Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – January 21, 2025

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – January 9, 2025

Item No. 2 Vehicle for Hire Industry 2024 Annual Update and Proposed Vehicles For Hire By-law and MBEA Enabling By-law Amendments

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 update provided on the Vehicle for Hire industry be received as information.

2. That a by-law to amend the Vehicles for Hire By-law No. 129/2017 and the Municipal By-law Enforcement Act Enabling By-law No. 59/2016 in accordance with this report, a draft of which is attached as Appendix A to this report, be enacted.

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

Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – January 21, 2025

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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 January 9, 2025, 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.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On December 12, 2024, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works and adopted the following:

1. That an extension of time of 60 days be granted for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the Vehicle for Hire industry Annual Update and Proposed Vehicle for Hire Bylaw Amendments.

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

On December 15, 2022, Council adopted the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works which included the following recommendation:

2. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to continue its annual report to Council on the vehicle for hire industry until December, 2027.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – January 9, 2025

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

On December 13, 2017, Council adopted the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee, as amended, which included the following recommendation:

13. That the Public Service be required to report back every 12 months for the first 5 years with an update on the vehicle for hire industry under the new By-law and to request approval for any By-law revisions deemed necessary.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Vehicle for Hire Industry 2024 Annual Update and Proposed Vehicles For Hire By-law and MBEA Enabling By-law Amendments

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

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
R. Topolniski	J. Berezowsky	T. Graham	S. Armbruster, Interim CAO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout 2024, the Vehicles for Hire (VFH) office has continued to make accessible service delivery, training and safety for both drivers and passengers its top priorities. Key highlights of this year's annual report include:

- An update on the health of the VFH industry in Winnipeg;
- Recommended amendments to the Vehicles For Hire By-law No. 129/2017 ("VFH By-law) that will clarify obligations and continue to improve parity in the licensing and operating requirements for traditional taxi and personal transportation (PTP) service providers;
- Recommended amendments to Schedule A of the Municipal By-law Enforcement Act Enabling By-law No. 59/2016 ("MBEA Enabling By-law") that will:
    - add or clarify offences under the VFH By-law so that the VFH office can issue penalty notices (tickets) more efficiently; and
    - modify fine amounts for certain VFH By-law offences;
- An update on the Building Cultural Competency training for VFH drivers led by Indigenous Relations (IRD) related to the MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice and safe transportation; and
- An update on improvements to VFH driver training and VFH driver accessible training.

There are a number of VFH By-law changes proposed, many of which are intended to improve parity in licensing and operating requirements between traditional taxis and PTP operators. The newly proposed fines, as well as the amended existing fines, are not expected to significantly impact generated revenue. Details regarding the bylaw changes are included in Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the update provided on the Vehicle for Hire industry be received as information.

2. That Council enact a by-law to amend the Vehicles for Hire By-law No. 129/2017 and the Municipal By-law Enforcement Act Enabling By-law No. 59/2016 in accordance with this report, a draft of which is attached as Appendix A to this report.

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

This is the second of five additional annual reports required by Council, as per Council's December 15, 2022, direction:

> "That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to continue its annual report to Council on the Vehicle for Hire industry until December 2027."

Council approval is required to amend the VFH By-law and the MBEA Enabling By-law.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are financial implications related to the proposed VFH By-law and MBEA By-law amendments, including the addition of new fines and changes to the fines for existing offences. The frequency of these offences, and therefore their associated revenue, is difficult to predict but is not expected to have a significant budgetary impact.

There are also a number of VFH By-law changes proposed, many of which are intended to clarify obligations of VFH drivers and dispatchers, as well as improve parity in licensing and operating requirements between traditional taxis and PTP operators.

The management, licensing, regulatory oversight, and other initiatives for the VFH industry are currently projected to be cost-neutral and will have no budgetary impact to the City.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

On November 9, 2017, the Province of Manitoba passed the *Local Vehicles for Hire Act*, which dissolved the Manitoba Taxicab Board, repealed *The Taxicab Act* and associated regulations, and statutorily transitioned oversight and regulation of Winnipeg's Vehicle for Hire (VFH) industry to the City, effective February 28, 2018.

The City of Winnipeg assumed responsibility for the VFH industry by enacting a new VFH By-law that streamlined and modernized VFH regulations, with an emphasis on passenger and driver safety, as well as an aim to increase accessible service and options for passengers. This report's recommendations, combined with recent achievements made since the City was assigned responsibility for VFH regulation, will continue to resolve these concerns and allow for ongoing modernizations, updates and further improvements in the industry.

The following amendments to the VFH By-law will continue to make oversight and enforcement more efficient, add more parity to the VFH by-law for taxis and PTPs, address feedback from industry stakeholders, and offer improvements to the VFH industry.

VFH By-law amendments

In an attempt to ensure that the VFH By-law remains current, innovative, and reactive to market and industry forces, potential by-law amendments are collected and analyzed throughout the year, captured from a variety of sources. These allow the VFH office to continue to effectively administer and enforce the VFH By-law, and to ensure that the proper tools are in place for regulation, licencing and compliance. The proposed amendments are intended to address areas of the VFH By-law that have been identified by the VFH office and through feedback from a number of sources including VFH industry service providers, accessibility advocates, the VFH stakeholders, and from passengers using VFH services.

Proposed amendments to the by-law and their associated implications are summarized below (further details are available in Appendix A, attached):

i. Define "digital advertising" and create opportunities to install this in VFH

With vehicles for hire looking for additional opportunities to create revenue streams, as well as having an audience in their vehicles, and as technology continues to improve, the opportunity exists for dispatchers to have vehicles install tablets that can play ads and provide information to passengers. This amendment, which includes providing the designated employee with authority to establish and ensure compliance with requirements and guidelines relating to digital advertising, will ensure that minimum standards are set involving the form and content of the advertising, marketing, interactive or promotional content that may be provided by dispatch companies.

ii. Removing the responsibility for taxi dispatch companies to retain taxi camera footage

In 2023, an amendment was approved to require taxi owners to be responsible for ensuring the retention of camera footage for the minimum amount of time required under the VFH By-law, including in the event of a camera change. Originally, this responsibility was on the taxi dispatchers; however, they have little impact on this, and often are unaware of a camera change. This amendment will remove the responsibility from taxi dispatchers, as it is already required to be retained under the By-law by the taxi vehicle owner.

iii. Updating definitions related to "shuttle service" and "transportation as a basket of goods"

The updates to these items are included in the "transportation service" definition and are meant to provide clarity for the VFH office and for industry service providers, as well as ensure that those providing transportation service as defined under the VFH By-law are properly licenced and meeting the requirements as set out. These are generally housekeeping updates.

iv. Amend the requirement for taxi dispatchers to report refusals to on-request

In the interest of streamlining processes and reduced unnecessary reporting, this amendment will ensure that taxi dispatchers continue to collect information regarding refusal of service by a taxi driver, but only be responsible to report that information within 24 hours of a request by the VFH designated employee.

v. Adding clarity that only taxi companies may advertise or identify as having taxis

Taxis are clearly defined under the VFH By-law, require distinguishing decals and equipment, and have additional rules around operation. This proposed amendment will ensure that only taxi companies advertise and promote taxis and that PTP companies do

not hold themselves out to have taxis or use language such as “taxi” or “cab” that may confuse the public.

vi. Adding a section that requires a PTP driver to comply with an order and prohibit a suspended PTP driver or PTP vehicle to engage in transportation services while under suspension

