



DOWNTOWN COMMISSION
AGENDA REPORT

DATE: January 18, 2017

AGENDA OF: January 26, 2017

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS

SUBJECT: Prioritizing Curb Space for Taxicabs by Adding Taxi Stands in
Downtown Locations

RECOMMENDATION: Motion to recommend that the City Council approve a program to establish taxi stands in Downtown locations between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. within established guidelines per Municipal Code 10.44.080.

BACKGROUND: At several City Council meetings since April 2016, the Council has heard from representatives of local taxi services expressing concerns about the significant negative impact that transportation network companies (TNCs) such as Uber are having on their businesses. In August, the Council directed staff to review taxicab industry regulation in the City of Santa Cruz (City) and to return to the Council with recommendations for modifications.

On December 1, 2016, City staff presented a proposal for the creation of specific taxicab stands to the Downtown Commission for review and was asked to provide additional information to the Commission at its January 26, 2017 meeting. City staff will return to the Council with the Commission's recommendations at a future date.

DISCUSSION: The City has regulated taxicab businesses for more than half a century in order to ensure safety and fairness to all passengers. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), however, regulates TNCs and preempts the City from regulating these companies locally. As a result, in the City, taxicabs and TNCs are subject to different regulatory standards and requirements, despite the similarity of their services. Differences include:

- TNCs are not required to undergo Livescan background checks, a service that includes fingerprinting and continuous monitoring of criminal records.
- TNCs are not subject to alcohol and controlled substance testing.
- The City has a quota on the number of taxicabs allowed (one taxicab per 2000 residents).

- The City sets rates for taxicabs.
- Taxicabs are required to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Local taxicab companies also provide service to individuals in our community with disabilities. According to James Monroe, owner of Yellow Cab (which holds 21 of the City's 27 taxi permits), approximately 15% of their requests, or 900 calls per month, are for wheel-chair accessible vehicles. These companies also provide service to members of our community who do not have credit cards, do not have smartphones, or who require transportation from the hospital or the jail.

When City staff met with local taxicab drivers, they suggested one way to address their concerns would be to create more taxi stands near local establishments between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m. for licensed taxis. At present there is only one taxi stand in the City on Front Street, next to the Santa Cruz METRO.

Creation of taxi stands during these hours would give taxi drivers a place to park their cars while waiting for customers during a time when they may be able to get a lot of business. Per Santa Cruz Municipal Code Chapter 5.16.200, "Any taxicab stand so established by the city council shall be solely for the use of those licensed taxicabs specified by city council resolution and no other vehicles or taxicabs whatsoever." It would also help with the issue of double parking by taxi and TNC drivers in front of local businesses during the hours of 8:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m.

As the Commission requested, City staff reached out to downtown businesses that may potentially be impacted by the placement of taxicab stands near their businesses. Responses were mixed. Given the concerns raised by some local business owners about the specific placement of taxi stands previously recommended, staff recommends that the Commission consider taxicab stands placed in two alternative locations and one location previously proposed:

1. Three loading zones on Pacific next to the Santa Cruz METRO in front of Parking Lot #12- South Pacific Parking Lot). While the Santa Cruz Police Department had concerns about taxicab stands on Pacific because of potential spillover of crowds in front of local businesses onto Pacific, the Police Department is comfortable with utilizing these zones as taxicab stands.
2. One red curb zone in front of a fire hydrant next to New Leaf (southeast corner of Soquel and Pacific). Per California Vehicle Code §22514: "No person shall stop, park, or leave standing any vehicle within 15 feet of a fire hydrant except as follows: (a) If the vehicle is attended by a licensed driver who is seated in the front seat and who can immediately move such vehicle in case of necessity." Accordingly, cars parked in this space cannot be left unattended, so it is unlikely that customers of local businesses will be parking in this spot.
3. The loading zone on Locust at Cedar (across from Red Restaurant).

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Although the City is largely unable to make dramatic changes with regard to the taxicabs and TNCs, this simple change is one of the few options available to help level the playing field somewhat between traditional taxicabs and TNCs locally.

FISCAL IMPACT: The cost of signage for each location would be approximately \$50/sign and \$150/pole if the existing poles in place are full.

Prepared and Submitted by: Casey Hemard, Principal Management Analyst

Attachments

Correspondence