

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MAJORITY REPORT relative to digital rooftop advertising on taxicabs and rideshare vehicles.

Recommendations for Council action, as initiated by Motion (Blumenfield – Harris-Dawson):

1. REQUEST the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance to repeal Taxicab Board Rule 415(c) regarding digital rooftop advertising on taxicabs.
2. DIRECT the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) and the Los Angeles Police Department to take enforcement action against persons who operate vehicles with attached dynamic message sign devices within the City of Los Angeles.
3. REQUEST the City Attorney and the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) to report relative to the steps necessary to implement a pilot program to permit digital rooftop advertising on taxicabs in the City of Los Angeles.

Fiscal Impact Statement: Neither the City Administrative Officer nor the CLA has completed a financial analysis of this report.

Community Impact Statement: Yes.

For (Motion): Tarzana Neighborhood Council

SUMMARY

On January 29, 2019, Council considered Motion (Blumenfield – Harris-Dawson) relative to repealing Taxicab Board Rule 415(c) regarding digital rooftop advertising on taxicabs. Motion states Board Rule 415(c) was adopted by the Board of Public Works many years ago (before there was a Taxicab Commission or digital sign technology) and was intended to allow static advertisements to be installed on taxicabs as long as doing so complied with state and City law. Using Board Rule 415(c) to authorize Firefly's digital advertising signs on taxicabs or rideshare vehicles would conflict with current state and City law. Motion goes on to state that the California Highway Patrol has determined that these devices are not in compliance with California Vehicle Code Section 25400, which states, among a number of restrictions, that a vehicle may be equipped with a lamp or device on the exterior of a vehicle that emits a diffused non-glaring light of not more than .05 candela per square inch of area.

According to Motion, Firefly installs the rooftop digital advertising devices using roof racks and wiring the screens to the car battery. At 52 inches long by 17 inches high, the boxes holding the screens are bigger than most rooftop cargo carriers. In November 2018, the City Attorney's Office told Firefly that installation and operation of its digital signs in the City is illegal under state and City law. Disregarding that admonishment, Firefly continues to place its digital signs on rideshare vehicles operating in the City.

Motion movers believe that Taxicab Board Rule 415(c) is not consistent with State law and should be repealed. Motion recommends that Council request the City Attorney prepare an ordinance to repeal the Board Rule. Council referred Motion to the Transportation Committee for consideration.

At its meetings held February 13, and March 27, 2019, the Transportation Committee discussed this matter with LADOT and City Attorney staff. During the public comment periods, speakers in favor of permitting the use of digital signs on taxicabs and rideshare vehicles stated that the signs supplement drive income. It was also stated that the signs are designed for pedestrians and will not distract other drivers. Supporters of the Motion expressed opposition to the use of the digital signs. They stated the signs are visual blight and pose a serious public safety risk by distracting other drivers. Concerns were also expressed regarding the use of public space roadways for commercial profit.

At the March 27, 2019, meeting, the City Attorney's representative stated that rooftop dynamic message signs are illegal pursuant to State law. In their Majority Report to Council, the Committee Chair Councilmember Bonin and Councilmember Martinez recommended that Council approve Motion's recommendations. The Committee members further recommended that Council request the City Attorney and the CLA to report relative to the steps necessary to implement a pilot program to permit digital rooftop advertising on taxicabs in the City of Los Angeles.

Respectfully Submitted,

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE



MEMBER VOTE

BONIN: YES

MARTINEZ: YES

KORETZ: NO

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-NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL COUNCIL ACTS-