

TRANSMITTAL

To:

THE COUNCIL

Date: **JAN 23 2009**

From:

THE MAYOR

TRANSMITTED FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION. PLEASE SEE ATTACHED.



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
Mayor

TRANSPORTATION
JAN 23 2009

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

January 16, 2009

To: The Honorable Antonio R. Villaraigosa
Mayor, City of Los Angeles

Attention: June Lagmay, Legislative Coordinator

From: Patricia Sanchez, Commission Executive Assistant
Board of Transportation Commissioners

Subject: ONE-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE HAIL-A-TAXI PILOT PROGRAM

At its regular meeting of January 15, 2009, the Board of Taxicab Commissioners considered the evidence presented at the public hearing and approved the above-referenced Board report. A copy of the Board's action is attached for your information.

After your office reviews the attached information, please forward to the City Clerk's office for assignment of a Council file number and transmittal to the City Council.

If you need further information, please contact Thomas Drischler, Taxicab Administrator, at (213) 972-8431.

Thank you.

PS

Attachments

c w/attachments: Thomas Drischler
Jasmin San Luis

BOARD REPORT
CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Date: January 15, 2009 E14

To: Board of Taxicab Commissioners

Subject: **ONE YEAR EXTENSION OF THE HAIL-A -TAXI PILOT PROGRAM**

SUMMARY

On July 31, 2008, the six-month hail-a-taxi pilot program, intended to facilitate street hail taxi service in downtown Los Angeles and Hollywood, went into effect. The program resulted from discussions and meetings involving the Department, the Board, the taxi industry, and interested parties and advocates since 2005. Hail-a-taxi allows for greater flexibility for taxi drivers to respond to street-hails without receiving parking tickets – provided they follow guidelines established for the program. This report reviews the preliminary results of the pilot program and recommends that the Board determine that it be extended for twelve months. This report will then be forwarded to the City Council for approval.

The Department will provide updates on the progress of the program to the Board throughout 2009, including a Board report at the six-month point that will also examine the feasibility of expanding the program to additional areas of the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board, after a public hearing:

1. **DETERMINE** that, to the benefit of residents, visitors, businesses and their employees, as well as taxi operators, the Hail-a Taxi pilot program has shown indications that street-hail taxi service has the potential to become a more integral transportation option in the City of Los Angeles; and
2. **FIND** that the initial six-month hail-a- taxi pilot program, in which legally permitted Los Angeles taxi drivers have been allowed flexibility to actively load and unload passengers in some otherwise restricted areas in Hollywood and downtown, has encompassed the public's need for safe driving conditions and the efficient flow of traffic; and
3. **FIND** that the since its inception on July 31, 2008, the Hail-a-Taxi Pilot Program has met reasonable performance measures gathered by the Department; and

4. **DETERMINE** that it is appropriate to extend the Hail-a-Taxi program for one year to allow continued acceptance by the public and the taxi industry of street hail taxi service; and
5. **APPROVE** that the Hail-a-Taxi program be extended for a one-year period, commencing February 1, 2009, and extending until January 31, 2010; and
6. **DIRECT** the Board's Executive Assistant to forward a communication to the Transportation Committee of the City Council conveying the Board's determinations and findings regarding the Hail-a-Taxi Pilot Program, with the recommendation that the program be extended by the City Council for a one-year period, commencing January 31, 2009; and
7. **DIRECT** the Department to return to the Board in six months with a progress report on the program, including an analysis and possible recommendations for expansion of Hail-a-Taxi to additional areas of the City

INTRODUCTION

On December 12, 2007 the City Council, approved a motion sponsored by Council Member Jan Perry directing the Department and City Attorney to provide a more thorough investigation of the potential for hail a cab "flag downs" by taxicab operators. An informational report presented to the Board on January 17, 2008 examined the operational, logistical and safety concerns facing the City and the industry in implementing an enhanced street hail taxicab culture in Los Angeles.

The Board heard testimony from representatives of the Downtown Center Business Improvement District, business owners, residents of the downtown area and Council staff, all of whom supported the hail-a-taxi concept. The report before the board had been preceded by a number of meetings between these interested parties (including representatives of the Hollywood area business community) and Department staff dating back to 2005. However, due to many changes in LADOT management, the issue had not been fully and comprehensively discussed.