At present, the VFH By-law requires that any licence holder must comply with an order as it relates to their ability to operate. This doesn’t currently apply to PTP drivers or PTP vehicles, who are not licenced in the same way as a taxi or limousine driver. This amendment makes clear that PTP drivers are also required to comply with orders and suspensions, as well as provides corresponding enforcement tools to VFH and ensure that both parts of the industry are required to follow the same rules and respond accordingly. As well, these amendments will ensure that if a PTP driver or a PTP vehicle is suspended, then it will not be able to operate and – if it continues to do so – will be subject to fines, further enforcement action and de-registration.

vii. Housekeeping updates to the VFH By-law

There are a number of proposed amendments to the VFH By-law that can be considered housekeeping amendments to ensure that there is improved clarity and efficiency in the enforcement and application of the intended VFH By-law sections.

viii. Addition of new offences and associated fines related to the VFH By-law sections added above, as well as adjustments to existing fines to better align the fine with the actual offence

Many of the new sections of the VFH By-law being proposed are meant to ensure the same rules apply to PTP drivers and PTP vehicle owners as licenced industry participants. In those cases, the proposed amendments to the MBEA Enabling By-law create an offence for the new section and attribute a similar financial fine for licenced operators. There are also sections of the VFH By-law that currently do not have a fine, and a new one is being added in these cases. Additionally, where obligations have been updated or changed, some fines are being removed or replaced accordingly.

As well, the VFH office has identified a few offences where the existing fine appears to be out of line with the corresponding offence. In these instances, a revised fine amount is being proposed. While there are a small number of increases to VFH By-law fines to better reflect the seriousness, the majority of the changes are decreases in fine amounts. A table has been produced (see Appendix E to this report) to highlight the new offences, as well as the proposed changes.

All of the above sections, offences and subsequent fines are set out in Appendix A to this report.

Key achievements and VFH industry update

The VFH industry continues to be an instrumental service provider and plays an important role in transporting citizens and visitors around the City, helping them obtain important goods and services, ensuring they are able to get to work or school, medical appointments, conduct business, supporting tourism, as well as allowing people to fully participate in and enjoy all the City has to offer.

Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry has continued to rebound in the numbers of trips provided, continuing to demonstrate the desire of passengers to use vehicle for hire service, as well as the resiliency of the industry. There continues to be growth and opportunity for expansion.
The VFH industry has seen strong growth since 2022 in the areas of trips-taken, vehicles available to handle the increased numbers of trips, and drivers providing service in the industry. The average number of vehicles available to provide service in 2024 is 3,360 (to the end of September), which is an average increase of 654 vehicles over the 2023 average of 2,706. The total number of vehicles available is higher than in 2023, and continues to be reactive to the increased numbers of trips that are being requested as well as the flexibility for part-time work and opportunity that is provided for drivers in the industry. This continues to demonstrate the overall resiliency and elasticity of the industry as well as the fact that as the demand for the service increases, there are interested service providers that can meet the needs of customers. The VFH industry provides an opportunity for drivers to be part-time service providers and allows them to fit this work into their schedules and other commitments.

The maximum number of taxis (standard and accessible) available for service in 2024 remains at 600 licences issued, with an average of 589 on the road each month. Through 2024, there was an average of 2,712 personal transportation providers ("PTPs", including accessible and standard passenger vehicles). The limousine/luxury vehicles numbers remain steady, when compared to 2023, with an average of 59 in 2024 available on a monthly basis. Nearly all available PTPs would be considered standard passenger vehicles (including those in the limousine category). These numbers have generally remained constant throughout the year based on the increase in demand. The average number of taxis operating in Winnipeg has remained constant during this period, but can generally fluctuate and be affected by demand as well as vehicle repairs and maintenance. Taxis continue to deliver more trips/vehicle than the PTP category.

The PTP category continues to provide significant scalable capacity and is driving increased competition in the industry and ultimately more options for the travelling public. The overall level of customer service continues to improve, as does the availability of vehicles and accessibility of on-demand service. Customers have increased transportation choices, more flexibility regarding the type of service they are able to obtain, and are better able to manage their own transportation choices. Further, VFH continues to see customers integrating various multi-modes of transportation into their overall plans in order to move around the City. The PTP segment of the industry also provides an opportunity for residents to earn additional income to supplement other income sources or provide service on a full-time basis as well as providing flexibility of schedule to accommodate other commitments.

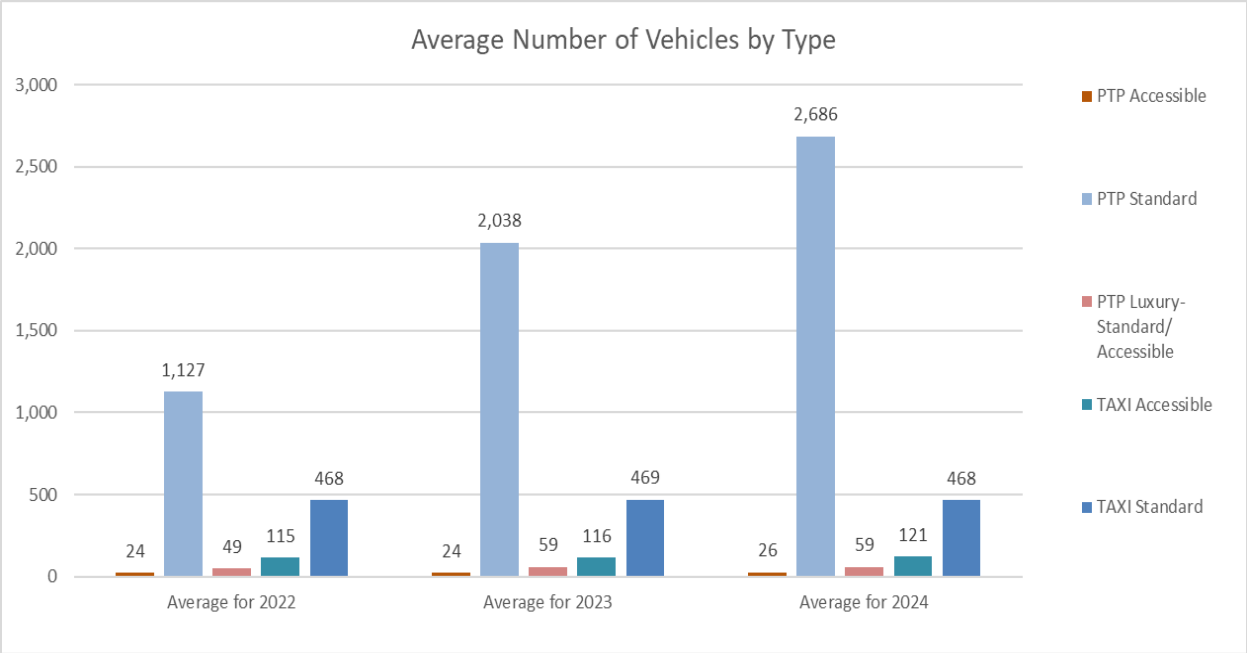


Figure 1

The PTP category continues to see a large number of available standard vehicles. The average number per month of standard PTP vehicles is the largest one available; however, their actual number of these vehicles on the road at any given time can vary greatly due to the transient nature of the drivers in setting their own schedules. As shown in Figure 1, the average number of standard PTPs available during 2024 to the end of August is 2,686, which is an increase over the 2023 average of 2,038. With previously noted increases in the demand for service remaining strong in 2024, and showing further growth, companies continue to scale their operations and bring on more drivers to meet the ever-growing needs for transportation. As mentioned in past reports, it should be noted there could be some double-counting of vehicles, albeit this appears to be an immaterial number on the total count.

