

Accessible Taxi Survey

Qualitative Report

Prepared for The City of Calgary by:



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Background

The Taxi and Limousine Advisory Committee (TLAC) has been assessing taxi user satisfaction via a telephone survey for several years, however, the general public survey does not focus on satisfaction with accessible taxi services in Calgary. While many Calgarians have used accessible taxis in Calgary, the vast majority of these users do not require the services of an accessible taxi (i.e. do not have mobility challenges that require accessible vans).

It was decided in 2016 to include a separate research component aimed specifically at surveying users of accessible taxis and/or their caregivers who actually require the services of an accessible van.

Leger, the company who has conducted the TLAC research over the past few years, was contracted to complete this research.

Objectives

The objective of this research is to assess the satisfaction of users of accessible taxi services in Calgary. In order to get a clear picture of the quality of the service, only taxi users who actually require the services of an accessible vehicle were surveyed.

Specifically, the research measured...

- Satisfaction with:
 - The booking process
 - Pick-up, loading, drop off and unloading
 - The accessible driver
 - The accessible vehicles
 - The payment process
- Attitudes towards the accessible taxi industry and service
- Support for an enhanced subsidy program for drivers

Methodology

Sample:

- Accessible taxi users/caregivers were recruited in two ways-
 1. Accessible Taxi users/caregivers who completed the annual TLAC Citizen Satisfaction survey were asked if they were interested in participating in another survey specifically designed to gauge satisfaction of accessible taxis.
 2. The City encouraged drivers of accessible taxis to distribute a postcard to each of their mobility-disabled passengers throughout the summer, from late June to August 26th, 2016. Following the instructions on the postcard, interested customers contacted The City and provided their contact details and preferred method of being interviewed (i.e. Online via personal email invitation and closed link, telephone via Leger call centre or by mail)

- 48 accessible taxi users/caregivers* expressed interest in participating in the survey (30 of these were recruited via the TLAC Annual Citizen Satisfaction survey previously conducted by Leger). Of the passengers who called The City after receiving the postcard - 6 preferred to be contacted via phone, 5 to be contacted via mail and rest by email.

Data Collection:

Leger contacted the 48 recruited accessible taxi users/caregivers from July 6th, 2016 to September 2, 2016. 12 out of 48 recruited accessible taxi users/caregivers completed the survey via one of their preferred options – online, telephone or mail.

*excluding the 1 bounce back email.

Response Rate:

Response rate for phone and mail surveys was high (80% and 100% respectively). The recruited accessible taxi users/caregivers who wanted to be contacted by email were sent reminders several times to help achieve a better response rate among these users. In the end, the response rate for the online method was 5%.

To help improve the response rate, The City of Calgary decided to include a draw for two \$50 gift cards for the participants. All participants were informed about the draw.

Note to Reader

With only 12 respondents, the findings in this report must be considered qualitative and cannot be extrapolated to be representative of the whole user-base of accessible taxis in Calgary.

In most cases, results are discussed in terms of “all” “most” or “some” users. These “quantitative” measures are only reflective of the few users who responded to the survey.

Results and commentary must be interpreted with extreme caution.

A close-up photograph of a field of tulips in shades of orange and yellow, with green stems and leaves visible in the foreground and background.

Summary and Conclusions

Conclusions

Overall, albeit from a very small base of users, accessible taxi users are satisfied with most of the aspects of the accessible taxi service they receive. Given that (a) they are using this service on a fairly regular basis (every other week on average) and (b) the accessible taxis form a critical component of users' transportation options, these positive ratings are good news.

Most (if not all) the users in the study are satisfied with the booking process ~ all respondents only use the telephone to make bookings. Generally, users report taxis arriving at or, at least, within a few minutes of the scheduled arrival time and they all received the help they needed from the driver to load themselves, their wheelchairs and any other belongings.

The drivers and their vehicles receive high marks as all of the users are satisfied with all aspects of the drivers.

The payment systems and options all seem to be working correctly with no criticism from the handful of users in the survey.

Conclusions Cont'd

Most, if not all, users have positive impressions about the industry, and generally good things to say about the services they receive. Notwithstanding all the positive ratings, many users feel there are not enough accessible taxis available to meet their needs.

There is a strong belief from accessible taxi users that if The City were to offer accessible drivers an enhanced subsidy, this would trickle down and represent improved service to the users. Most feel a new subsidy would translate directly into more accessible taxis on the roads and therefore better/quicker/more reliable service.

The users believe that while a new subsidy program may translate into more accessible taxis and better service, it may not necessarily translate into better drivers.