On February 21, 2008 the ad-hoc Hail-a-Taxi (also called Hail-a-Cab) Committee of the Board met. After a discussion that included participation from the members of the taxi industry, the Mayor's Office and Council District 9, Committee members and staff, the Department was directed to complete its fact-finding on this subject and report back to the Committee members and the Board with recommendations.

On May 15, 2008, a final report was approved by the Board to enact a six-month hail-a-taxi pilot program in limited areas of downtown and Hollywood. The Board's recommendation was forwarded to and approved by the City Council. The official kick-off of the pilot program was held on July 31, 2008 at the Disney Hall, attended by Council members Jan Perry and Wendy Greuel, Board members, representatives of the Central Cities Association and both the Downtown and Hollywood Business Improvement Districts.

DISCUSSION

The main idea behind the Hail-a-Taxi program is that it should be possible for the public to easily find and flag down taxis for short trips in congested areas of the city, and that taxi operators should be able to earn good incomes from providing such service. It has been intended to reduce the potential for a taxicab driver to be issued a parking ticket while attempting to pick up a passenger from a flag-down service request. The threat of being issued a ticket has long been enough of a disincentive to drivers to cause them to avoid responding to such requests. Staff believes that the program has alleviated that fear with many drivers, who are now more likely to seek out and respond to street hails in downtown and Hollywood than before the program started.

The six-month Hail-a-Taxi pilot program incorporated operational protocols that were worked out after extensive discussions between all interested parties, including the Department's Bureau of Parking Enforcement. Attachments A and B are copies of the final Hail-a-Taxi (Hail-a-Cab) protocols that were distributed to drivers and also disseminated to the public through the media. They appear to have been well accepted by the drivers.

In late July, staff conducted a brief survey of drivers at LAX prior to the enactment of the pilot program. We asked them how frequently they responded to street hails, why or why not they did so and whether they were willing to provide increased street hail service if they were less likely to be ticketed. Attachment C provides a summary of the survey results. They clearly indicated that drivers would be more eager to respond to street hails if they were less likely to be ticketed and there was an increase in the number of taxi trips resulting from increased street hail demand from the public.

As of the writing of this report, staff is completing a follow-up survey. Nonetheless, extensive discussions with drivers and industry representatives have conveyed at least a partial increase in street hail taxi operations in downtown and Hollywood since the start of the program. Drivers have noticed that there is an increase in customers flagging down taxis. However, the increase is relatively modest. We believe that this indicates the public is slowly but surely becoming more aware of the street hail transportation option. In addition, the Department's Parking Enforcement Bureau has reported that there has not been any noticeable increase in traffic congestion, hazards or citations issued to taxi drivers resulting from the program.

The Downtown Center Business Improvement District, in cooperation with L.A. Live!, sponsored a driver appreciation day with free-box lunch giveaway to approximately 400 taxi drivers on Monday, December 8, 2008. The event, which included press announcements by Council members Perry and Greuel, and representatives of L.A. Live! and the Downtown Center Business Improvement District, marked the start of a taxi driver appreciation week, as described in the December 8, 2008 article of the Los Angeles Downtown NEWS (see Attachment D). The Downtown Center Business Improvement District also provided 600 "Hail-a-Taxi" signs that were prominently posted throughout downtown. These considerable efforts have done much to educate and encourage the public to engage in hailing taxis.

It will be essential for the success of the pilot program to continue to inform the public of the increased availability of taxis for street hails, as well as a coordinated effort to educate drivers of

the potential increase in the availability of passengers for short-haul trips. The Department is prepared to work with Council offices, the taxicab industry and business associations in coordinating efforts to get this information out to the public.

The Department believes that, due to the progress made by the program, it is appropriate for the program to continue. However, given the gradual nature of the acceptance of street hail taxi service among the public, the program needs additional time to develop. We are therefore recommending the program continue for a full year, with the Department reporting back to the Board in six months with an update and possible recommendation for expansion of the program to additional areas of the City.


CONCLUSION

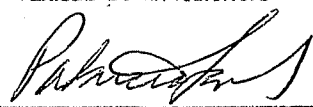
The Department wants to improve the ability of people to obtain cab rides for local trips in areas of the City that are experiencing unprecedented growth in the construction of high density residential units, as well as restaurants, entertainment venues and other businesses providing goods and services to residents and visitors. We believe that the successful trial efforts in the downtown and Hollywood areas will set precedents for other City neighborhoods generating similar transportation needs.