Year-to-date (January to September) in 2024, there have been 7,346,457 trips completed in the VFH industry. This is an average of 816,273 trips per month. The first half of 2024 saw continued strong trip numbers, seeing four of the highest five monthly trip totals recorded. If the industry continues to provide trips at the current pace, 2024 will set a new record high. This is an average increase of 10.9 percent trips per month over 2023.

The 2023 year concluded with the industry providing 8,879,397 (an average of 739,950 trips/month). Compared to 2022, there were 2,199,679 more trips provided over the entire year (2022 – 6,679,718). Each of the last three years has seen continued growth, and a new industry high in trips provided. See Figure 2, below, for total VFH trips per year (2018-2024).

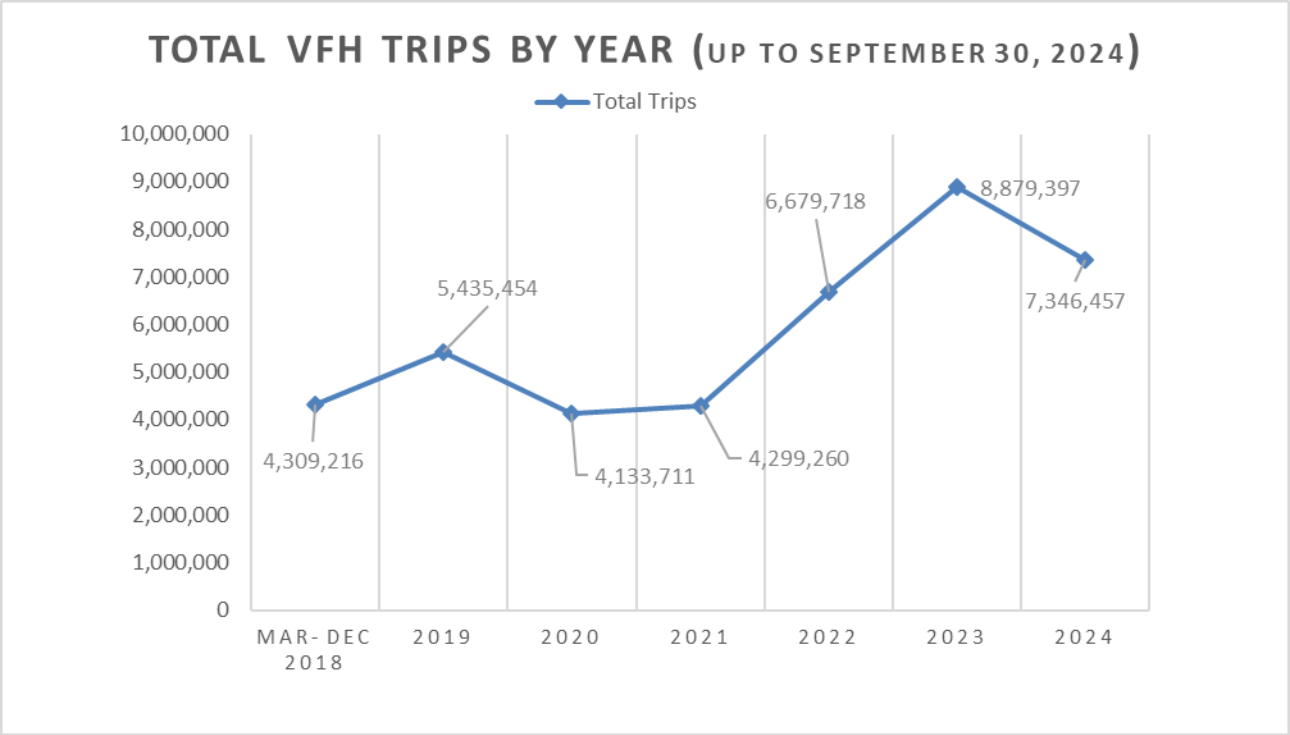


Figure 2

There continues to be strong evidence that the VFH market in Winnipeg is expanding. As mentioned, trips have continued to grow year-over-year in the industry, with 2023 ending at a new Winnipeg high of 8,879,397 trips, increasing from the previous high set in 2022 of 6,679,718. These results continue to demonstrate that the size of the market is increasing and the numbers of passengers with a desire and willingness to use vehicle for hire service continues to grow. VFH users are regularly requesting more trips and shifting the modes of transportation they are choosing to use, as well as choosing to use the VFH industry for their everyday transportation needs, as the cost of owning a vehicle becomes ever more expensive.

The increase in 2024 can be attributed to a few items:

- Increases in air travel throughout the year, as exhibited by the travel numbers reported by the James A Richardson International Airport. This is one of the largest impacts on the VFH industry.
- The increasing cost of vehicle ownership, due to inflation and other costs, with reduced usage, leading to a shift in transportation modes with less reliance on personal vehicles.
- Changing behaviours as residents adjusted their modes of transportation. People had more choices regarding the type of transportation they wanted, often integrating both public and private transportation into their decision-making.
- A full slate of various music, arts and cultural festivals this year, as well as professional sporting events, such as the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and Winnipeg Jets, concerts and performances.

- An increase in the use of VFH for non-emergency medical transportation and people getting to appointments. This includes the successful Winnipeg WAV program and the increases in trips seen there.

- In-person grads, weddings, holiday gatherings and other large-scale social events where people are making the decision to take VFH service both directions, instead of driving. This is partly due to changing attitudes, but also the education around the impacts of impaired driving and people generally making better decisions due to a wider variety of options available to meet their needs.

The use of VFH continues to be a much-needed and popular mode of transportation. Residents continue to see the benefits of having choice and competition and access to both taxi and PTP options, and the service providers in each category. VFH continues to experience generally improved customer service and increased accountability by the dispatch companies especially as it relates to responding to complaints, as well as improvements in the availability and access to vehicles, which in turn all benefits residents and transportation users.

PTP service providers (both standard and accessible) accounted for 56.6 percent of the number of trips provided to the end of September 2024. This is a slight increase over the 2023-year end result of 50.4 percent. Standard and accessible taxis continue to provide a significant number of trips, and provide 43.2 percent market share to the end of September 2024, which is down slightly from the 2023 share of 49.4 percent. It should be noted that taxi companies in Winnipeg continue to do well, and provide some of the highest trip totals in Canada. Limousine/Luxury PTP vehicle service providers have continued to hold a consistent share of the market year-over-year, providing a specific type of service for their passengers.
Of particular note here is that the size of the market (as measured in trips provided) has grown significantly since the beginning of 2022, with the projected trip numbers for 2024 being nearly 2.3 times as many as the trips provided during 2021. This indicates that there has been quite a bit of new business available for service providers to go after with Winnipeggers continuing to employ vehicles for hire at high rates.

Figure 3 displays the market share provided by the service provider type.

