



King County

King County 2006 Taxicab Annual Report

April 2007

This report is submitted in compliance with King County Code 6.64.740.

This report includes:

- *Brief history of taxicab regulations in King County*
- *Statistics regarding number of taxicabs, drivers, and complaints*
- *Survey results comparing current response times to previous reporting periods*
- *Relationships of actual response times to optimum average response times*
- *Information relating to licensing and enforcement of taxicab vehicles and drivers by King County.*





King County

Department of Executive Services
Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

With a population of more than 1.8 million people, King County is the 13th largest U.S. county and home to a taxicab fleet of 842 vehicles. Charged with safeguarding passengers, drivers and the public, the King County Taxicab Licensing Section provides regulation and enforcement of the taxicab industry in Washington's largest county.

King County's Taxicab Licensing Section regulates the operation of taxicabs in unincorporated King County and has cooperative agreements to enforce regulations at Sea-Tac International Airport, along with the cities of Auburn, Bellevue, Burien, Covington, Enumclaw, Federal Way, Kenmore, Kirkland, Maple Valley, Redmond, Renton, Sammamish, SeaTac, Shoreline and Seattle. This includes regulation of rates, the manner in which fees are established, operating requirements that address customer service and public safety, and the requirements for obtaining vehicle and for-hire driver's licenses.

Produced in accordance with King County Code (KCC 6.64.740), the 2006 Taxicab Annual Report provides statistical information on taxicabs and drivers, service response times, complaints, and other information relating to the licensing and enforcement of taxicab vehicles and drivers by King County.

Licensing Services

Every driver operating a taxicab in King County must have a for-hire driver's license. In 2006, the King County Licensing Section processed 2,494 for-hire driver applications. For every taxicab in Seattle and King County, there are approximately three licensed for-hire drivers. To ensure public and passenger safety, each new applicant is carefully screened and must complete several requirements in order to qualify and obtain a for-hire driver's license.



Regulatory Services

The County Code requires the Licensing Section to establish and regulate a schedule of optimum times for responses to requests for taxi service. Each year, the Licensing Section conducts an audit of taxicab company dispatch records to determine *actual* response times for service requests, which are then compared to the *optimum* response times. In 2006, the average service response times met the established optimum response time guidelines. King County Licensing also regulates taximeter rates.

Enforcement Services

Since 1995, King County and the City of Seattle have worked together in an interlocal service agreement whereby the county issues all for-hire licenses and the city issues all taxicab vehicle licenses. A result of the interlocal agreement, each respective jurisdiction is granted the authority to enforce the regulations of the other, effectively increasing the regional enforcement authority without increasing field enforcement personnel.

Expectations for 2007

In 2007, King County plans to continue to work in collaboration with the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle to discuss improvements to taxicab and for-hire driver regulations, including the issues of accessible taxicabs, limousine/town car licensing (which is currently a state function), taximeter rates, and other regulatory changes that would better align Seattle and King County taxi regulations to further regionalize taxicab service in the greater King County area.

Background

In 1979, King County, the City of Seattle, and the Port of Seattle embarked on a program to regionalize taxicab regulations and licensing by developing consistent regulations and services across jurisdictions. This promoted public safety and customer service by standardizing fees, regulations, enforcement, and rate review procedures throughout King County.

This program continued until September 1988, when these three entities formed the Regional Taxicab Commission. The Regional Taxicab Commission recommended rates, entry restrictions, and other related revisions to the King County Code prior to ending on December 31, 1990.

After reviewing recommendations from the Regional Taxicab Commission, the King County Council passed Ordinance No. 9986 on June 10, 1991, permanently closing the issuance of new taxicab licenses. Spread between a few companies operating taxicabs in King County, there are only 502 currently licensed taxicabs.

King County Licensing Section provides licensing and regulatory services for drivers in the City of Seattle and King County as a result of an interlocal service agreement that has been in effect since August 1995. This agreement grants authority to both the city and the county to issue for-hire driver's licenses and taxicab vehicle licenses, allowing both licenses to be obtained at one convenient location. County and city license inspectors have the authority to enforce both city and county tax codes.

A more complete history of taxicab and for-hire licensing can be found in the appendix, on page 24.



Recent Ordinance Changes

While there were no ordinance changes in 2006, King County Licensing focused resources on implementing and monitoring the four ordinances established in 2005:

Ordinance 15132: *Increased taximeter rates to \$2.50 drop/\$2.00 per mile (previously \$1.80 drop/ \$1.80 per mile). A joint ordinance was proposed for consideration by both County and City Councils. The new rates went into effect on April 1, 2005.*

In 2006, County and City inspectors worked together to ensure meters were tested on all 842 taxicabs. As an added convenience to the taxicab owners and drivers, County and City staff arranged for special meter inspections to occur at the taxi company lots. King County and the City of Seattle anticipate additional rate increases or fuel surcharges in 2007, as a result of rising fuel charges.