A close-up photograph of several tulips in shades of orange and yellow, with green stems and leaves visible in the foreground and background.

Detailed Findings

Accessible Taxi Usage

On average, accessible taxi users are using accessible taxis every two weeks (~28 times per year on average). Usage ranges from a couple of times per year to twice a week.

Over half of the users require an accessible taxi to transport a mobility device all or most of the time.

The Booking

All of the accessible taxi users are using the phone to arrange for their rides – half are calling dispatch for immediate pick up, one quarter are calling for pre-arranging pick up and the rest are calling the driver (Code 8) directly to arrange pick up.

Generally, most accessible taxi users are satisfied with the process of making their last booking for an accessible taxi.

All the users are satisfied with their ability to reach dispatch in a timely manner; the courteousness of the dispatch operator; and the operator's ability to understand the user's needs.

A few users are less than satisfied with the dispatcher's explanation of the expected wait time for a taxi to arrive and the dispatch operator giving information about which taxi is being sent.

None of the accessible taxi users report using the mobile apps or online booking services to book their last taxi ride.

Base: Accessible taxi users (n=12)
Results to be interpreted with extreme caution

The Arrival

Almost all of the accessible taxi users are satisfied with the time their last taxi pick-up arrived and three quarters report that the taxi arrived within ± 10 minutes of the expected arrival time.

Only one user stated the taxi did not arrive at all and they were forced to phone dispatch and arrange for another accessible taxi pick up.

Note: While some users do report long wait times (or even no shows) when they have ordered accessible taxis in the past, the results reported here reflect the users' last experience.

The Ride

On their last trip, accessible taxi users used Checker (6/12 users); Associated (4/12 users), Mayfair (1/12 users), or didn't remember (1/12 users).

About one third were attending a medical appointment, one quarter went shopping and the remainder used an accessible taxi for a variety of other reasons. Although there were trips from each quadrant, most often, users started their trips in the Southeast, on a weekday, during the day (10:00am to 3:00pm) for an average trip of around 10km.

The Pick-up

Among those who needed help moving from inside a building or their home to the curbside where the taxi was waiting, all received the help they required from the driver.

All respondents report having their wheelchair properly loaded and secured in the taxi. As well, among users who needed help, all received help loading groceries of packages from the driver.

As a result, all of the accessible users are satisfied with the pick-up and transfer process.

The Driver

The drivers of accessible taxis receive very high marks from users. All of the users are satisfied with...

- The driver overall

- The courteousness of the driver

- The ease of communication with the driver

- The respectfulness of the driver

- The helpfulness of the driver with bags and parcels

- The helpfulness of the driver when loading their wheelchair

- The professional appearance of the driver

- The driver's adherence to the driving laws

- And the driver's handling of a service animal (from the 2 respondents who needed this service)

Overall, all of the accessible taxi users are satisfied with the experience on their last ride

Base: Accessible taxi users (n=12)

Results to be interpreted with extreme caution

The Vehicle

Similar to satisfaction with the drivers, all the users are satisfied with the vehicles themselves, including unanimous satisfaction with...

- The cleanliness of the vehicle

- The placement of the seatbelt

- The condition and maintenance of the vehicle

- The amenities within the vehicle, and

- The music or radio station being played during the ride

Although none were dissatisfied, there were fewer “very” satisfied ratings for the last two attributes.

The Unloading

The majority of accessible taxi users are satisfied with the process and the drivers' assistance – with once exception of a passenger who needed help unloading their parcels but didn't receive help from the driver.

Notwithstanding the one example, all of the accessible taxi users are satisfied with the process of the drop off and transfer from the taxi to their destination.

The Payment

About one third each of the accessible taxi users paid by cash, debit or credit. Only one respondent used the ACE Card, even though about half of users state that they qualify for the subsidy program that provides the ACE Card.

All of the accessible taxi users are satisfied with all aspects of the payment process, including...

- Ease of accessing the payment machine

- Driver having the correct cash change for their payment

- The debit/credit card machine working properly

- Driver's professionalism when accepting their choice of payment option.

- Only paying for the fare on the meter, with no extra charges added.

Attitudes about Industry and Services

Opinions are mixed in terms of the attitudes accessible taxi users have about the industry and services they receive. For example...