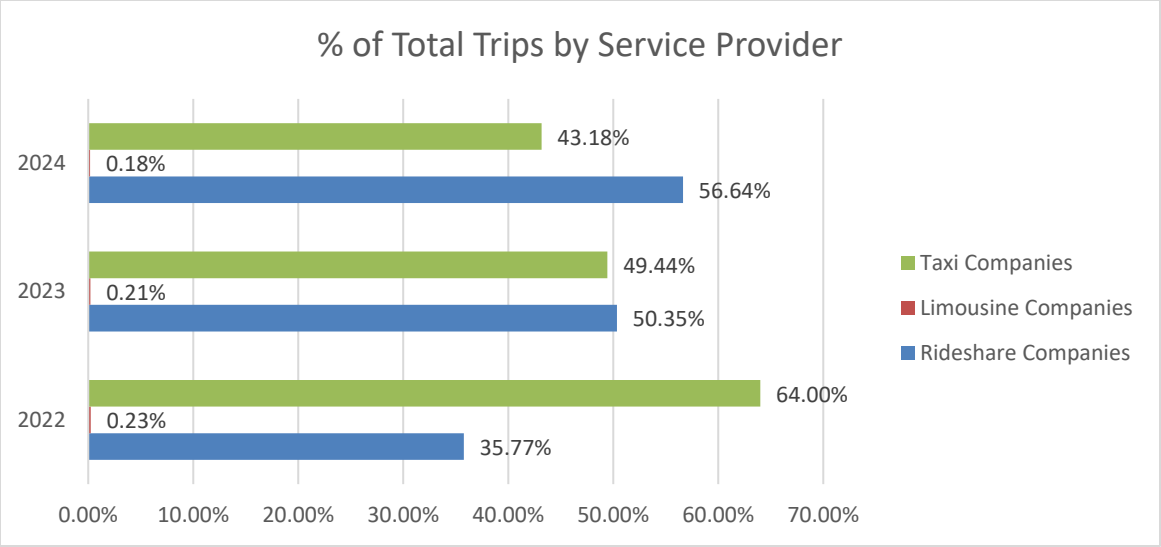


Figure 3

As a major piece of ensuring that the vehicle for hire industry is safe for drivers, passengers and other vehicles on the road, enforcement and regulatory oversight of the industry continues to be a main focus of the VFH office. The VFH enforcement team continues to provide mobile on-street monitoring of the industry, regularly attending to high-use locations and locations where vehicles for hire congregate waiting for trips or to pick up passengers. In order to ensure that vehicles providing for hire transportation service are compliant with the VFH By-law, that they are properly decaled and identifiable and are safe for drivers and passengers, vehicle inspections continue to be a major tool used by VFH Enforcement to identify and record concerns.

From January 2024 to the end of September 2024, a total of 14,396 vehicles have been inspected by VFH officers under the VFH By-law. In comparison, there were 18,310 total vehicle inspection completed throughout 2023. The inspections completed may include full vehicle inspections that are more in-depth, or walkaround inspections, which are less involved and focus more on minor or more easily identifiable concerns. Since 2022, there has been a specific focus on inspecting more PTP vehicles. With an increased number of PTP vehicles on the road, this has been an important step to take, especially in ensuring vehicles are properly decaled while providing service, so that passengers can identify they are in-fact being picked up by the legitimate driver from the company they requested. VFH maintains its partnership with Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) regarding vehicle safety, however there have been no vehicle inspection blitzes since 2021. A number of analytical projects between MPI and VFH have occurred tracking vehicles and their usage, as well as building data sets around vehicle age and mileages.

VFH enforcement officers continue to spend a majority of their time focussing on overall vehicle safety. Of all the inspections in 2024 to date, officers have placed a vehicle “out of service” only 2.8 percent of the time, which is slightly lower than 2023’s out of service rate of 3.8 percent. This rate continues to remain low mainly due to the increased numbers of inspections, the proactiveness of drivers and owners to ensure their vehicles meet compliance standards, as well as assistance from the dispatch companies in educating and communicating with their drivers and on the need to maintain safe vehicles and remain compliant with the VFH By-law. As well, the proactive nature of the inspection program continues to demonstrate the desire of

VFH to ensure that vehicles are maintained, and those that are on the road are safe and road-worthy and those that are not in compliance with accepted standard and the VFH By-law should be taken off the road.

All vehicles for hire are required to meet certain mechanical and operating standards in order to pass inspections, and are expected to meet those minimum standards at all times while available to provide transportation service. Roadside or call-in vehicle inspections are used to inspect critical components and systems that may pose imminent safety concerns to the public and drivers. As well, the VFH office has continued work closely with MPI to ensure that any vehicles providing service to customers are safe, reliable, and meet the standards of both the VFH By-law and the MPI vehicle inspection and safety certification program. The VFH office continues to see that the intense inspection program of previous years is paying dividends now, in that vehicles are much more regularly maintained to ensure they meet standards and remain compliant, which ensure a safer vehicle for all and reduces the overall risk of dangerous vehicles being on the road.

On a regular basis, and no less than yearly, the Public Service reviews the numbers of vehicles available in the market to provide transportation service in line with the Council endorsed metric of one taxi per 1,203 residents. With the scalability of the PTP dispatcher licences, and how capacity has reacted to fluctuations in demand, as well as discussions with the taxi industry, there is no need to issue new permanent taxi licences and increase the current maximum cap number. Without a addressing a specific need, there does not appear to be a shortage of vehicles available to provide service; it appears, as previously indicated, that the number of vehicles have additional available capacity in order to meet any additional increases in trip requests.

Consistent with previous VFH Annual Reports, the Public Service continues to recommend that, when new taxicab licences are issued based on the Council-approved formula, that priority be given to adding additional accessible vehicles. This is especially important given the aging population of Winnipeggers, the versatility of accessible vans to provide both accessible and standard service, as well as to ensure that there is on-going available capacity for the Winnipeg Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV). Ensuring that accessible vehicles are available for service continues to be important in ensuring that passengers who rely on the service are served.

Since the introduction of the VFH By-law, the City of Winnipeg has ensured that ongoing consultations with VFH industry stakeholders and the public have occurred in order to gain valuable insights and to gather input for consideration while developing future recommendations to Council on the regulation. Over the past year and through a variety of sources, feedback was gathered specifically on accessibility, safety, education and licencing, as well as enforcement.

The VFH Advisory Committee last met formally as a group in early 2022. While the committee still exists, should there be a desire to begin meeting again, a number of the people who were committee members would likely need to be replaced. In lieu of having formal Advisory Committee meetings, the VFH office prefers to meet with stakeholders and engage with the public as needed, on specific topics as they come up or are relevant. This method has provided better opportunities for the various stakeholders to be heard, provide feedback directly and have their points of view considered. This approach has specifically bared fruit for the VFH industry in the areas of specifically related to Indigenous relations, accessibility issues and improvements to driver safety and training.

The VFH office and the Winnipeg Community Taxi Association (WCTA), along with their business advisors, continued to engage and have positive discussions. These meetings continue to allow both sides to discuss a variety of topics that impact the VFH industry around driver safety, training, accessibility, as well as the overall industry. Through these discussions, a number of initiatives have been undertaken throughout late 2023 and into 2024 where VFH has worked closely with the WCTA. Of note, the VFH office has had regular, nearly quarterly phone calls or meetings with the WCTA or representatives since early 2019. The VFH office has worked to ensure open lines of communication with the WCTA's representatives and advisors, and ensure there have been on-going discussions to move issues along. This relationship has allowed for more focused discussions and has helped identify specific items that require additional collaboration. The ongoing discussions have seen concerns be brought forward earlier, thereby allowing time to consider changes, and work collaboratively on solving challenges.

While there has been consistency within the VFH office regarding the administration and enforcement of the VFH By-law, as well as the policies and guidelines that have supported the VFH By-law and the overall industry, there have been numerous changes amongst the representation of those operating within the industry. Changes to Board leadership and management have also brought adjustments to their style of operation, priorities and agendas. This can, at times, present a challenge to ensuring that the industry continues to improve its level of engagement, passenger and driver safety, and in implementing positive changes to ensure that the public has confidence in the service providers.

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

On April 28, 2022, Council directed the Public Service, led by the City's Indigenous Relations Division (IRD), to work with the MMIWG2S+ implementation team, Indigenous governments and territorial organizations, VFH service providers, and the community, to consult and engage on the lived experiences that passengers have had using vehicles for hire, on what can be done and what needs to change, as well as bringing the groups together to share experiences and learn from each other.

