



Traffic Engineering Division

David C. Dryer, P.E., City Traffic Engineer and Parking Manager

Madison Municipal Building, Room 100
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
P.O. Box 2986
Madison, Wisconsin 53701-2986
PH 608 266 4761
TTY/Textnet 866 704 2315
FAX 608 267 1158

Date: March 24, 2009
To: Transit and Parking Commission Members
From: David Dryer, City Traffic Engineer
Subject: 2009-2011 Taxicab operators license renewals resolution

OVERVIEW

The following taxicab companies applied to renew their operating licenses: Badger Cab Co., Inc.; Union Cab of Madison Cooperative, Inc.; Affiliated Carriage Systems, Inc. (Madison Taxi); Laidlaw Transit Services, Inc.; Transit Solutions, Inc.; and Badger Bus Lines, Inc. There were no applications for a new license at his time.

In accordance with the criteria articulated in Madison General Ordinances, Traffic Engineering staff conducted an investigation into taxicab operator license renewals. The companies were required to answer a series of written questions (attached). The written questions were developed based on: relevant ordinances; complaints received by the Traffic Engineering Division in 2007 and 2008; and lastly, current public safety and service issues associated with the taxicab industry. Every crash on the Madison Police Department's web site involving licensed taxicab providers was reviewed. In addition, taxi companies were asked to comment on specific drivers who had multiple crashes (only Madison Taxi had a driver with multiple crashes that appeared to be his fault).

All companies were asked about vehicle maintenance, driver rest periods, customer/driver complaints, driver/passenger safety, paratransit operations, taxicab rates, refusal of service, and financial results. While all of the carriers were provided an opportunity to correct financial data provided in January of 2009, none of them corrected any previously supplied information.

Lastly, the 2007 and 2008 annual surveys (attached) completed by licensees, which included information on passengers, profits, crashes, complaints and vehicles are included.

INDIVIDUAL COMPANY INVESTIGATIONS

Badger Cab

Type of Service: Badger Cab is a zoned taxicab business that operates on a shared-ride basis, i.e., they often pick-up and deliver passengers/packages while in route with other fares. Each passenger pays only for the zone combination shown in the Badger rate book, regardless of the actual route taken. Due to this type of operation, Badger continues to have the lowest cost/passenger of any cab company and usually has the lowest fares. Passengers may give up some transit time as a trade-off to these relatively lower fares.

Badger is a leased cab operation where each driver is an independent contractor and leases their vehicle from the company on a daily basis. Drivers retain the revenues collected during their shift but must pay a lease payment to Badger for the vehicle and other services provided. The City does not regulate these lease arrangements. There are no driver-owned vehicles.

MDOT Complaints: MDOT received three Badger Cab driver complaints in 2008. MDOT received 8 complaints regarding Badger Cab: three complaints were for unsafe driving, two were for rude or unprofessional drivers, one was for a rude dispatcher, one was for a rate dispute and, one was for a taxicab arriving late.

Reported Crashes: none applicable

Other Information: Badger staff reports that they are concerned that the economic downturn could hurt customer volume, therefore, drivers' income and ultimately could reduce the number of cabs on the street negatively effecting company revenues. In addition, they feel that the taxicab stand previously on the 600 block of University (closed during University Avenue Reconstruction) hurt their business as their drivers rely on volume and do not believe waiting at a taxicab stand will be cost effective.

Union Cab

Type of Service: Union Cab is a cooperative with a metered cab operation. All employees are equal owners of the company. Union operates more vehicles (63) than any other company and is increased its fleet by two vehicles in 2007. They are the only company providing accessible taxicab service, and receive no financial assistance from the other metered or zoned taxicab companies or the City of Madison for this service.

MDOT Complaints: Union had six customer complaints filed with MDOT in 2008: three complaints were for rude or unprofessional drivers, two were for rude or unprofessional dispatcher, and one was for a passenger who felt they should not have been ejected (passenger appeared to be impaired by alcohol and was allegedly abusive).

Reported Crashes: not applicable

Other Information: Union is concerned about non-paying passengers. MPD does not prioritize responding to non-paying passengers, thus, Union feels an ordinance that would change the criteria at which a passenger may be refused service is necessary. MDOT staff plans to work with Union, the other taxicos, and City Attorney's Office in regards to this issue and, hopefully, strike a balance that takes the safety and financial well-being of the taxicos as well as equitable treatment of passengers into account.

Union states that it lost money on its 24/7 on-demand accessible taxi service in 2008. Also, it lost its biggest corporate customer—Community Living Alliance. However, they have received a grant that has allowed them to increase the fleet from 3 to 5 vehicles. Union feels that this program is a success because they have been allowed to operate within its own business model.

Affiliated Carriage Systems (Madison Taxi)

Type of Service: Madison Taxi operates a privately owned, metered taxi operation. They also operate some driver-owned taxicabs.

MDOT Complaints: Madison Taxi had five complaints filed with the MDOT last year. Two complaints involved passengers feeling that drivers were rude or unprofessional, two

complaints were related to fare disputes and one involved a person who accidentally pulled into the taxi cab queue at the airport and was screamed at an individual who she believed worked for Madison Taxi (no driver found who met that description).

Reported Crashes: One driver had two crashes that appeared to be his fault and two that were not his fault. Madison Taxi has had this driver work with its safety manager to improve his driving skills. They feel that he is a fine driver but just needs some additional work.

Other Information: One of the 2008 complaints rate dispute complaints (mentioned above) involved Madison charging passengers a flat rate to ride from the Dutch Mill Park and Ride to destinations near the UW campus area. Madison Taxi acknowledged charging a flat rate and refunded the complainant's fare. After this incident,, Madison created a policy to run the meter for each trip from the park-and-ride and to have passengers split the fare as indicated on the meter.

First Transit (Laidlaw Transit Services, Inc.)

Type of Service: Laidlaw is a nationwide company that operates a specialized taxi operation used to transport the elderly or persons with disabilities. All services provided by Laidlaw in Madison are contractual.

MDOT Complaints: None reported.

Reported Crashes: none applicable

Transit Solutions

Type of Service: Transit Solutions is a privately owned specialized transportation service.

MDOT Complaints: none reported.

Reported Crashes: none applicable

Badger Bus

Type of Service: Badger Bus is a privately owned specialized transportation service providing services to Madison Metro and local school districts.

MDOT Complaints: none reported.

Reported Crashes: none applicable

CONCLUSIONS

Staff finds the responses to all questions acceptable. It is apparent from these question and visual inspection that: a) vehicles are being maintained properly (there were no maintenance related crashes in 2007 and 2008 by licensed carriers); b) drivers appear to be getting adequate rest periods; c) there has been relatively few MDOT complaints; d) driver and passenger safety is a high priority among carriers; e) refusal of service is rare; and f) the voluntary accessible taxicab program provided by Union Cab appears to be in high demand, and, is operating reasonably well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the operating licenses for all six of the currently licensed carriers be renewed, and that the attached resolution recommended for approval.