Ordinance 15263: *Established the Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab (WAT) Demonstration project, and also included minor changes which increased taxicab insurance coverage, added an additional driver safety training requirement, added a mandatory oral English test that mirrored the City requirement, and changed the taxicab license year. The ordinance became effective September 18, 2005.*

The Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab (WAT) Demonstration project

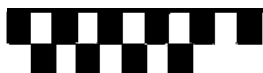
For the first time, the King County and City of Seattle taxicab fleet was expanded to include eight wheelchair-accessible vans in October 2006. This project will last up to two years and will provide accessible taxicab service to people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids. These ramp-equipped vehicles are a result of a partnership formed by with King County Licensing Section, King County Metro's Accessible Services section and the City of Seattle.

Wheelchair accessible taxicabs, or WAT, operate similarly to standard taxicabs with charge taximeter rates. The WAT service prioritizes use for individuals with wheelchairs, but is also available to the general public. Throughout 2006 and in the upcoming year, the Licensing Section will seek input from WAT users through the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Advisory Committee (referred to as “advisory committee”); and will conduct field enforcement and inspections of new WAT vehicles and drivers. The Demonstration project was designed to test the economic viability of privately owned and operated accessible taxicabs that provide taxicab service at taximeter rates to passengers with wheelchairs and other mobility devices, and to evaluate the operation of the side-loading vehicles, the dispatch system, and other logistical issues.

Ordinance 15309: *Effective November 13, 2005, this ordinance approved a methodology for issuing additional taxicab licenses and made taxicab licenses issued after January 1, 2006, nontransferable. Altering the transferability of taxicab licenses prohibits licenses from being bought and sold on the open market. The transferability issue arose from complaints and comments received from taxicab drivers during public hearings.*

King County Licensing Section staff began to gather information that may be useful in determining the appropriate number of taxicab licenses that should be made available and ways to begin to address alternatives to the current taxicab industry structure.

Ordinance 15282: *Council established the advisory committee, with members to be selected in spring 2006. This committee will help ensure the pilot project is implemented to accurately gauge the demand and viability of accessible taxicab service in the Seattle and King County markets. The committee will monitor implementation of the pilot project and will advise the King County Licensing and Metro Accessible Service sections.*



Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Advisory Committee

Throughout the upcoming year, the Metro Accessible Services and the Licensing Section will seek input from WAT users through the Advisory Committee and will participate in regularly scheduled meetings.

The committee will consist of nine members recruited by the Executive in consultation with the Council, reflecting the diversity and geographic distribution of county residents. Seven of the members will be appointed before start-up of the WAT Demonstration project and the remaining two positions will be filled by WAT users. The committee will oversee the Demonstration project and make recommendations for future taxicab service.



Expectations for 2007

In 2006, King County continued collaboration with the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle regarding improvements to taxicab and for-hire driver regulations, including accessible taxicabs, limousine/town car licensing (which is currently a state function), taximeter rates, and other changes that would better align Seattle and King County taxi regulations.

Reapportionment of Reverted Licenses

The County may consider other regulatory changes to improve customer service, driver safety, provide beneficial impacts to the environment and test alternatives to the ways taxi associations are structured. Reapportionment of reverted licenses could provide the opportunities for the County to effect these changes/improvements.

The specific process for reapportioning 59 taxicab licenses will be under consideration in 2007. Current ordinance provisions allow for either an RFP approach, a drawing from a pool of qualified drivers or establishing alternative(s) to the current industry structure.

The Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab (WAT) Demonstration project

Throughout 2007, King County and the City of Seattle will be monitoring and assessing the joint project that provides accessible taxicab service to people who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids that require the use of a ramp-equipped vehicle. The Licensing Section will seek input from WAT users through a newly created Advisory Committee; and will conduct field enforcement and inspections of new WAT vehicles and drivers.

Limousine Drivers

In 2007, the Executive plans to propose ordinance changes to the King County Council on behalf of the Port of Seattle to require all limousines drivers operating at Sea-Tac airport to have a King County for-hire driver's license. The Port of Seattle does not have authority to adopt its own regulations and must use the County's legislative process. Limousine/town car drivers are currently licensed by the State. However state



law allows for self-certification, and there is no consistency or standards for driver qualifications. This licensing requirement for limousines drivers would provide for more consistent screening of qualified drivers, increase public safety, provide additional enforcement, and improve service to the public.

