



**Economic Development and Planning Committee
REPORT 08-012
Tuesday, June 19, 2008
Special Meeting Re: Taxi Safety Issues
10:00 a.m.
Albion Room, Hamilton Convention Centre
1 Summer's Lane
Hamilton**

- Present:** Chair T. Whitehead
Councillors B. Bratina, B. Clark, S. Duvall, B. McHattie, D. Mitchell,
R. Pasuta, and M. Pearson
- Absent:** Councillor L. Ferguson, declaration of interest
- Staff Present:** T. McCabe, General Manager – Planning and Economic
Development
M. Hazel, V. Ormond – Planning and Economic Development
A. Rawlings – Co-ordinator, I. Bedioui, City Clerk's Office

**THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE PRESENTS
REPORT 08-012 AND RESPECTFULLY RECOMMENDS:**

1. **On-board Safety Features for Licensed Taxis (PED08139) (City Wide) (Item 6.1)**
 - (a) That Report PED08139, which provides a chronological history of the issue of on-board safety features for Licensed Taxis in the City of Hamilton, be received for information;
 - (b) That staff be directed to consider all the information received at this Special Public meeting, and report back to Committee, with recommendations respecting Taxi safety measures, excluding cameras;
 - (c) That staff be further directed to review and include in the report the Committee's preferred option, which is the installation of permanent removable shields on all taxi cabs with the costs to be covered by the taxi cab owners.

FOR THE INFORMATION OF COUNCIL:**(a) CHANGES TO THE AGENDA (Item 1)**

The Clerk advised of the following changes:

- (a) List of Additional Speakers which has been distributed this morning.
- (b) Additional communications which have been distributed this morning, from:
 - (i) Liz Bertrand
 - (ii) Jim Backus
 - (iii) A form letter in favour of safety shields, signed by 31 people

The Agenda for the June 19, 2008, meeting of the Economic Development & Planning Committee was approved, as amended.

(b) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 2)

The Chair noted that Councillor Ferguson has declared an interest as he is an investor in the taxi industry and is therefore absent from the meeting today.

(c) On-board Safety Features for Licensed Taxis (PED08139) (City Wide) (Item 6.1)

Chair Whitehead welcomed everyone to this special meeting of the Economic Development and Planning Committee, to hear input from the industry on taxi cab safety issues.

The Chair advised that there were many speakers who had registered to speak on the item, and who had registered prior to the advertised cut-off date.

He added that several people had contacted the Clerks Department after the cut-off date, with requests to speak to the meeting. The Chair suggested that the registered speakers should speak first, and then, depending on timing, a decision could be made on whether to hear extra speakers.

Chair Whitehead advised the meeting that each speaker would have a maximum of 5 minutes to address Committee.

He also advised that Paul Miller, the MPP for Hamilton East, and the NDP Workplace safety critic is in attendance and he is registered as a speaker on the Additional List. Mr. Miller asked if he may address Committee before 12 noon, when he has to leave for another meeting.

The Committee approved moving Mr. Miller's presentation up to be earlier in the meeting, if this is required.

Marty Hazell made a PowerPoint presentation which provided an overview of the staff report and the subject of taxi safety issues. He outlined the history of the development of the taxi by-law since amalgamation and provided an overview of events to date and why the safety issues are before Committee today. Copies of the presentation were distributed.

Marty Hazell responded to questions posed by the Committee.

(d) Registered Speakers

- (i) Ejaz Butt - Cab Drivers Welfare Association of Hamilton - and written submission (Item 6.2)

Mr. Butt addressed Committee and spoke in support of the installation of safety shields. His comments included but were not limited to the following points:

- He is the president of the Cab Driver Welfare Association of Hamilton which was established after the escalating violence against drivers;
- The association is a charitable organization and there are 572 members;
- Drivers are being killed and injured because they are vulnerable and shouldn't be;
- At a meeting held January 6, 2008, the drivers unanimously supported the installation of safety shields;
- The safety shields protect the cab driver without interfering with the heating and cooling of the back seat;
- They are inexpensive;
- They are used in many cities around the world;
- The Province of Manitoba and the City of Edmonton have made the safety shields mandatory;
- The camera does not protect the driver – it can only be useful in catching the perpetrator after the fact.

