Taxicab Operations in Des Moines

Presentation Overview:
- Provide background on existing ordinance
- Discuss Recent issues with taxicabs
- Solicit Ideas from Council on potential solutions
Council can decide if further taxi cab service is required by the public convenience and necessity. Currently 5 companies and 123 cabs operating:

- Yellow Cab (operating for over 90 years) with 45 cabs
- Capitol Cab (operating for over 55 years) with 55 cabs
- Freedom Cab (operating since May of 2009) with 8 cabs
- United Cab (operating since October of 2010) with 10 cabs
- City Cab (operating since May of 2011) with 5 cabs
Company License and Drivers License

- Companies are required to get a certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to Operate
  - Original Certificate granted by council if they determine further taxi service is needed and applicant is fit, willing, and able
  - Company must supply a minimum of 5 vehicles and 6 licensed taxicab drivers
  - Subsequent annual review and renewal of company license by staff
  - License is non-transferrable

Taxicab Driver License

- Drivers DMV record and criminal record reviewed
- Must have good driving record and be of good moral character per guidelines provided in code
- Driver License issued administratively by staff (T&T and Police)
- Contention of denials heard by Administrative Hearing Officer
Dispatch must be provided 24-Hours per day, 7-days per week to all customers, answer all calls received

- No current requirement for centralized dispatch center
- Company must record and retain trip info, address for trip, and time call was placed

Taxi Cab Rates

- Maximums and minimums set by ordinance
  - Night surcharge of $2 per trip (10pm-4am)
  - Taxicab stand surcharge of $2 per trip
Existing Taxicab Ordinance

- **Taxicab Stands**
  - $2 per trip allowed by code to be charged where steward or extra security provided
    - Airport
    - Court Ave
  - **Airport provides steward**
    - $2 collected from each cab by steward while in line before they get patron
  - **TransIowa provides DSM PD security at Court Ave**
    - All companies work voluntarily with TransIowa for extra security thru a private agreement
    - TransIowa would like $5 per cab per night (Fri & Sat) that security is provided. They bill companies accordingly
Existing Taxicab Ordinance

- **Enforcement**
  - Currently have 1/4 of a full time staff person dedicated to taxi cab company and driver application, processing, licensing, and handling of complaints
  - Enforcement is on complaint basis, not routine inspection process
  - Remedies are: suspension of Company certificate or driver’s license, or misdemeanor charge and fine issuance depending on activity
  - Increasing enforcement requires increasing fees
Recent Past Changes to Taxicab Ordinance

- Per Trip Fees for Cab Stands at airport and Court Avenue established (2011)
- Drivers Licensing denial appeals to Administrative hearing officer (2012)
  - 8 appeals upheld
- Company certificate applicants once denied must wait one year to apply again (2012)
Upcoming “Vehicle for Hire” Ordinance Changes

- Budget constraints eliminated taxi cab administrative staff, service reduction
  - Upcoming code changes to renew drivers every 5 years instead of annually
  - Company license still annual review
Current Taxicab Issues/Concerns

- Dispatch
  - No current requirement for “centralized” dispatch center
  - Customer concerns with no one answering, long time delay to get a cab, and no shows
- Cab Stand Operations
  - TransIowa is not being paid
  - Voluntary agreement, no allowance in code to enforce
- Enforcement Issues
  - Some other cities larger than Des Moines have field enforcement section, such as Kansas City
Other Current Issues/Concerns

- Non Profit Providers
  - Riders Club
    - Offering low cost transportation to seniors
    - Non Profit, can’t afford high cost of company license and drivers licensing
  - Lyft/Uber
    - New technology, uses apps to connect riders to individual drivers
    - Companies claim not “vehicles for hire” but ridesharing
    - Patrons pay for rides or offer a suggested tip
    - Concerns across country from traditional cab companies
Future Plans for Taxicab oversight

- Limited with no full time dedicated staff
- Limited ability to enforce regulations
Potential Solutions

- Evaluate Crown Cab application under current code
- Work on future code changes with Stakeholder engagement to address other issues/concerns:
  - More enforcement could be provided with more staff
    1) Could increase fees to cover costs
  - Dispatch
    1) Change requirement to require a central dispatch center
    2) Modern technology could be used instead lessen the need for a central dispatch center. Explore the use of creation of an app that lets users hail and pay for cabs with their smart phones
- Court Ave Cabstand
  1) Remains a voluntary agreement
  2) RFP for contract to provide security services and cab stand needs
    *Increase fees to cover city staff needed to oversee contract with provider