management
Winnipeg Parking Authority
Bike Winnipeg – Mark Cohoe, Executive Director

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

01-01b Key Directions for the Entire City- Key directions for connecting and expanding our sustainable transportation and infrastructure network.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Transit
Division: Operations Division
Prepared by: Alex Regiec, MCIP, RPP, Operations Planner
Date: May 13, 2019