Mr. Butt responded to questions posed by the Committee. It was noted that the cost of the shield is about \$800.00 and a brief discussion followed respecting the affordability of installing safety shields. If the owners install the safety shields the cost will be transferred to the drivers by an increase in the lease fee. In Mr. Butt's opinion, the City should protect the driver from being charged for the cost as they already make below minimum wage.

Councillor McHattie advised that Mr. Butt should re-circulate copies of the 2003 financial statements.

Staff provided the following statistics regarding the stakeholders in the taxi industry: there are 411 plate owners, 1,200 licensed cab drivers, 2 brokers and 5 independent operators.

(ii) Harry Harrington (Item 6.3)

Mr. Harrington addressed Committee and spoke in support of the safety shields. His comments included but were not limited to the following points:

- He has been driving for about 8 years –day time, night time full time and part time;
- 99 % of the time the fares are law abiding people
- However, if a driver encounters the other 1%, who are usually unwell – i.e.: addicts, a camera will not protect the driver;
- Nothing will stop an addict from trying to get money to feed his addiction;
- Without the safety shields, the drivers will continue to be concerned with their safety and may refuse fares – people under the influence of alcohol may end up driving;
- A photo from a camera will not apprehend a criminal;
- The City of London taxi drivers are highly trained;
- They must complete a two year course and they have a safety shield in the cab;
- Government should protect the taxi drivers;
- Conditions are getting worse because the drug problems are getting worse.

(iii) Mohammed Dar (Item 6.4)

Mr. Dar addressed Committee and spoke in support of the safety shield and his comments included but were not limited to the following points:

- Industries are protected by laws;
- Cab drivers also need to be protected;
- Being a cab driver is one of the most dangerous occupations;
- The safety shield is preferable to the camera;
- The taxi industry is part of the economic development of the City;
- Why hasn't a public meeting been called for the past seven years;
- The customers and brokers need to be handled by an independent committee and judicial system;
- Taxi fares should be calculated by the cab driver.

(iv) Mansour Khan (Item 6.5)

Mr. Khan addressed Committee and indicated that he is not in support of safety shields but is in support of cameras. His comments included but were not limited to the following points.

- He challenged the necessity to install the shield;
- A cab driver is aware of the dangers of his occupation;
- A cab driver must be trained;
- With a shield, no one can sit in the front seat;
- The front seats cannot be adjusted;
- The City Hall will be sued if someone is injured because of the shield;
- If there is an accident the safety shields break;
- Most drivers and customers don't want the shield;
- The City courses cover tourism and how to operate a cab;
- Those that have been driving for 15 years should not need to attend all the courses;
- The drivers are frustrated because they are not making the money and they are not getting the good trips;
- Some drivers get mad and use inciting language;
- For 20 years he was a driver and last year he leased one plate from an owner and one plate from a private company;
- After midnight, the cab driver should only pick up fares that are dispatched by the Company, in front of the bars;
- They should not pick up anyone who flags them down.
- He supports the installation of cameras.

- (v) Paul Miller, the MPP for Hamilton East, and the NDP Workplace safety critic.

Paul Miller addressed Committee and indicated that he is in support of safety shields and his comments included but were not limited to the following points.

- The Toronto drivers are in favour of the safety shields – Hamilton drivers are too;
- The drivers are not covered under WSIB and safety and this needs to be changed;
- Other jurisdictions in North America have passed legislation regarding the safety shields
- The City of Edmonton has had 8 deaths since 1981 and safety shields are now a requirement;
- The drivers are provided with interest free, amortized loans to cover the cost of \$800 or \$1,000 to install the shields;
- Manitoba has mandated the safety shield throughout the Province under its Motor Vehicle Safety Standard Act – Regulation 209-091;
- The cameras are a small deterrent – someone on drugs will not be deterred;
- Council can make the installation of safety shields a requirement and he recommends it do so.

Paul Miller responded to questions

- (vi) Liz Bertrand/Jennifer Moses (Item 6.6)

Liz Bertrand had requested that Jennifer Moses speak in her place.