The Public Service, led by IRD, held three engagement sessions between August and October 2022. While the sessions were all different, with different groups of attendees, many of the same themes that came out of these sessions were brought forward – specifically the need for better education and understanding amongst drivers and the community, better access to information, as well as complaints handling information that has been translated for understanding.

Ongoing feedback continues to be possible, and is received. This is accomplished through a dedicated phone number (204-986-0544) and email at safetransportation@winnipeg.ca to allow confidential feedback, experiences, concerns and ideas to be brought forward to improve safety within public transportation in Winnipeg.

The Building Cultural Competency training was created and developed where IRD worked with Giganawenimaanaanig (formerly the MMIWGS2+ Implementation Committee) and other Indigenous community members where they had direct input into the content, and plan to deliver and facilitate the training.

The first session of this training occurred on August 24, 2023. From September 2023, to the end of 2023, there were 10 additional sessions (for a total of 11). During 2024 to the end of

September, there have been 34 training sessions held, with nine more planned during the final three months. During 2024, the VFH driver Building Cultural Competency training was rolled out to all drivers in the industry, and has seen PTP drivers attending (as it is also mandatory training for them). By the end of 2024, it is expected that over 1,400 vehicle for hire drivers will have attended this important training.

In early 2025, the VFH office will be setting targets for PTP companies to achieve in respect of driver's attendance and completion of this training in order to ensure that they are complying.

Communication regarding upcoming sessions continues to be rolled out to drivers, which directs them to an easy online platform to sign-up, providing them confirmation and notifications. There also continues to be plans to develop additional platforms to deliver this training so that it is as accessible as it can be. The training was also developed with the fact in mind that it could be used by other City departments, not only those involved in transportation, so that this training can be a foundation program to educate on colonization, impacts of colonization towards Indigenous women and girls and their traditional roles, as well as implementing Calls for Justice both individual and industry specific, that can also be customized and delivered to City staff as well.

Launching this training and adjusting its content to best reflects the needs of the community and the industry have shown Winnipeg to be a leader in this area. The leadership and guidance provided by IRD here has made this program a relative success. The training draws interest from other jurisdictions in Canada and around the USA.

While it will take a several years to accomplish having all current drivers trained, the impact continues to be felt as more drivers are trained, with the expectation that Building Cultural Competency within the industry amongst drivers will not only continue to help make passengers safer, but also make drivers safer. This training will only serve to raise the individual and collective consciousness and help in having more accountability for actions and words, especially as it relates to interactions between drivers and passengers.

Winnipeg Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) On-Demand Accessible Transportation Service
With the Winnipeg WAV pilot project set to end in December 2023, an administrative report on the project was approved as amended by Council on October 24, 2024. For further information specific to the Winnipeg WAV, that report should be referenced.

Other key highlights and achievements that have occurred over the past year:

Communications and Service
The VFH office has continued to communicate with, and provide guidance and support to, the VFH industry. The virtual access portals that were created during the pandemic have remained in place and continue to be a successful and an effective way for drivers to become licenced, as well as having a variety of options for those in the industry to access service. The VFH office continues to ensure that it provides a high level of customer service to the industry, and continues to work on adjusting and redeveloping processes and procedures that can be implemented easily both online and in-person.

Also undertaken in 2024 was the translation of several key documents available on the VFH website. The "Know Your Taxi" and "Know Your PTP" documents available for the public to educate them on what a licenced taxi and PTP would look like and their features were translated into ten languages, specifically (Punjabi, Hindi, Chinese, Somali, Tagalog, Ukrainian,

Urdu, Arabic, Swahili, Tigrinya). As well, the Taxi Driver Safety Fast Facts and PTP Driver Safety Fast Facts were translated into the same ten languages to assist drivers in better understanding some of the information available to them. These documents are available to the public, and this project was completed in order to improve understanding and education as well as foster a spirit of inclusivity for citizens in Winnipeg. The VFH office will continues to look for additional opportunities to translate documents and communications in the future.

Driver Licencing and Training

The VFH office is continuing a spirit of innovation and is always looking for ways to become more efficient and provide more flexibility to the VFH industry and review and update outdated items that impact dispatchers, vehicle owners, or drivers operating within the industry.

The provisional taxi drivers' licence that was first introduced in late 2022/early 2023 continues to be available for drivers as a path to become fully licenced. This program was created through discussions with the WCTA, and has been a significant benefit to the taxi industry in on-boarding drivers, allowing them to gain some practical experience while completing their driver training requirements. New applicants continue to have a 90-day window to successfully complete their training and provide confirmation to the VFH office to become fully licenced. This brought taxi driver licencing more in line with PTP driver registration and reduced a barrier to the becoming a taxi driver.

Implementation of Accessible Training for all VFH Drivers

The VFH By-law requires that all taxi and PTP drivers who provide accessible service are required to take accessible driver training. This training provides education on not only proper wheelchair/mobility device securement, but also on other accessibility needs, including hearing and eyesight impairment, service animals, and physical or cognitive challenges.

To ensure that drivers are properly trained in the area's accessibility, and to be in alignment with the Provincial Accessibility of Manitobans Act customer service requirements on accessible training, VFH made accessible training mandatory for all VFH drivers, whether they drive a standard or accessible vehicle, effective January 1, 2024. The type and content of the training will vary depending on the type of driver, but all drivers across the industry will take some form of this training. Drivers who drive standard vehicles will receive more general training, while those who drive accessible vehicles must take accessible training that includes wheelchair securement.

VFH also partners with the Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC) to deliver this training.

Updating VFH Driver Training

At present, all new taxi drivers are required to attend a 44-hour training course. This course was implemented by the Taxicab Board, has been in place for over 15 years, and is delivered by St. James School Division Continuing Education (SJSD Con Ed). As noted in the 2023 VFH Annual Report, a plan was developed to review this training through the creation of a VFH stakeholder working group, and bring forward a revised and updated training program that would then be implemented for all new vehicle for hire drivers. The working group will also consider modernizing the delivery of training and testing.

The working group consisted of key members of the VFH office, representatives of SJSD Con Ed, members of the taxi industry and with stakeholder consultation of the PTP companies.

The new training program and curriculum is planned to be rolled out for testing in late November 2024 and be fully implemented by the Q1 2025. This new training will be applicable to all new drivers entering the VFH industry, whether they be taxi, PTP or limousine drivers, and will include such relevant topics as: The Vehicle for Hire industry in Winnipeg, the VFH Office and VFH Enforcement, driver relevant specifics from the VFH By-law, Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking information, signs and their duty to report, and other topics.

Suggested training topics will be created and provided to dispatch companies so that they can supplement the training for their drivers should they choose. These topics would include more general topics, customer service expectations, company specific policies as well as training on their dispatch systems and reporting requirements.

Moving to this revised training program will help the VFH office meets its goal to have all drivers entering the VFH industry trained to a minimum standard. This driver training would further be supplemented by the accessibility training and the Building Cultural Competency training to ensure that drivers have a complete training profile and meet all expectations, regardless of what type of service they are providing.

Relationships with Stakeholders

The VFH office has continued to support and develop relationships within the community and industry-affected organizations throughout Winnipeg. Engagement continues to happen with a variety of stakeholders within Winnipeg that create opportunities for a number of organizations to provide feedback. The VFH office continues to reach out and strengthen its dialogue and lines of communication with Indigenous organizations in Winnipeg. These groups continue to be a valuable resource and provide insights into how VFH service affects the community as well as assisting in improving customer service and monitoring. This positive dialogue and relationship-building initiative continues to bring a number of voices to the table to provide their perspective and input in shaping the industry and how VFH regulates and oversees it.

