

TO: Regional Transportation Commission
FROM: Karena Pushnik, Senior Transportation Planner
RE: Taxicab Ordinance Standardization

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for your information.

BACKGROUND

Commercial taxi service in Santa Cruz County is regulated separately, through ordinance, by the County and by each of the four incorporated cities. All five jurisdictions regulate taxi service by mandate from the State of California (California Government Code 53075.5), to “protect the public health, safety, and welfare.” Jurisdictions regulate and oversee vehicle safety, driver qualifications, and business practices of commercial taxi companies.

Over the past year, the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E/D TAC) has been discussing issues regarding commercial taxi regulation within the county, with special concern for the unique needs of elderly and disabled users of this service. Commercial taxi service is an essential component of the broad array of specialized transportation services available to elderly and disabled residents of the county, and is often used when public and non-profit transportation services are unavailable or insufficient to meet particular mobility needs. The E/D TAC and staff examined the state of commercial taxi regulation within the five jurisdictions in the county and found inconsistencies that affect seniors and people with disabilities.

The E/D TAC requested that the Regional Transportation Commission send a letter to each of the local jurisdictions highlighting these issues. That letter -- signed by the Commission Chair and including information about the various codes delineating rates, licensing and restrictions -- was sent in March 2007 ([Attachment 1](#)).

DISCUSSION

Since the above-referenced RTC letter was sent, three events have occurred.

County of Santa Cruz Response

A response letter from the County of Santa Cruz was received on May 2, 2007. Attached to the letter are memos from both the County Counsel and the County Administrative Office (Attachment 2). The County indicates that an extensive process ensued in 1989 to develop a draft ordinance that was the basis for the ordinances in the other jurisdictions. Due to the passage of time, the five ordinances have diverged. The County recommends that the Regional Transportation Commission take the lead in preparing a “model ordinance” that incorporates all the provisions it considers important and then present that model ordinance to each jurisdiction for deliberation and action.

City of Santa Cruz

Last month the City of Santa Cruz considered a resolution that would increase fares in response to a request from one of the three operators. Discussion by city council members included the impacts of the proposed fare changes on seniors and people with disabilities, which would specifically affect the existing Taxi Scrip program (provides discounted taxi fare vouchers to eligible riders through RTC allocated funding from the Transportation Development Act to Community Bridges). The discussion also touched on the broader implications of changes to the local taxicab ordinance to services county-wide. The council indicated interest in a regional entity developing recommendations to develop standardized taxicab requirements that could be considered for adoption by each of the five local jurisdictions. The City of Santa Cruz will hold a public hearing to consider the rate change issue in September. City representatives may want to provide the RTC with an oral update about their discussions.

Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee

The E/D TAC reviewed the taxi issues at its June meeting (minutes from the meeting included in this month’s RTC packet). The committee expressed concern about undertaking the entire spectrum of taxi issues and felt that it would be wise to monitor the consultant contract currently underway in Monterey County (Transportation Agency for Monterey County) to develop regional taxi oversight. The committee unanimously took action directing the chair to write a letter to the RTC and the County outlining the taxi ordinance issues of interest, issues potentially of interest and those that are not necessarily of interest to seniors and people with disabilities, and suggesting that Santa Cruz County monitor the outcome of efforts to reform taxi regulations in Monterey County (Attachment 3).

RTC Work Program

Currently, the Specialized Transportation Program element in the RTC adopted Work Program does not include work on developing components of a model taxicab ordinance. In addition, the E/D TAC interest in the issue is specifically focused on the implications of the ordinance inconsistencies on seniors and people living with disabilities, not necessarily every aspect of taxi services. However, the series of events highlight the lack of countywide

oversight of this form of transportation and the interest by some jurisdictions for guidance in this arena.

At this time, staff concurs with the E/D TAC that, rather than “reinvent the wheel,” it makes sense to wait until the Transportation Agency for Monterey County completes their efforts to develop a model taxi ordinance or oversight mechanism, therefore no RTC action is recommended.

SUMMARY

The Regional Transportation Commission’s Elderly & Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee is interested in standardizing the five local jurisdiction’s taxicab ordinances with respect to mobility issues for seniors and people with disabilities, but not necessarily interested in addressing the full spectrum of taxicab issues. Without an overarching entity that oversees all taxi issues, each jurisdiction has modified its ordinances over time, resulting in inconsistent and confusing requirements that affect riders. However, because a countywide review of taxi issues is not currently included in the RTC work plan and a consultant contract underway in Monterey County may yield information useful to local efforts, no action is recommended at this time. Once a model ordinance or oversight mechanism is developed in Monterey County, RTC staff and the E/D TAC may make further recommendations for action on this item.

Attachments:

1. March 2007 letter from the RTC to local jurisdictions
2. May 2007 letter from the County of Santa Cruz to the RTC
3. E/D TAC letter including Issues of Interest

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