



Traffic Engineering Division

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Date: April 20, 2011
To: Transit and Parking Commission Members
From: David Dryer, City Traffic Engineer
Subject: 2011-2013 Taxicab Operator's License Renewals Resolution

OVERVIEW

The following taxicab companies applied to renew their operating licenses: Affiliated Carriage Systems, Inc., dba Madison Taxi; Badger Cab Company, Inc.; Green Cab of Madison, Incorporated; Union Cab of Madison Cooperative, Inc.; Badger Bus Lines, Inc.; and Transit Solutions, Inc. There were no new taxicab operating licensees at this 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. The written questions were developed based on: relevant ordinances; complaints received by the Traffic Engineering Division in 2009 and 2010; and lastly, current public safety and service issues associated with the taxicab industry. Every crash on the Madison Police Department's website involving licensed taxicab providers was reviewed. In addition, taxi companies were asked to comment on specific drivers who were at fault in multiple crashes (Badger Cab and Union Taxi each had a driver with multiple-crash driver).

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 2010 and 2011, none of them corrected any previously supplied information.

Lastly, the applicants submitted 2010 and 2011 annual surveys (attached) which included information about passengers, profits, crashes, complaints and vehicles are included.

INDIVIDUAL COMPANY INVESTIGATIONS

Affiliated Carriage Systems, Inc., dba Madison Taxi

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

MDOT Complaints: Madison Taxi had four complaints filed with the MDOT in 2009 and five in 2010. The vast majority of complaints (8 out of 9) took place at the Dane County Regional Airport. Seven of these complaints were for rude or unprofessional behavior and one was for a rate dispute. The one remaining complaint was for alleged unsafe driving.

Madison Taxi acknowledges that it has had some customer service issues at the Airport. Management claims that poor driver communication and “overly aggressive” drivers are the root causes. Generally, passengers have complained about Madison drivers being abrupt and rude when attempting to load multiple passengers that are sharing rides. Meter cabs are allowed to provide shared-ride service during declared peak periods; however, drivers should be very polite as to avoid making passengers feel like they are being herded into a cab to maximize driver profits without concern for passengers.

Madison is actively working on improving Airport customer service and communication through education and driver discipline. Madison Taxi has hired secret customer service employees to provide feedback to management.

Reported Crashes: None applicable.

Other Information: Madison Cab has not chosen to implement the estimated fare collection as provided under MGO 11.06(7)(e).

Badger Cab Company, Inc.

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. Passengers may give up some transit time as a trade-off for these relatively lower fares.

Badger is a leased cab operation and each driver is an independent contractor and leases a vehicle from the company on a daily basis. Drivers retain the revenues collected during their shift but must make 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 seven Badger Cab driver complaints in 2009 and four complaints in 2010. Eight of those complaints were for rude or unprofessional drivers or dispatchers; one was for a late arrival; one was for unsafe driving; and one was for a driver being involved in a verbal conflict with a non-passenger driver.

Reported Crashes: One driver (J. Uicker) was responsible for two crashes between 2009 and 2010. Both accidents involved Uicker unsafely driving his vehicle in reverse and causing relatively minor damages.

According to Badger, Mr. Uicker is still driving for them. Typically, Uicker would be required to take an eight-hour defensive driving class through the Wisconsin Safety Council. Unfortunately, the WSC instructor took another position and they are currently trying to find a replacement. Once Badger finds a defensive driving class that meets its needs, Uicker will be required to attend.

Other Information: In February 2010, Badger Cab raised their initial zone charge from \$2.75 to \$3.00 but maintained its additional zone charge at \$1.25. Green Cab, the only other zone cab in Madison, has the same initial zone charge of \$3.00 and also has an additional zone charge of \$1.25.

Badger Cab has only collected a prepaid fare under the MGO 11.06(7)(e) twelve times since the ordinance was enacted in September 2010: on four occasions, the passenger did not identify his or her destination or changed his or her destination while in transit; on four occasions, a passenger had previously not paid his or her fare; on one occasion, an individual was extremely intoxicated; on three occasions a passenger's destination was out of town; and on one occasion, a customer indicated he was unwilling or unable to pay his fare. Neither Badger nor MDOT have received complaints regarding Badger Cab's collection of estimated fares.

Green Cab of Madison, Incorporated

Type of Service: Green Cab began operation in September 2010. It is a zoned taxicab business that operates on a shared-ride basis, i.e., they often pick-up and deliver passengers while in route with other fares. Each passenger pays only for the zone combination, regardless of the actual route taken. Passengers may give up some transit time as a trade-off for these relatively lower fares.

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

MDOT Complaints: Green Cab had two complaints in 2010: one for unsafe driving and one for rude or unprofessional behavior. The unsafe driving complaint involved an unidentified Green Cab driver speeding, and the other "rude" complaint involved a Green driver allegedly parking in an illegal parking space.

Reported Crashes: None applicable.

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 (71) than any other company and has increased its fleet by six vehicles in 2010. 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 two customer complaints filed with MDOT in 2009 and one complaint in 2010: two complaints were for rude or unprofessional drivers, and one was for a driver allegedly smoking (this allegation refuted by driver).

Reported Crashes: One Union driver (R. Davis) was responsible for two minor crashes during this period.

Union claims that Davis had been driving for them since 2002 and these two crashes were the first characterized as unavoidable. Davis has been informed that if he has another avoidable accident within the year, he will lose his driving privileges altogether, and furthermore, he has become ineligible for any safe driving bonus awarded to safe drivers.

Other Information: Union Cab has posted on decals in every taxicab the fact that drivers are authorized to collect estimated fares. Union has not received any complaints about its collection of estimated fares. Union believes that this policy change has been effective, since several passengers who had requested rides were unable to prepay estimated fares. The company collects roughly 10% of its nighttime fares in advance, and about 2.5% of its daytime fares. Union Cab is currently working on a system to track and report estimated fares collected.

Badger Bus Lines, Inc.

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.

Transit Solutions

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

MDOT Complaints: None reported.

Reported Crashes: None applicable.

CONCLUSIONS

Staff finds the responses to all questions acceptable. It is apparent from these questions and visual inspection that:

- a) vehicles are being maintained properly (there were no maintenance-related crashes in 2009 and 2010 by licensed carriers);
- b) drivers appear to be getting adequate rest periods;
- c) there have been relatively few MDOT complaints;
- d) driver and passenger safety is a high priority among carriers;
- e) refusal of service is rare;
- f) the voluntary accessible taxicab program provided by Union Cab appears to be in high demand, and is operating reasonably well; and
- g) Green Cab has appears to have successfully entered Madison's taxicab market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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