Human Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation and the VFH Industry's Duty to Report

In November 2022, Manitoba passed Bill 40 "*The Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act and Amendments to The Child and Family Services Act and The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act"*, which strengthens the required reporting of incidents of child sexual exploitation and human trafficking by VFH drivers, and obligates them to report suspected incidents when they have been part of the transportation. The Bill also makes it easier for law enforcement to obtain records. Since this Bill was passed, the Public Service continues to engage stakeholders involved in identifying, reporting and stopping human trafficking. The information learned in these education opportunities is then provided to the VFH industry through training, and communications with the dispatch companies.

The Building Cultural Competency training that drivers take also includes information related to this important topic. As well, new drivers continue to be trained in the area of sexual exploitation and human trafficking, often having guest subject matter experts, such as the Joy Smith Foundation, presenting to the classes.

Often, the drivers are unaware of their part in the act, but realize after they have been engaged for service and often complete the trip for their own safety. Helping educate drivers on the potential signs of human trafficking, and providing them with the phone numbers to confidentially report suspect incidents and details has been an important step forward in this area.

The phone number for the National Human Trafficking Hotline was added to the back of all taxicab and limousine driver's licences so that if they were to identify a possible situation, they would have the number at their fingertips to report it.

There continues to be significantly more work that can be done in this area, especially around education; however, the VFH office continues to discuss and engage with organizations and stakeholders who are willing to provide the training and assist the industry in being part of the overall solution.

Other Manitoba Regulatory Bodies

VFH continues to strengthen and solidify its relationships with industry regulatory bodies, including MPI, the Winnipeg Airports Authority and the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS). The Master Information Sharing Agreement that was signed between MPI and the City continues to be beneficial to both parties. It has continued to strengthen communication and the relationship between the City and MPI and made the flow of important vehicle and driver-related information much easier as it pertains to the agreement. Further, VFH has partnered on a number of initiatives with MPI, regarding insurance, vehicle and accident data and in determining vehicle usage and mechanical garage information.

Over the past year, the WPS and VFH have collaborated on a number of important initiatives that have impacted the vehicle for hire industry, including identifying strategies to reduce and prevent violence against taxi drivers, VFH assisting with obtaining taxi camera video in an expedited manner, and most recently a public information notification regarding a "fake taxi" scam working in Winnipeg, in which the WPS Public Information Office provided a news release in order to notify citizens of the scam and provide information on how to identify legitimate operators. Initiatives like this assist the industry in continuing to provide transportation service to citizens, and ensures that drivers feel supported by both VFH and WPS.

Complaints

The VFH office continues to receive and actively investigate complaints, holding the dispatch companies accountable to respond to residents when issues arise, as well as holding vehicle owners and drivers in the industry accountable to remain in compliance with the VFH By-law as well as ensuring passengers are safe and receiving improved and consistent customer service through a balanced approach of by-law enforcement, communication and education. The Department takes legitimate complaints seriously, investigating them and ensuring follow-up with the complainant. Though the number of serious incident complaints continues to fall, the VFH office is also acutely aware that the true number is likely underreported.

Through 2024, there have been 78 complaints filed with the VFH office. During 2023, the total number of complaints was 68, while in 2022 this number was 108. The VFH office added some additional complaints categories in 2022, including drivers reporting fare jumping/unpaid fares, as well as complaints or issues that have arisen from the Winnipeg WAV program.

The two biggest areas of complaint over the last few years are drivers reporting that passengers have not paid their fare, driver customer service, and driving/road habits. The instances of drivers being reported for overcharging and not running the meter has dropped significantly over the past few years. Some of these instances may not be reported, however this can also be attributed to fines that are commensurate with these offences (as they were brought in line in 2023), more education, and clearer pre-payment rules within the VFH By-law (also amended in

2023). There have been improvements in this area as the dispatchers have taken more action regarding driver incidents (see Appendix C).

VFH recognizes that the number of complaints filed may be under-reported, as there continues to be more work that needs to be done to make reporting easier, and to ensure that those experiencing issues with the VFH industry are able to safely have their voices heard. The VFH office continues to work on this area, and has been engaging grassroots community organizations to assist in providing ideas to improve complaint reporting mechanisms. This work will continue into 2025.

Appeals

The VFH Board continues to meet only when required, which is infrequent. However, it is an important component as it relates to discipline and licence appeals.

Throughout 2024, there has only been one appeal board hearing, held in May. The Appeal Board continues to hear appeals related to driver licencing based on VFH By-law required licence denials and on decisions made as a result of a licence review hearing.

The appeal process is open and transparent and provides an opportunity to have a case heard by an impartial tribunal committee of citizens that considers the facts of the situation, the character of the appellant, and any relevant or mitigating factors as they weigh the risks and render a decision. There continues to be a number of disciplinary hearings conducted by the designated employee under the authority of the VFH By-law. Decisions from these hearings are not public, but there have been a range of outcomes, from reprimands and training/re-training, to fines, and up to licence suspensions or cancellation.

International Association of Transportation Regulators (IATR)

Since 2018, when the City began regulating the VFH industry, the VFH office has been a member of the International Association of Transportation Regulators (IATR). This worldwide regulatory association includes a strong Canadian Regulators Committee, and schedules regular conference calls to discuss insights, lessons learned, best practices, and issues of oversight and regulation.

IATR provides a significant opportunity to learn from other jurisdictions, and to have a network of other regulators to pose questions of, get advice and provide feedback. Winnipeg's Manager of VFH continues to serve as IATR's Co-Chair of the Canadian Regulators committee, which elevates Winnipeg's status amongst its fellow Canadian regulators.

In addition to this, the VFH office continues to sit on other relevant IATR committees, including the Accessibility Committee, Safety Committee and the Technology committee. These committees provide opportunities for the Public Service to hear insights, experiences, and concerns from other regulators and stakeholders in North America regarding improving safety and accessibility within the VFH industry.

Building on the success of the 2023 IATR conference presentation, Winnipeg was once again given an opportunity to speak and lead a session on "Investing in Accessibility". Winnipeg has been a leading City in regards to investing in on-demand accessible transportation and the session involved a roundtable discussion on opportunities, challenges and current state of various jurisdictions in their investment. From these discussions, a report back to the conference attendees occurred and IATR will consider the feedback and information and is working to update its Accessible Model Regulations, which provide guidance to the City in

crafting policy and regulation. The Winnipeg WAV was often referenced during the conference with many attendees looking for updates and seeking advice, consultations and looking to arrange a presentation regarding it.

The conference usually includes panel discussions related to the VFH industry and have begun to focus on overall mobility and multi-modal opportunities, as well as regulatory information, policy setting, enforcement, technology, accessibility, training, and industry changes.

There continues to be more discussion on both autonomous (automated) and electric vehicles, micro-mobility options (such as e-scooters), industry modernization and multi-modal transportation integration. These are areas that will be explored further in the future. The VFH office continues to reap the benefits of being a member of IATR as well as attending this conference yearly, as the opportunity provides substantial benefits to the Public Service and the local VFH industry.

Documentation Verification and Auditing

As part of its ongoing enforcement of the industry, PTP driver and vehicle documentation audits continued to be conducted by the VFH office. The VFH office undertakes this work in a continuing effort to ensure that the PTP dispatchers are complying with their responsibility under the VFH By-law. The VFH office continues to see issues with ongoing documentation vetting and compliance of drivers and vehicles in the PTP category by their dispatchers. While some dispatch companies have done well in obtaining and reviewing the documentation submitted by prospective drivers, there are still concerning deficiencies.