The significant change in the City's taxi culture represented by Hail-a-Taxi requires additional time to continue to develop. The pilot program has proved to be a large step forward in transforming Los Angeles into a more of a "taxi town" as seen in other great cities. We hope that by improving the mechanisms of providing street hail taxi service – through adjusting parking enforcement priorities and increasing customer and driver awareness - demand will meet its potential and the benefits envisioned by hail-a-taxi proponents will be realized. Ultimately, it could mean fewer private vehicles being used for local transportation in the most congested areas of the city and a more profitable bottom line for taxi drivers. Drivers' reluctance to take short trip fares may become a thing of the past as this becomes a larger part of their regular business.

The Department believes that, due to the progress made to date, it is appropriate for the program to continue. However, given the gradual nature of the acceptance of street hail taxi service among the public, it need additional time to develop. We are therefore recommending the program continue for a full year, with the Department reporting back to the Board in six months with an update and possible recommendation for expansion of the program to additional areas of the City.

APPROVED:


RITA L. ROBISON
General Manager

Approved: January 15 2009
Board of Taxicab Commissioners

Commission Executive Assistant

Date Signed: 1/9/09

Hail-A-Cab Rules

The Hail-a-Cab program is not a parking or waiting program. It is for the immediate pick-up or drop-off (loading and unloading) of passengers in the Downtown and Hollywood Areas of the City.

- Hollywood Area - North of De Longpre Ave; East of La Brea Ave; South of Franklin Ave; and West of Argyle Ave.
- Downtown Area - North of the 10 Freeway; East of the 110 Freeway; China Town to the North; and West of the L. A. River.

What Drivers May Not Do

- Drivers may not stop or park in a bus zone at any time.
- Drivers may not stop under any conditions that obstruct the movement of traffic or create a safety hazard.
- Drivers may not stop or park in a normally restricted red or blue zone if they are not completing an immediate pick-up or drop-off.
- Drivers may not block the only available lane of traffic.
- Drivers may not stop or park at a crosswalk, intersection, fire hydrant, driveway or bus zone to pick-up or drop-off passengers.

What Drivers May Do

- Drivers may stop in a **no-parking** or **no-stopping red zone** to actively load or unload passengers – emergency flashers must be used during the entire process.
- Drivers may stop in a **blue disabled zone** to actively load or unload disabled passengers – emergency flashers must be used during the entire process.
- Drivers may **double-park** to immediately load or unload passengers, but only if there is at least **one remaining lane of traffic available** in the direction the vehicle is headed - emergency flashers must be used during the entire process.
- **Drivers must turn on their vehicle emergency flashers** during the entire process of completing a street hail pick-up or drop-off at a location that is normally not authorized for parking or stopping.

When a Parking Ticket May Be Issued

- If the driver fails to cooperate with instructions from a Traffic Officer or other authorized enforcement personnel.
- If a taxi is parked in a Hail-A-Cab location (no parking zone, red zone, blue zone, or is double-parked), but the 1) driver is not in the presence of the vehicle; or
2) driver is not actively loading or unloading passengers; or
3) driver has not turned on the vehicle emergency flashers.
- If a taxi is blocking the only available lane of traffic in the direction it is headed.
- If a taxi is blocking a crosswalk, driveway, fire hydrant, intersection, or is parked in a bus zone or other restricted area that is not part of the Hail-A-Cab authorized parking conditions.

**TAXICAB DRIVER QUICK GUIDE
HAIL-A-CAB RULES AND LOCATIONS**

Hail-A-Cab Program Rules

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- Drivers may stop in a **no-parking** or **no-stopping red zone** to actively load or unload passengers – must use emergency flashers.
- Drivers may stop in a **blue disabled zone** to actively load or unload **disabled passengers** – must use emergency flashers.
- Drivers may **double-park** to **immediately** load or unload passengers, but only if there is at least **one remaining lane of traffic available** in the direction the vehicle is headed - must use emergency flashers.

Hail-A-Cab Locations and Offenses

Hollywood Area -	North of De Longpre Ave; East of La Brea Ave; South of Franklin Ave; and West of Argyle Ave.
Downtown Area -	North of the 10 Fwy; East of the 110 Fwy; China Town to the North; and West of the L. A. River.

