Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – July 5, 2023

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – June 26, 2023

Item No. 4 Safe Transportation Training for Vehicle for Hire (VFH) Drivers

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

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

1. That the expenditure of up to an additional $130,000 from the VFH Safety and Security fund be approved to pay for training for VFH drivers related to the MMIWGS2+ Calls for Justice and Safe Transportation.

2. 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 Public Works – June 26, 2023

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Lukes,

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

Carried

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 26, 2023, the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

David Grant submitted a communication with respect to the matter.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Safe Transportation Training for Vehicle for Hire (VFH) Drivers

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Public Works - Executive Policy Committee - Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
R. Topolniski	J. Berezowsky	C. Kloepfer	M. Jack

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 28, 2022, Council directed the Public Service to consult and engage with the MMIWG2S+ Implementation team, Indigenous governments and territorial organizations, vehicle-for-hire (VFH) service providers, and the community. The purpose of this engagement was to gain insight on the lived experiences that passengers have had using vehicles for hire, what needs to change and what can be done, and to bring the groups together to share experiences and learn from each other. After spending much of the remaining months of 2022 creating a task force; arranging consultations with the Indigenous community, Taxicab service providers, newcomer and racialized women; and then compiling all feedback received by many participants; the Public Service moved into the next phase which included considering the feedback and how the suggestions could be implemented.

One of the consistent themes of the engagement sessions was the need for enhanced cultural training in order to begin to build a better understanding amongst service providers of the history of Indigenous peoples. It was felt that beginning to build this knowledge would improve understanding between drivers and passengers, increasing safety for both. The Indigenous Relations division worked extensively with the community to determine what should be included in the training, and the Public Service is now at a point where it can move forward and begin to deliver. In order to facilitate this, funds are needed to cover both one-time costs associated with content development, as well as the ongoing facilitator costs. Funding this program from the VFH Safety and Security fund will remove the barrier of an out-of-pocket expense for drivers who will be required to take the training.

In general, the topics of the training will include:

- History of Colonization;
- Colonial impacts of sexual violence on Indigenous Women;
- Videos that include lived-experience testimonials;
- Role of the Driver;
- Role of all Canadians;
- Resources available; and
- Who to call when someone is in distress.

The proposed training is in line with the City's commitment to Reconciliation and the MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice – specifically Call 4.1, 8.1 and 17.9. Additional training will improve safety for drivers and for passengers while using vehicle for hire service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council approve the expenditure of up to an additional $130,000 from the VFH Safety and Security fund to pay for training for VFH drivers related to the MMIWGS2+ Calls for Justice and Safe Transportation.

2. 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

Only Council has the authority to approve expenditures from the VFH Safety and Security fund.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Approving the expenditure of these funds from the VFH Safety and Security fund will cover the cost of the development of content, the resources required for training, as well as the expense related to the facilitators for each session to deliver the training over the course of the next several years. This would allow all taxicab drivers to attend the training at no cost to register.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

MMIWG2S+ 231 Calls for Justice and National Action Plan Implementation – Safe Transportation

On April 28, 2022, Council directed the Public Service to consult and engage with the MMIWG2S+ Implementation team, Indigenous governments and territorial organizations, vehicle-for-hire (VFH) service providers, and the community. The purpose of this engagement was to gain insight on the lived experiences that passengers have had using vehicles for hire, what needs to change and what can be done, and to bring the groups together to share experiences and learn from each other. The original motion directed the Public Service to report back on the work that was done in the City's Indigenous Accord Report in 2023.

Once Council passed this motion as part of the Vehicle for Hire (VFH) Annual Report, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) created a Safe Transportation Task force led by the City's Indigenous Relations division. This task force included members from Indigenous Relations, VFH, Winnipeg Transit, Community Services, Corporate Communications, and the Office of Public Engagement. Objectives of the Safe Transportation Task force include: Coordination of fulsome engagements with stakeholders to achieve safe public transportation in Winnipeg; recommend amendments to the VFH By-law that is responsive to the concerns of the Indigenous community; recommend opportunities for safer spaces and transportation related to Winnipeg Transit; other additional policy/safety-focused operational changes related to public transportation.

The task force created a timeline that began in April 2022. Throughout the months of May and June 2022, the task force conducted extensive consultation and outreach regarding engagement sessions before they were scheduled. The task force completed significant preparatory work during this phase, including the development of a communications strategy, communications documents, and marketing materials. Further, letters of invitation were sent by the CAO to Indigenous governments and territorial organizations (the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Southern Chiefs Organization, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, and the Manitoba Metis Federation), the MMIWG2S+ Implementation team (and Winnipeg Indigenous Accord signatories), and taxi dispatcher stakeholders. The task force also compiled a number of handouts available for attendees of the sessions, including brochures (created with Winnipeg Transit), information on the VFH complaint process, and listings of available community supports. Engagement sessions began in August and ran through the fall of 2022. An update on this work is included in the Winnipeg Indigenous Accord annual report that will be presented to Council in 2023.