However, through these audits, the VFH office has identified fewer drivers and vehicles that are not qualified for registration under the VFH By-law, which indicates some improvement. The registration and subsequent vetting of background checks and documentation by PTP dispatchers continues to remain an area of concern for the VFH office. Some dispatchers have demonstrated the capacity to perform the task, others have not.

The Public Service also continues to educate the PTP companies on their responsibility regarding the registration of drivers and collection of their paperwork. The audit process has identified that documentation continues to be an area that requires specific attention from the VFH office. Dispatch companies that fail to properly vet drivers and vehicles present a risk to both the industry and passengers.

Given the scope of these audits, the concerns around deficiencies in compliance and the risk that a non-compliant driver or vehicle could pose to the public, the VFH office will likely be looking at a PTP driver and vehicle licencing regime in the near future. This is common in other jurisdictions.

Budgets

The VFH office operates on a budget-neutral mandate generating all revenues needed to sustain its operations through licence revenue, fine revenue, and per trip surcharges. All activities performed by the division are within budgeted amounts. There continue to be synergies with the existing WPA systems, and through the support provided within the department. The VFH office manages its finances closely, adjusting its operations as revenue moves. Further, when possible, VFH looks to reinvest in its operation and staff to ensure that it remains effective and efficient in delivering service and support to the industry and the community. The VFH office budgets to remain on a budget-neutral basis and ensure that operational expenses meet its expected revenues (see Appendix D).

Medium to Long-Range Plans for the VFH Industry

The VFH office continues to engage the community, stakeholders and the industry to look for ways to improve the safety for both passengers and drivers, streamline and improve compliance and enforcement, expand the capacity of the industry, and assist in providing an improved level of customer service. In order to do so, some of the plans that the VFH office has for the medium to longer term include the following.

Innovation and Modernization

The Public Service continues to look for opportunities to innovate and streamline processes in order to provide improved service for the industry. A few of the projects that have been undertaken, that will show benefits in the years to come, include:

- Creation of an online vehicle Inspection Reporting Program (IRP). This will allow VFH officers to more effectively and efficiently complete vehicle inspection reports using the technology they already possess. This virtual inspection program is to reduce the time required to fill out a paper inspection report, as well as the manual process of inputting this into the database and sending it to any affected parties. The new IRP will reduce a number of the manual processes involved in this presently, and allow for more efficient completion of the report, better communication and a reduction in potential errors. This will also improve the experience of the owner or driver who has the vehicle during the inspection. Due to IT resource constraints, project completion continues to be delayed and is now being planned for 2025 at the earliest.
- Creating an online complaint reporting portal that would allow people to report in a number of different languages (besides English and French), identify the language they are using through a list and then have artificial intelligence (AI) translate the complaint in English for VFH to review. This could elevate a person's comfort level in reporting an incident, and would also provide at least the basis for the complaint to VFH Enforcement. This idea is conceptual right now, and further work needs to be completed, but it something that could be employed to foster more reporting of complaints.

The VFH office is always considering innovative ways to improve the processes of licencing, enforcement and reporting. It regularly engages with other jurisdictions to gain insights and search out opportunities.

Also, the VFH office continues to consult and discuss with other jurisdictions in North America, the industry and the public as it continues to look for ways to deliver efficient, effective and timely customer service, programs and enforcement.

Reserve Fund

The Public Service will explore the feasibility of creating a reserve fund within the VFH office budget in order to have funds available for initiatives to support the industry. Further research of options, including reserve usage, funding sources, and limitations will be undertaken in order to provide recommendations related to this.

Ongoing administration of the VFH industry and VFH By-law:

The Public Service believes that the administration, oversight, and regulation of the VFH industry and VFH By-law has been generally successful since implementation and should continue to reside within the Winnipeg Parking Authority. As well, given the breadth of the VFH industry, continued regulation and licencing should remain as it has been since transitioning to the City. This model works well, and the Public Service continues to work with the industry, its partners, and stakeholders to evolve and improve all facets of the VFH network, especially in the areas of training, safety and improving accessible service.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: November 8, 2024

Project Name:

Vehicle for Hire Industry 2024 Annual Update and Proposed Vehicles For Hire By-law and MBEA Enabling By-law Amendments

COMMENTS:

There are no financial implications from **Recommendation #1.**

There are potential financial implications from **Recommendation #2** that proposes amendments to VFH By-law and MBEA By-law, including the addition of new fines and changes to the fines for existing offences. The frequency of these offences, and therefore their associated revenue, is difficult to predict and will be managed within existing budgets.

Lioubov Gavrilova-Crozier Nov 8, 2024

Lioubov Gavrilova-Crozier, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance & Administration
Winnipeg Parking Authority

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

- Legal Services
- Indigenous Relations Division

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

Goal: Environmental Resilience

Goal: Leadership and Good Governance
Objective #1 – Establish and implement priority actions through evidence-informed decision-making processes.
Objective #2 - Promote trust and government responsiveness through meaningful, inclusive and informed community engagement
Policy 1.5 – Evidence-Informed Decisions
Policy 1.7 – Equitable Service Access

Goal: Economic Prosperity
Objective #3 – Address poverty as an unacceptable and costly outcome of systemic barriers, through collaboration with the community and government bodies.
Policy 3.12 – Poverty Reduction

Goal: Social Equity
Objective #2 - Build bridges spanning ideas, cultures, identities and generations on a foundation of truth, understanding, and rights-based reconciliation.
Policy 5.4 – Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples
Policy 5.5 – Indigenous Lens
Policy 5.6 - Equitable Service Access

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

Strategic opportunity #3 – Advancing Sustainable Transportation – Increase Mobility Options and Shift to Zero Emission Vehicles

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Goal 5 -Transportation System Equity is Enhanced
Goal 6 – All City Services are Equitable, Inclusive and Accessible