When a Parking Ticket May Be Issued

- If the driver fails to cooperate with instructions from a Traffic Officer or other authorized enforcement personnel.
- If a taxi is parked in a Hail-A-Cab no parking zone, red zone, blue zone, or is double-parked, but the
 - 1) driver is not present; or
 - 2) driver is not actively loading or unloading passengers; or
 - 3) driver has not turned on the vehicle emergency flashers.
- If a taxi is blocking the only available lane of traffic in its direction.
- If a taxi is blocking a crosswalk, driveway, fire hydrant, intersection, or is parked in a bus zone or other restricted area that is not part of the Hail-A-Cab authorized parking conditions.

**Hail-A-Taxi Driver Survey Response - Survey No. 1 at LAX
(Conducted Just Prior to Start of Program - Week of July 28, 2008)**

Survey Date	Survey Time Frame	Number of Responses Received	Street Hail (Flag Down) Figures:	Summary	
7/29/08	7/29/08	7/30/08	7/30/08	7/31/08	Summary
1pm-3pm	3pm-5pm	1pm-3pm	3pm-5pm	1pm-3pm	Survey 1
122	132	144	127	103	628

22.2	27.9	23.4	26.0	23.9	24.7
32.9	34.1	37.2	34.2	32.8	34.4

With the Program, Are You More Likely to Respond to Street Hails?

Yes - will increase street hails	107 - 88%	115 - 87%	127 - 88%	108 - 85%	93 - 90%	550 - 88%
No - will not increase street hails	3 - 2%	8 - 6%	5 - 3%	5 - 4%	5 - 5%	26 - 4%
Not Sure if it will increase street hails	11 - 9%	9 - 7%	12 - 8%	13 - 10%	5 - 5%	50 - 8%

What Factors are Likely to Cause You to Increase the Number of Street Hails You Respond To?

relaxed ticketing will increase hails	110 - 90%	116 - 88%	125 - 87%	107 - 84%	94 - 91%	552 - 88%
multiple trips will increase hails	58 - 48%	46 - 35%	62 - 43%	50 - 39%	34 - 33%	250 - 40%
other: more taxi stands are necessary	7 - 6%	6 - 5%	4 - 3%	5 - 4%	2 - 2%	24 - 4%
other: higher flag drop or minimum fare	2 - 2%	2 - 2%	1 - 1%	1 - 1%	0 - 0%	6 - 1%
other: remove more illegal towncar/bandits	3 - 2%	1 - 1%	4 - 3%	2 - 2%	8 - 8%	18 - 3%
other: add bus zone pick-up or drop-off	1 - 1%	2 - 2%	1 - 1%	1 - 1%	1 - 1%	6 - 1%
other: provide more passenger education	1 - 1%	1 - 1%	0 - 0%	0 - 0%	0 - 0%	2 - 0.3%

other: make U-turns legal for getting customers (especially in business districts where it is now illegal)
 other: allow taxis to use carpool lane at all times (especially when returning to airport on airport authorized day)
 other: reduce lines at hotels (1-1.5 hr waits) to increase cabs available for flag downs
 other: more stands at convention center, kodak theater and staples, blue and red lines
 other: allow 5-10 minute waiting (not just flagdown) at medical facilities (or provide more stands at medical facilities)

All Hail

Downtown Tours Cab Program With Taxi Appreciation Week

By **RICHARD GUZMAN**
CITY EDITOR

Officials with the Downtown Center Business Improvement District are hoping that if they post it, they will come.

Just to make sure, the organization has erected about 600 signs to promote Taxicab Appreciation Week, which runs Dec. 8-12. It is intended to remind locals and visitors to hail cabs and to encourage cab drivers to utilize the streets of Downtown Los Angeles when looking for fares.