The City held an initial engagement session on August 24, 2022, that was centred in Indigenous practices and customs, including opening the session in a “good way” by having a traditional fire with fire keepers present throughout the day, a traditional Indigenous healer, and opening the discussion with a sharing circle. This session was developed in a trauma-informed approach considering the guidance provided by the MMIWG2S+ Implementation team. It had 44 participants who spent the time sharing their experiences as well as providing feedback and making suggestions on the issues that have led to passengers feeling unsafe (including while using Winnipeg Transit), and the tensions created between the Indigenous community and the taxi industry.

Some of the main themes that the City heard included: the need for more frequent Indigenous mandatory cultural training for everyone; the need to create a more straightforward complaint process; the value of harm-reduction training for all staff (call-takers and drivers); the value of including community (Indigenous) input into training and complaints; the need for current processes to be more available (more widely communicated) on buses and in taxis; the importance of ensuring that the “Right to ride” is more commonly understood by drivers and passengers for bus and taxi. As transportation is such an important facet of a person’s life and ability to thrive in the community, being able to access safe transportation, whether that is through vehicles for hire or public transit, is a right that all people should be entitled to. This means that barriers should be reduced as much as possible, and that the safety of both drivers and passengers should be of utmost importance. This also included better understanding and compassion by Transit drivers by allowing those who do not have proper fare to board buses when they were in fear for their safety or if it was bitterly cold outside.

On September 20, 2022, the City held an engagement session with the Taxi Industry. There were 24 participants at this session, which was largely made up of board members and management from the two major taxi companies in Winnipeg. This day included guidance from a Sikh “Aunty” from the East Indian community who attended and opened the session (having an aunty/female voice is imperative to the overall process which includes Indigenous and Newcomer community). One of the comments that stood out from this session was made by a Board Member, who stated “After 40 years of driving, this was the first time I have ever sat at the same table with an Indigenous person.”

Some of the main themes heard were:

- Drivers feel safer when they get paid upfront (because then they are only thinking about driving);
- Drivers need more clarity on destination (it either often changes or is not accurate);
- Drivers need a campaign to inform passengers of driver rights;
- Drivers recognize a need for more gatherings like this, to meet Indigenous people and get to know each other;
- The City needs to enforce the correct training and the companies will comply;
- Drivers will be more impacted from stories of lived experiences;
- Accountability is key and a system is needed to report other drivers.

A second consultation was held in September 2022, at Manitoba Moon Voices regarding the Safe Transportation approach to the Calls for Justice. This was done at their request, and had eight participants. This session included an overview of the Safe Transportation processes and a discussion on opportunities for change.

In October 2022, a third session was held involving Newcomer and Racialized women and their experiences with VFH service and using Transit. There were 24 participants at this session, and the same themes and suggestions that had been discussed in previous sessions came through again.

While these sessions provided a place to start for consultations with the Indigenous community, racialized and newcomer women and the taxi industry, they are not the end of the discussion and engagement. The Public Service set up a dedicated email address (safetransportation@winnipeg.ca) and phone number (204-986-0547) so there are options available for community members to provide confidential experiences, feedback, and ideas to improve safety within public transportation in Winnipeg.

After compiling all of the feedback received from the consultation sessions, as well as at times outside of those sessions, there were a number of recurring themes and suggestions from the community.

The three main recommendations that came out of the consultations that the Public Service conducted were:

- Improved training for drivers (bus and vehicle for hire);
- Improved communication from the City on complaint processes and how to navigate them;
- Improved access to filing complaints and complaints processes.

In response, Indigenous Relations has been working with the MMIWG2S+ Advisory Committee since December 2022 to develop mandatory training for vehicle for hire drivers that will be implemented by end of 2023. These are all policies that can be worked through and implemented. While some may require additional consultation and result in additional requests of Council for funding, those will come later, if needed as part of the VFH Annual Report for 2023.

This report, focuses on the training for VFH drivers, which will include the general content of this new training, and a proposed budget. The Public Service estimates, based on the ability to deliver this training and the number of drivers that will be required to take the training, that it would take a number of years to have them all fully trained.

General content of the new training

- History of Colonization (colonization and the *Indian Act*)
- Colonial impacts of sexual violence on Indigenous Women and discussion
- Videos – lived experience and discussion
- (Reflection – Part 1 - Answers)
- MMIWG2S+ Current Realities
- Role of Driver
- Role of all Canadians
- Resources (where to find them)
- Who to call when someone is in distress
- Evaluation/test

The content of this training was developed by Indigenous Relations, in consultation with the MMIWGS2+ Implementation Committee and through the voices of the Indigenous Community. The Indigenous community will deliver this training.