Ms. Moses addressed Committee and indicated that she does not support safety shields and her comments included but were not limited to the following points:

- She has been a taxi driver since 1986 – 20 years on night shift;
- She has heard many stories from her customers;
- She has seen how a simple act of kindness can touch people;
- In her opinion, it's the best job in the world;
- She has had good experiences and made good friendships;
- On November 27, she was forced to drive by a customer who put a gun to her ear;
- He had a gun in her head before sitting down;
- The public doesn't like safety shields;

- A driver's attitude can avoid problems;
- A shield will change the dynamics;
- She likes the contact with the public;
- A shield would enable a driver to lock a fare in his car;
- Female customers have expressed fears that they may be locked in the cabs by male cab drivers;
- Concerned with the added expense;
- People may no longer be able to lease their cars
- No one wants to be caged up;
- Good sense and being careful are the solutions;
- The image of Hamilton would be affected if the shield is installed;
- As a driver, you have super intuition;
- Doesn't like anyone sitting behind her;
- Prefers to have them beside her where she has more control;
- The shield is not bullet proof – it is bullet resistant
- There would be no room in the back seat.

(vii) Donna Brooks (Item 6.7)

Ms. Brooks addressed Committee and indicated that she does not support safety shields and her comments included but were not limited to the following points:

- She has been a taxi driver for twenty years;
- It is necessary to be able to read people;
- Intuition and common sense are necessary;
- Don't install safety shields or cameras;
- An educated driver who knows how to handle the fares is best;
- A driver shouldn't get out of car to confront a fare;
- The room in the back seat would be tight;
- No one wants to drive in a Plexiglas cage for 12 hours a day;
- The police have warned that drivers would be able to lock in fares;
- Groups of people will not be able to fit – this will impact the drivers' earnings;
- There's a potential for injury factor with the glass breaking;
- There's no protection against a gun;
- It can cause back problems for the driver if it impedes leg room.

Ms. Brooks submitted a petition of approximately 180 signatures of people who are not in favour of passenger dividers in taxi cabs.

- (viii) Peter Liebovitch or Tony DiPietro, Steelworkers Union (Item 6.8)

Mr. Liebovitch addressed Committee on behalf of the United Steelworkers Hamilton Area Council and Tony DePaulo (not DiPietro) and read a letter, copies of which were circulated.

He spoke in favour of the installation of safety shields since these were a measure designed for the welfare of the cab drivers. He considers that all drivers should be protected by safety requirements, just like workers in other occupations.

- (ix) Jim Backus (Item 6.9)

Mr. Backus was not present to address Committee, due to work commitments, and sent his apologies, but had sent in a letter expressing his opinions. Copies of the letter were distributed to the Committee.

- (x) Stephen Sheen (Item 6.10)

Mr. Sheen addressed Committee and indicated that he is in favour of the safety shields and not the cameras. His comments included but were not limited to the following points:

- He has been a driver for 27 years;
- He has been in dangerous situations as a cab driver;
- He is for the shield;
- Hamilton is becoming known as little Chicago;
- He has been physically threatened by customers;
- A shield would protect from attacks from behind;
- The cameras do not deter people who are drunk or stoned;
- A camera would only be a witness of an attack;
- As the plate is City property, the City should maintain the shield;
- Bus drivers have a shield;
- He asked for a show of hands in the audience of who wants a shield and most raised their hands.

- (xi) Bruce Griffiths (Item 6.11)

Mr. Griffiths addressed Committee and spoke against the safety shields and cameras and expressed his opinions which included but were not limited to the following points:

- He has been driving for 25 years – on and off;
- The cost of the safety shields goes to the owners, not the drivers;
- He hasn't been robbed;
- He has been the victim of a few little assaults;
- There was a recent rash of violence that occurred last December;
- There has now been a small decrease in violence;
- Don't compare the Hamilton situation with that of Toronto;
- Don't install safety shields or cameras;
- Immigrants should speak English – it used to be a requirement of the by-law;
- Immigrants are being targeted – don't give them cab licences.

(xii) Ahmed Majboub (Item 6.12)

Not in attendance.

(xiii) Surinder Multani (Item 6.13)

Mr. Multani addressed Committee and spoke in favour of safety shields and his comments included but were not limited to the following points:

- He has been driving cab for five years;
- His main concern is for his safety;
- He supports the installation of safety shields as he believes they will provide protection and the betterment of the industry and society.

The Committee recessed for lunch at 12:00 noon and reconvened at 12:40 p.m.

(xiv) Pardeep Mull (Item 6.14)

Not in attendance.

(xv) Len Parrin (Item 6.15)

Not in attendance.