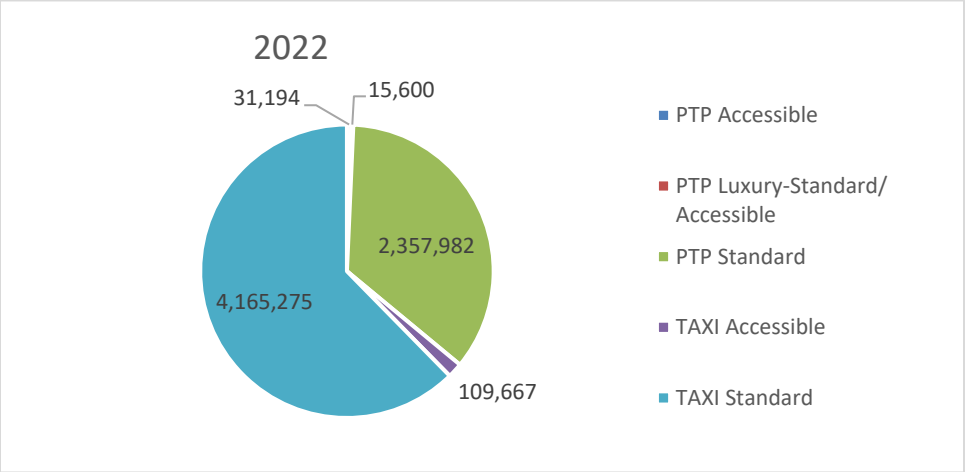
SUBMITTED BY

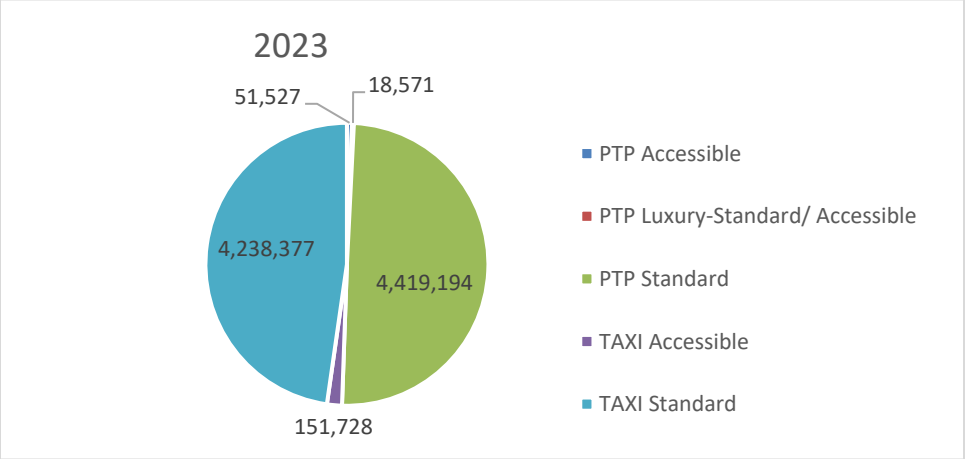
Department: Public Works
Division: Winnipeg Parking Authority SOA
Prepared by: G. Heather
Date: November 14, 2024
File No: WPA-019-2024

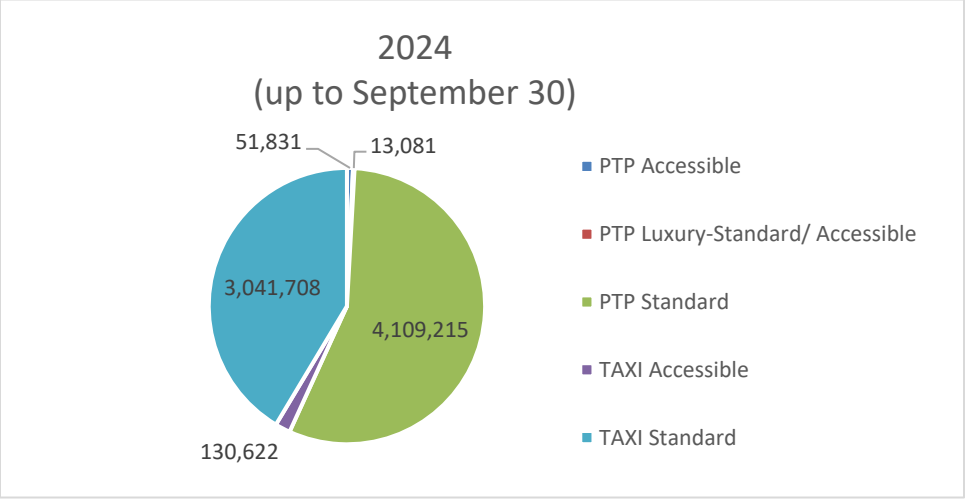
Attachments:
Appendix A: Vehicles for Hire By-law and MBEA Enabling Bylaw Amendments

Appendix B: Vehicle for Hire Marketshare by Category
Appendix C: Vehicle for Hire Complaints
Appendix D: Vehicle for Hire Office Revenue and Expenditures
Appendix E: Details for Amendments to VFH By-law Fines

Appendix B: Vehicle for Hire Marketshare by Category







Appendix C: Vehicle for Hire Complaints

	Complaints (2018 - 2024)												
	Service - Refusal/ Poor	Driver - Conduct/ Road Habits	Taxi Condition	Articles lost/ Damaged/ Collateral	Overcharge/Pre-payment/ Meter not on	Illegal Operator	Assault/ Harassment	Driver Reported - Fares not paid by passenger *	WAV / Accessible Complaints *	Police / MPIC **	Cell Phone **	Other	Total
2018	35	26	5	9	8	6	2					29	120
2019	9	25	1	4	20	3	1					23	86
2020	15	15	3	2	7	3	-					6	51
2021	10	31	-	5	7	-	1					20	74
2022	9	21	3	5	17	1	2	23	13			14	108
2023	4	19	-	6	5	-	2	7	9	1	3	12	68
2024	1	24	3	4	2	3	1	14	13	-	-	10	78
	83	161	15	35	66	16	9	44	35	1	3	114	585

* New Category in 2022

Appendix D: Vehicle for Hire Office Revenue and Expenditures

	2022		2023		2024	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
Revenue	1,213,651	1,657,539	1,504,780	2,099,405	2,061,300	-
Expenditure	1,593,354	1,657,539	1,644,512	2,099,405	2,061,300	-
Surplus/(Deficit)	(379,703)	-	(139,732)	-	-	

Appendix E: Details for Amendments to VFH By-law Fines

Brown – Existing sections that are being deleted.
Yellow – New sections of the VFH By-law with new fines.
Grey – Existing sections with revised fines.
Green – Existing sections with housekeeping revisions.

New/Existing By-law/Removal Section	Provision	Contravention Summary	Current Administrative Penalty ($)	Current Early Payment Discount ($)	Proposed Administrative Penalty ($)	Proposed Early Payment Discount ($)
Removal of Section	23	Failure to preserve camera records for required time period	1,000	N/A	-	-
Removal of Section	26	Failure by dispatcher to report refusal of service within 24 hours of receipt of report	1,000	500	-	-
Removal of Section	45.1(1)	Owner allowing provision of limousine service in unlicensed limousine or by unlicensed driver	500	250	-	-
New Section New Fine	20.1(1)	Failure by dispatcher to comply with digital advertising guidelines or requirements	-	-	1,000	500
New Section New Fine	20.1(2)	Failure by dispatcher to comply with	-	-	1,000	500

		an order to make changes to digital advertising				
New Section New Fine	26(1)	Failure by dispatcher to collect all required information regarding refusal of service	-	-	1,000	500
New Section New Fine	26(2)	Failure by dispatcher to report refusal of service information within 24 hours of request	-	-	1,000	500
New Section New Fine	32(4)	PTP dispatcher identifying or holding out a PTP vehicle as a taxi	-	-	500	N/A
New Section New Fine	45.1(a)	Owner allowing provision of limousine service in unlicensed limousine	-	-	500	250
New Section New Fine	45.1(b)	Owner allowing provision of limousine service by unlicensed driver	-	-	500	250
New Section New Fine	64(2)	Fail to comply with Highway Traffic Act rules for restraining passengers and securing	-	-	500	N/A

		wheelchairs, etc.				
New Section New Fine	64.2(1)	PTP driver failing to comply with order	-	-	1,000	500
New Section New Fine	64.2(2)	Operation under registration during suspension	-	-	1,000	500
Existing Section Revised Fine	57(1)	Charge a fare not in accordance with the fare schedule	1,000	500	500	250
Existing Section Revised Fine	57(2)	Negotiating a fare in excess of what would be charged under the fare schedule	1,000	500	500	250
Existing Section Revised Fine	57(3)	Failure to operate the meter during service where a negotiated fare is in place.	1,000	500	250	N/A
Revised Contravention Summary Descriptions Original Fine	22(a)	Dispatch or offer to dispatch a PTP by a nondigital platform	1,000	500	--	--
Revised Contravention Summary Descriptions Original Fine	55(3)	Taxi driver failing to allow passenger to pay by either cash, debit card or credit card	125	N/A	--	--