

MARIN GENERAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 10, 2015
TO: MGSA Board of Directors
FROM: Paul Berlant, Executive Officer and Jeff Rawles, Taxicab Regulation Program Manager
SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM F: Taxicab Regulation Program Update

Recommendation

Accept this update regarding the Marin Taxi Regulation Program. No action is requested.

Update and Discussion

In the May 14, 2015 taxi program update we reported the largest taxicab company in Marin County, On the Move Transportation (OTM), had closed its doors in April without giving advance notice to its drivers or customers. The closure of OTM continues to ripple through the industry with OTM drivers still finding jobs with other companies or starting their own taxicab businesses. Northbay Cooperative Taxi, a San Rafael based business, has been the primary beneficiary of OTM closure with many drivers, vehicles and customers being directed in its direction. However, many of the other taxi companies have also added drivers and vehicles. This disruption has caused opportunities for some and hardship for others.

The current inventory is as follows:

- Drivers 129 (172 in May, including 60 from OTM)
- Companies 26 (25 in May)
- Vehicles 88 (102 in May, including 21 from OTM)

In addition to the permitted inventory noted above, there are currently applications pending for four new taxi companies and several drivers. These are serious applications as they have already paid the required \$1,000 business permit fee. These new businesses are currently in the process of getting their vehicles ready and completing background checks. They should all be operating within the next few months, and will be adding additional vehicles to the taxi fleet in Marin County.

Recent communication with the Marin Transit Authority has indicated that with the closure of OTM there has been a shortage of transportation options for people with disabilities. Among the new business applications there is one that will specialize in transporting people with disabilities (Wheels on Time). We anticipate that this new company will provide some relief in this area. Staff met with Marin Transit Authority staff in August to help assess opportunities to assist with accessibility options. Marin Transit staff will be reporting to its board this fall regarding the potential to further support accessible transportation.

We believe that the taxi industry in Marin County considers the taxi permits issued by MGSA as valuable assets. However, staff continues to get periodic complaints from company owners and drivers regarding the competition from UBER and other Transportation Network Company (TNC) businesses. In short, the complaints are that the playing field is not level because TNCs are not required to pay for permits fees, do drug/alcohol testing, and provide other items that increase business operation costs. Just one example of advantages enjoyed by TNCs is that their vehicles are not required to have commercial license plates, taximeters, and special markings. Anecdotal stories from some drivers who work for both taxi businesses and TNCs include the statement that they can charge more for individual taxicab rides, but get more business when driving for a TNC. It is difficult to analyze this information as much of the TNC work by Marin County drivers takes place in San Francisco. It is staff's impression at the end of the summer months that most of the taxi businesses are currently busy and will be through the holidays.