Taximeter Rates

Recommendations from the Taxi Advisory Group subcommittee on rates are again expected in 2007. The subcommittee is expected to address the issue of high fuel costs and the inconsistency of rates with the City of Seattle's imposed fuel surcharge. Throughout 2006, the city had imposed a \$1.00 fuel surcharge that allowed drivers to collect an additional dollar to offset the high cost of fuel. As fuel costs fell, the surcharge went to .50 cents. Trips originating outside the city of Seattle (in King County and contracting cities) could not collect the additional fuel surcharge, creating an inconsistency in rates. However, few formal complaints have been received from the general public.

Additional updates to the existing regulations to better align the King County Code with City of Seattle regulations will be examined and may include:

- Additional driver and passenger safety standards,
- Streamlining the passenger complaint process,
- Braille sign requirements in taxicabs, and;
- Implementing monetary penalty for smoking ban violations

SERVICES PROVIDED

Licensing

Every driver operating a taxicab in King County must have a for-hire driver's license. In 2006, the King County Licensing Section processed 2,494 for-hire driver applications. For every taxicab in Seattle and King County, there are approximately three licensed for-hire drivers. To ensure public and passenger safety, each new applicant is carefully screened and must complete several requirements in order to qualify and obtain a for-hire driver's license.

King County Licensing Section operates interlocal service agreements with 14 cities and the Sea-Tac Airport. Under this agreement, jurisdictions are granted the authority to enforce the taxicab regulations of other jurisdictions, effectively increasing the regional enforcement authority without increasing personnel.

For-hire drivers

All for-hire driver applicants are required to take a written examination, an oral English exam and attend a two-day training program. New applicants for a City of Seattle license are also required complete a one-week taxicab association-training program where they learn how to use the taximeter equipment and ride along with experienced drivers.

The number of for-hire driver licensees dropped slightly in 2006, however over the previous decade recognized steady increases, with an approximate 33 percent growth since 1997. As demand has increased, indicated by the growth in the number of paid trips, the demand for drivers has grown. Taxicabs that in the past only operated a single shift or did not operate a full week, are now in operation longer hours. The actual number of for-hire drivers operating at any given time is difficult to calculate as taxicab drivers operate on a full-time, part-time, and seasonal or occasional basis.



For-hire license applications

Year	License type	Number processed	Year	Total licenses
2000	County only	486	2000	2095
	County*	1572		
	City only	37		
2001	County only	497	2001	2169
	County*	1639		
	City only	33		
2002	County only	529	2002	2256
	County*	1690		
	City only	37		
2003	County only	498	2003	2393
	County*	1866		
	City only	29		
2004	County only	463	2004	2396
	County*	1912		
	City only	21		
2005	County only	490	2005	2663
	County*	1991		
	City only	21		
2006	County only	477	2006	2494
	County*	1998		
	City only	19		

*Indicates a King County license with a city endorsement

Driver Interviews

Driving records obtained from the State of Washington Department of Licensing are carefully reviewed for both new drivers and drivers renewing licenses.

Licensing staff only interview drivers with marginal driving records; records that show increased moving violations but are not serious or numerous enough to substantiate an immediate denial.

In 2006, 116 drivers were interviewed and counseled regarding their driving records. In some cases, drivers are required to agree to have their driving records reviewed on a quarterly basis. Other times, drivers are required to attend a defensive driving course in addition to the four-hour defensive driving course all new drivers must attend. The interview process has been successful



on two fronts: after interview and counsel, the driving records of most drivers improved; and in the case of drivers who do not improve, immediate denial or revocation of their license, to prevent unsafe driving.

Written examination

As a prerequisite for a for-hire license, King County tests applicants with a two section, 100-question written examination. The current examination, required by King County Code 6.64.580, tests applicant knowledge of fare determination regulations, driver-passenger relations, driver conduct, ability to understand oral and written directions in the English language, vehicle safety requirements, and geographic knowledge of King County and surrounding areas. In 2006, King County administered 703 written taxi exams to 449 new applicants.

Applicants must obtain a passing score of 80 percent on both sections of the exam. The written examination can only be taken two times. If a driver fails the exam the second time, their license application is denied, and the driver must wait 60 days before they can reapply and take the exam again. Applicants for a county and/or city license do not receive a temporary license to drive until they have passed the written examination.

Written examination results

	Tests Given	Passes	Fails	Percent Failed
1996	714	429	285	40%
1997 ¹	New: 453 Renew: 1,086 Total: 1,539	New: 208 Renew: 704 Total: 912	New: 245 Renew: 382 Total: 627	New: 55% Renew: 36%
1998	821	473	348	42%
1999	803	416	387	48%
2000	710	392	318	45%
2001	777	328	449	58%
2002	746	310	436	58%
2003	738	330	408	55%
2004	687	291	396	57%
2005	701	331	370	53%
2006	703	271	432	61%

¹ In 1997, the City required all drivers to retake the written examination.