(xvi) Zahid Butt (Item 6.16)

Mr. Butt addressed Committee and expressed support of the safety shield and his comments included but were not limited to the following points:

- The use of a camera system would enhance the taxi driver's safety to some extent;
- However, it does not protect the taxi drivers;
- He's in support of safety shields;
- The taxi driver's safety is important.

(xvii) Bhajan Singh (Item 6.17)

Mr. Singh addressed Committee and indicated that he is in support of the safety shield. His comments included but were not limited to the following:

- Being a taxi driver is not a pleasant experience;
- It involves letting a perfect stranger in your car and driving in dangerous areas while carrying cash;
- The worst example of the dangers was the gentleman who was attacked by a machete;
- Four drivers were sent to the hospital in another incident;
- 60% of drivers are likely to be assaulted;
- The bottom line is protection of drivers' lives - that alone should be worth installing the shields.

(xviii) Jagir Multaani (Item 6.18)

Mr. Multaani addressed Committee and spoke in support of the safety shield. His comments included but were not limited to the following points:

- He has been in the taxi industry for 24 years;
- In 1991 he was robbed at gun point;
- The customer pulled a gun on his head;
- He wanted to rob him;
- It was a Friday night;
- He gave him the \$400;
- He reported the incident to the police, providing evidence of the address from where the call was placed, but they were unable to find the robber;
- They were unable to find who called the cab;
- How then, are the police going to track an assailant with a picture but without an address;

- Only a shield will provide the protection;
- Cab drivers are not going to pay for the shield;
- The owners need to pay for the shield.

(xix) Parvinder Singh (Item 6.19)

Mr. Singh addressed Committee and indicated that he is in support of the safety shields. He expressed his opinions on the matter which included but were not limited to the following points:

- He has been in the taxi industry since 1985;
- Crimes against taxi drivers have been on the rise;
- Cameras in taxi cabs are a good solution but they don't stop the crimes;
- The cameras may help in apprehending criminals but the lives of the taxi drivers are not protected;
- Drivers need to provide for their families;
- Installing shields in taxis will significantly decrease the crime rate and save lives;
- 94% of attacks occur when the drivers are sitting in the cars;
- 80% of the attacks occur at night;
- The drivers need to be safe;
- The shields will not hide their face – communication will still be possible;
- Install the shields as soon as possible.

(xx) Azam Khan (Item 6.20)

Not in attendance.

(xxi) Babbar Ayub (Item 6.21)

Mr. Ayub addressed Committee and indicated that he is not in support of cameras. His comments included but were not limited to the following:

- He was robbed 3 weeks ago on Quigley by Strathern Mall;
- The passenger put a knife to his throat from the right side;
- He had asked him to sit on the right side as instructed by the police as a safety precaution;
- The passenger was a crack head;
- He was trembling;
- He told him he hadn't earned any money yet;

- He's from Pakistan;
- The British ruled Pakistan for 100 years and left their language;
- He can speak English;
- The cameras won't help;
- The drivers want to be safe and make it home alive to their families.

(xxii) Annie Lovas (Item 6.22)

Ms. Lovas addressed Committee and advised that she is in support of the safety shield. Her opinions on the matter included but were not limited to the following points:

- She is a Hamiltonian and a taxi cab driver;
- There are many scary nights;
- As a cab driver, there's no coverage for work place safety;
- There are no benefits;
- Back in December we had 15 robberies in 10 days;
- The cab drivers petitioned for safety shields;
- It's taking six months to pass a law for protection;
- Cab driver have no status;
- Cab drivers want to work in a safe environment and make a living;
- She spoke to a police officer and a by-law officer and both agreed that safety shields should be installed.
- She read a letter from one of her customers who supports the taxi shields;
- A meter increase is need to reflect the price of gas
- There has been no fare increase since 2003
- Taxi school is a waste of time for drivers who have been driving for many years. Impose on new drivers;
- It's another way for the City to make money;
- The City should cover the cost of the courses;
- What if someone doesn't pass?
- The City should reconsider this requirement;
- She has been driving for four years;
- She has been a victim of robbery and violence.