Implementation of this training, and requiring drivers to obtain this training does not require a change to the VFH By-law and can be implemented by the Public Service.

Budget

In the VFH division's Safety and Security Report that was approved by Council in February 2019, Council approved the expenditure of up to $20,000 for the development and delivery of training for VFH drivers in order to improve both their safety and that of passengers. While this training was being worked on in 2019, changing circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic, severely impacted the VFH industry. Further, it was felt that, based on the industry and discussions with the community, a re-prioritization and narrowed focus of this training was required. Instead of the training being more broadly-based, it was determined that further consultations with the community were needed and that moving on the Calls for Justice related to Safe Transportation in the MMIWGS2+ report was the right course of action and that narrowing the training to be more specific to the Indigenous community was appropriate.

The Public Service has developed a training schedule that would see training to occur two to three times per month in eight-hour sessions with a maximum of 30 participants per class.

There are one-time costs associated with the content development, which includes video resources and written content. This is estimated to cost approximately $30,000. The majority of the remaining expense is related to the cost of facilitators to deliver the training over the next several years. The Public Service estimates that in order to cover and train an initial intake of approximately 2000 drivers, this will cost approximately $120,000 for a total cost of $150,000.

As VFH already has received authorization for the use of up to $20,000 from this fund related to training, a request for the remaining anticipated budget expenditure of $130,000 is being made

in this request. Since this being covered from the VFH Safety and Security fund, it will remove the barrier of an out-of-pocket expense for the drivers who will be required to take the training. The Safety and Security fund has sufficient funds to accommodate this request, and continues to be funded monthly through the $0.03/trip levy charged on trips provided by personal transportation providers. This request will encumber nearly all the funds currently in the Safety and Security fund; however, this fund continues to be replenished on a monthly basis.

Next Steps

The Indigenous Relations Division is currently meeting with facilitators and trainers to finalize the content and training schedule for the remainder of 2023. Training sessions will be implemented once funding has been approved by Council. Indigenous Relations and VFH will work with Corporate Communications to develop information and communications for the VFH industry to advertise the training. Review of the training content with the VFH industry will take place prior to its finalization and feedback will be considered prior to full implementation and roll-out to drivers. Feedback will also be considered from facilitators and participants on an on-going basis.

Training sessions will be implemented once funding has been approved by Council. The Indigenous Relations Division and VFH will work with Corporate Communications to develop information and communications for the VFH industry to advertise the training.

As well, the VFH office will distribute communications to the existing VFH industry dispatchers and VFH drivers who would be affected immediately.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Safe Transportation Training for VFH drivers

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Capital					
Capital Expenditures Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budgeted Costs	-	-	-	-	-
Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Funding Sources:					
Debt - Internal	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Debt - External	-	-	-	-	-
Grants (Enter Description Here)	-	-	-	-	-
Reserves, Equity, Surplus	-	-	-	-	-
Other - Enter Description Here	-	-	-	-	-
Total Funding	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Total Additional Capital Budget Required	$ -				
Total Additional Debt Required	$ -				
Current Expenditures/Revenues					
Direct Costs	$ 150,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Incremental Revenue/Recovery	-	-	-	-	-
Net Cost/(Benefit)	$ 150,000	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Less: Existing Budget Amounts	150,000	-	-	-	-
Net Budget Adjustment Required	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -

Additional Comments: The direct costs of $150,000 represent funding to deliver training required for VFH Drivers related to the MMIWGS2+ Calls for Justice and Safe Transportation. In Feb 2019, Council authorized $20,000 for the Safety & Security Fund. This amount will be used to help offset the requested training cost of $150,000 leaving a balance of $130,000 as an additional request to use from the Safety & Security Fund.

Joseph Camia, May 11, 2023

Joseph Camia, CPA, CGA
Manager of Finance, WPA

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with: Indigenous Relations division

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

Implementation of the training recommended in this report will support Objective #2 of the OurWinnipeg Goal of Social Equity: “Build bridges spanning ideas, cultures, identities and generations on a foundation of truth, understanding, and rights-based reconciliation.”

Specifically, the focus on Indigenous culture will promote reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples (Policy 5.4) and the development of an Indigenous lens (Policy 5.5), as well as equitable service access (Policy 5.6).

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

Consideration was given as to whether this report connects to the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (CAP), and it was determined that the CAP is not applicable to this specific report.

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

The VFH industry supports the reduction of poverty by playing a role in ensuring that all residents and community members are treated fairly, and are able to access transportation. This supports Goal 5 of Winnipeg’s Poverty Reduction Strategy, that “Transportation system equity is enhanced.”

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Public Works
Division: Winnipeg Parking Authority
Prepared by: Grant Heather and Jessica Paley
Date: May 30, 2023
File No: WPA-007-2023