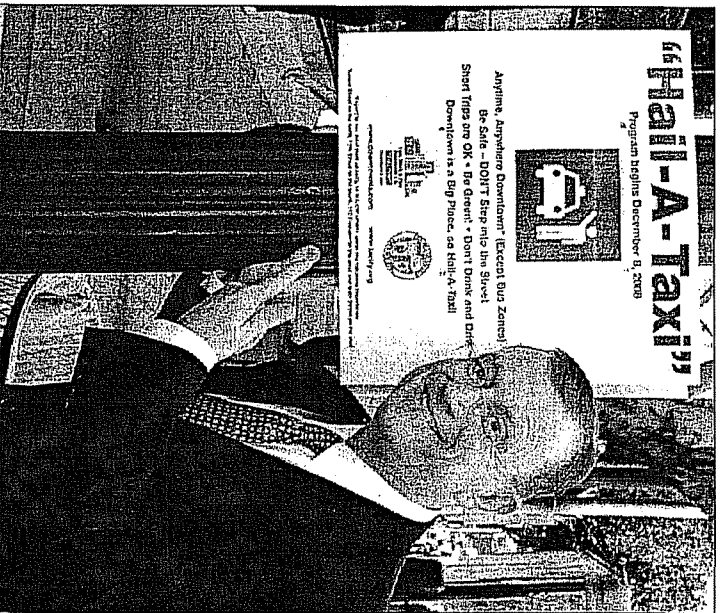
"We're asking the taxi drivers to get out of line and start cruising the streets of Downtown and telling people that they can now hail a taxi," said Hal Bastian, senior vice president and director of economic development for the BID.

The white signs were affixed to street signs and light poles between Temple, 12th and Main streets and the Harbor Freeway. They will remain up through December.

Taxicab Appreciation Week is intended to promote the Hail-A-Taxi pilot program, a six-month effort approved by the City Council this summer that loosens restrictions on where drivers may pick up fares in Downtown and Hollywood. Previously they had been limited to loading zones, taxi stands and parking areas.

Although the program was launched with much fanfare in the summer, including Ninth District Councilwoman Jan Perry sporting a giant foam finger as she flagged down a cab on Grand Avenue, cab drivers and potential customers have been slow to take advantage of the new rules.

"Hailing a cab is new to us here, so we gotta drive that point home," Perry said. Bastian said there has been a Catch-22 situation since the launch of the program.



Hal Bastian with one of the 600 signs the Downtown Center Business Improvement District has posted to promote cab use in the area. Taxicab Appreciation Week in Downtown runs Dec. 8-12.

Photo by Gary Leaman

"Taxi drivers didn't feel there was enough demand to warrant them driving around speculatively, especially with higher gas prices," he said. "Because of that, we couldn't tell people to go hail a cab, because cabs were nowhere to be hailed. They were sitting in a line."

Line Up

When it comes to taxicabs, Downtown, like most of Los Angeles, is different than New York, where cabs are abundant and constantly cruise the streets looking for fares. Instead, here they line up on busy streets or in front of hotels hoping to nab lucrative fares to the airport or outside the area.

With gas prices now below \$2 a gallon and the hundreds of

signs encouraging taxi use, the city's cab culture may finally be ready to change, Bastian said. To ensure that drivers agree, the BID is giving them a free lunch on Monday, Dec. 8, at Nokia Plaza.

"We're asking taxi drivers to change their culture by getting out and cruising," said Bastian. "We're asking the public to change their culture and begin hailing cabs."

Although cruising cabs are still a rare sight, Will Hebler, senior director of sales and marketing for Yellow Cab, said drivers are beginning to get the message that it's okay for them to cruise through Downtown.

Hebler, who worked with the BID on the taxi program, said many cab drivers were at first unaware they could pick up fares in previously restricted zones, but that is changing. He said he has begun to see cabs stop for riders along Downtown streets.

He said most cab drivers would prefer to cruise around, especially now that gas is less expensive, rather than wait in a queue.

"Otherwise they're sitting in these long taxi lines just waiting," he said. "This project is going to help a lot. It's going to let everyone know and remove all the doubt that this is happening."

Hebler said another important factor is tied to safety. "If you know you can step out of a club and there's a cab coming down in a minute, or if you step out at night and you can just flag down a cab, it gives people a sense of security and safety. It's a complete cultural shift," he said.

The pilot program will be reviewed at the end of January when city officials will determine if it should become permanent, Bastian said.

Bastian added that having cabs roaming the streets will also help area businesses, encouraging them to use taxis, rather than their own cars, when going to eat or shop.

"Downtown is a great place, but we want to make it a better place by doing what you can do in any other major city in America, which is hail a cab," he said.

Contact Richard Guzman at richard@downtownnews.com.