(xxiii) Elda Jones (Item 6.23)

Ms. Jones addressed Committee and indicated that she opposes safety shields. Her opinions on the matter included but were not limited to the following points:

- She's been In the taxi industry for 18 years;
- A taxi has a six year life span when purchased;
- How much quicker will the re-sale value of the taxi decrease with a shield;
- The owners are made to install mandated extras;
- The extras damage the car;
- No shield has been CSA approved;
- The governing body mandating the shield will be liable;
- The owner would be exempt;
- How can a shield not yet CSA approved be installed in any car on the road;
- The shield will create customer base deterioration as less passengers will fit;
- More than half the new drivers are first generation Canadians;
- They have preconceived attitudes;
- Mandatory training should be reviewed if complaints are received;
- Those drivers that have already been in the industry for a long time shouldn't be required to take the course
- The drivers that get a lot of complaints should be retrained by the company

The issues of book value, the responsibility of driver training and CSA approvals were briefly discussed and clarified.

The Chair referred to the additional speakers' list and called the following to the podium:

(xxiv) Abdul Alam

Mr. Alam addressed Committee and expressed his support for the safety shield and his comments included but were not limited to the following:

- He has been in the taxi industry since 2000;
- He has been robbed twice - once with a machete;
- He gave the robber his money;
- Drivers need safety shields to save their lives;
- A taxi driver was killed in Toronto – the camera was in the car – they caught the suspect but it didn't save his life;
- Shields instead of a cameras

(xxv) Javed Bukhari

Mr. Bukhari addressed Committee and expressed his support for the safety shield and his comments included but were not limited to the following:

- He was in military police for 20 years;
- He wants to thank the police and the City;
- The immigrant taxi drivers can speak English;
- They do have communication skills;
- Some drivers have PhD's and other degrees and are highly qualified
- They are not drop-outs;
- They have completed their education;
- Put the shields only at night;
- Remove them in the morning;
- We don't want the seniors or the children to be uncomfortable;
- He works at night and it is very dangerous;
- The drivers want training but don't charge them
- The City should pay in collaboration with the taxi companies
- The City would benefit from having a good taxi industry;
- Do consider increasing fares.

(xxvi) Usman

Mr. Usman addressed Committee and expressed his support for the safety shield and his comments included but were not limited to the following:

- It's thanks to the efforts of the Cab Drivers' Welfare Association of Hamilton that today's public meeting is taking place;
- Everything has already been said;
- Steve (a previous speaker) asked who's for and who's against the shield;
- The camera is a deterrent – it helps the police;
- The shield provides safety;
- English has become an international language;
- It is spoken everywhere;
- We all have different backgrounds and we all speak English;
- He doesn't think there is a communication problem;
- When driving at night with a passenger who is intoxicated – they wouldn't care about the camera;
- The taxi drivers pay for everything;
- The City shouldn't be concerned about who should pay;

- The drivers can afford to put in the shield;
- If a company requests retraining the company should pay;
- If the City requests retraining, the City should pay;
- The drivers will donate their time not their money;
- If the meter is increased, will the broker increase the lease;
- Will the money go to the driver or to the broker?

(xxvii) Nabo Terika

Not in attendance.

On a Motion (Pearson/Duvall) the Committee received the deputations and written comments.

The Chair advised that staff will be bringing forward a report in September. He thanked staff for doing a good job.

On a Motion (Duvall/Clark) Committee directed staff to consider all the information received today and report back with appropriate recommendations in September.

The Committee had a brief discussion regarding what the City's options are under the existing Provincial Acts and City legislation and noted that the goal is to gradually introduce the use of safety shields in order to allow for changes in attitudes.

On a Motion (Clark/Pearson) staff was directed to review and report back on the Committee's preferred option which is the installation of permanent removable shields in all taxi cabs and that the cost be covered by the taxi cab owners.

This Motion CARRIED on the following recorded votes:

Yeas: Whitehead, Clark, Duvall, and Pearson
Yeas: 4
Nays: Mitchell
Nays: 1
Absent: Bratina, Ferguson, McHattie, and Pasuta
Absent: 4

(e) Motions (Item 9)

None

(f) Notices of Motion (Item 10)

None

(g) General Information (Item 11)

None

(h) PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL (Item 12)

None

(i) ADJOURNMENT (Item 13)

On a Motion, the Economic Development and Planning Committee adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Whitehead, Chair
Economic Development and Planning Committee

Alexandra Rawlings, Co-ordinator
Economic Development and Planning Committee
June 19, 2008