All agree:

I generally feel safe when riding in an accessible taxi in Calgary

Drivers of accessible taxis understand my unique needs

Accessible taxi services are being adequately monitored to ensure quality service

Most agree:

The overall quality of the accessible taxi fleet in Calgary is good

The City of Calgary should subsidize the accessible taxi industry

The City of Calgary should review how the accessible taxi industry operates

I am aware of how accessible taxi services are regulated in Calgary

I would like more information about how the accessible taxi services operate in Calgary

Accessible taxi services in Calgary is consistent, regardless of which company you use

However, few agree:

There are enough accessible taxis in Calgary to adequately service citizens

During busy times, I order more than one accessible taxi and take the first one that arrives

Base: Accessible taxi users (n=12)

Results to be interpreted with extreme caution

Support for Enhanced Subsidy Program for Drivers

There is a strong belief from accessible taxi users that if The City were to offer accessible taxi drivers a subsidy, the users' satisfaction with the service would improve. Because...

"I think they would be on time and available".

"Availability might get better"

"More availability. We have used two companies but neither can be relied upon to show up on time. The wait varies between 10 minutes, over an hour is not uncommon."

"Happier drivers"

"We feel there would be more cabs available and the long waits of up to 45 - 1 hour would not happen. There seems to be a shortage of accessible cabs at certain times, either because there is not enough or the time of day (school getting out, football or hockey game). I feel there should be so many in each area not that the drivers can accept or refuse trips in accord to themselves. We live in the SE and often wait for handibus taxi."

"There would be more taxis available on weekends and holidays -It would be possible to phone for a taxi on the same day (instead of booking a day in advance). Last time I phoned on the day I waited 3 hours for a pick up! (when I'd been told it would be 1200, it was 1500.) -Maybe taxi drivers would actually get out of the taxi, come to the door of group home instead of phoning and driving off when phone is not answered right away"

Few drawbacks to this change in the subsidy model were offered by users.

Base: Accessible taxi users (n=12)

Results to be interpreted with extreme caution

Reaction to Proposed Subsidy Model

Generally, there is strong agreement that a new subsidy model for accessible taxi drivers would have a positive effect.

All agree

The overall service of accessible taxis would improve

The reliability of the accessible taxi system in general would get better

Most agree:

There would be more accessible taxis available

The quality of accessible vehicles would improve overall

There was, however, very mixed opinion on:

The quality of the drivers of accessible taxis would improve

Within the past year...

Only one accessible taxi user states they were refused a ride. This was because of too much luggage.

About half of users have made a compliment and about one third have lodged a complaint – only one of these complaints went to 311/The City of Calgary.

About four in ten users feel the accessible taxi services has improved, four in ten feel it has stayed the same and only one feels it has worsened over the past year.

While most say the accessible taxis arrive within 20 minutes of being expected, one third of users have had to wait more than 45 minutes after the scheduled arrival time for an accessible taxi within the past year.

Final Comments

"Help them as much as you can...it would make them easier to work under pressure of our traffic.....and help offset the cost of maintaining a car"

"I hope they continue to have enough accessible taxis for people with wheelchairs. I hope they keep them."

"Have them come on time and have them speak English."

"We need them".

"They state there's a considerable uptick in cost, ~\$15,000 CDN. There needs to be a way for them to recover this or the service will disappear."

"Online monitoring the trips would be wonderful."

"It is because we only used the cab for very specialized medical appointment. It is always really stressful when we are told by dispatch that they can't guarantee the pickup time."

"We very seldom use the taxi. Most of the time we use access bus or van."

Final Comments

“We have never booked an accessible cab in advance as I’m not sure they would be on time due to shortness of cabs on road and in certain areas. I tried once and was told there is no guarantee that they would be there at that time - depending on availability on that day or that time. We personally are happy approximately 90% of the time and have only used Checker cabs. We are happy with the service and drivers accept and understand the problems with accessibility and I know they do their best but like everything else there is always room for improvement. I think Checker cabs are great and will continue to use them as problems are few and seldom. We are very thankful for the service as it improves our quality of life and allows us to enjoy what everyone else does like a Sunday afternoon for supper at our son's place or to see the zoo through the eyes of a 3 year old.”

“Accessible taxi services allow handicapped to have more freedom of movement in time spent on transportation compared to handibus where it may take a couple hours and many stops picking up/dropping off passengers. However, the low limit for subsidized rides in a city this size is a drawback for low income individuals. I have had patients with urinary difficulties, seizure disorders, cancer etc. waiting up to 2 hours at each end of a trip and being incontinent, seizing etc. because they needed meds or be back by a specified time. Where was the booked taxi?”

Base: Accessible taxi users (n=12)
Results to be interpreted with extreme caution