Interlocal service agreements

King County taxicab and for-hire licenses are very restrictive. King County has interlocal service agreements with the Port of Seattle, which operates the Sea-Tac Airport, and the City of Seattle, in addition to 13 other cities in King County for taxicab licensing and enforcement services.

City	Type of Interlocal Service Agreement
Auburn	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Bellevue	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Burien	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Covington	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Enumclaw	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Federal Way	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Kenmore	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Kirkland	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Maple Valley	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Port of Seattle	Enforcement of County Taxi Code on Port Property
Redmond	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Renton	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Sammamish	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
SeaTac	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code
Seattle	Licensing of City For-Hire Drivers and Enforcement of City Code
Shoreline	Licensing and Enforcement of City Code

Enforcement

The King County Code provides different avenues for enforcement of violations of taxicab regulations. These include: 1) notices of violation that are issued in the field upon observation of a violation; 2) administrative notice and orders with a provision for an administrative appeal; and, 3) citations. Monetary civil penalties can also be assessed through the notice and order process.

The City of Seattle issues notices of violations to city and city/county (dual) licensed taxicabs for field violations such as a driver failing to complete a trip sheet. In the County, an administrative notice and order process is used which assesses a monetary civil penalty for trip sheet violations. More serious violations can be escalated and criminal charges can be filed, for example it is a criminal misdemeanor to operate a taxicab without a license. However, in recent years this has been unnecessary as compliance is reached through education and the administrative process.

Beginning in 2002, additional emphasis was placed on field enforcement and trip sheet reporting requirements, resulting in increased notice and orders and civil penalties.

Notice and orders

	<i>Drivers</i>		<i>Owners</i>		
	Denials	Other	Insurance	Other	TOTAL
1996	71 ¹	26	0	0	97
1997	37	25	21	1	84
1998	36	17	24	1	78
1999	28	12	11	10	61
2000	26	2	0 ²	0	28
2001	37	0	0	0	37
2002	40	39	0	2	81
2003	25	16	0	0	41
2004	39	23	0	0	62
2005	34	78	0	0	112
2006	41	79	0	0	120

¹ County began licensing City of Seattle drivers in 1996, thus the increase in driver denials.

² City implemented computerized tracking system to prevent lapses in insurance.



Civil penalties

	Driver: Assessed	Paid	Owner: Assessed	Paid
1996	4: \$300	\$300	0: \$ 0	\$ 0
1997	5: \$475	\$175	0: \$ 0	\$ 0
1998	4: \$200	\$200	0: \$ 0	\$ 0
1999	3: \$125	\$125	0: \$ 0	\$ 0
2000	2: \$75	\$75	0: \$ 0	\$ 0
2001	6: \$643	\$643	0: \$ 0	\$ 0
2002	37: \$1460	\$1,460	2: \$120	\$120
2003	16: \$ 570	\$570	0: \$ 0	\$ 0
2004	18: \$1,120	\$870	1: \$1,000	\$ 0
2005	42: \$2,785	\$1,745	4: \$3,100	\$100
2006	25: \$5,335	\$4,405	0: \$ 0	\$ 0

Cases appealed to the King County Board of Appeals

	DRIVER	Overruled	Upheld	OWNER	Overruled	Upheld
1996	28	4	24	0	0	0
1997	20	6	14	0	0	0
1998	5	0	5	0	0	0
1999	8	1	7	0	0	0
2000	8	0	8	0	0	0
2001	9	0	9	0	0	0
2002	12	1	11	0	0	0
2003	5	0	5	0	0	0
2004	6	1	5	1	0	1
2005	9	0	9	2	0	2
2006	7	1	6	0	0	0



Passenger complaints

King County Licensing's taxi complaint line, **206-296-TAXI**, is visibly displayed in all Seattle and King County taxicabs and offers riders the opportunity to file a complaint. Historically, King County receives very few complaints. The most common complaints occur over driver conduct (rude behavior) and cost of ride (suspected overcharge).

After a complaint has been investigated, there are varying results for violating the rules. These include assessment of monetary civil penalties and/or license suspension (permanently or temporarily), issued through a notice and order process. Sometimes drivers are requested to refund the fare amount or complete additional training classes.

The following table shows annual passenger complaints filed over the last ten years.

Year	Short Haul/ Refusal	Wrong Rate/ Wrong Route	Driver Conduct	Vehicle Condition	Service/ Response	Total
1996	1	7	3	0	3	14
1997	1	7	14	0	0	22
1998	1	3	15	0	1	20
1999	1	10	9	0	1	21
2000	0	3	5	0	0	8
2001	1	6	8	0	0	15
2002	0	1	8	0	0	9
2003	0	3	4	1	0	8
2004	0	4	7	1	0	12
2005	1	9	11	1	1	23
2006	1	10	15	2	0	28



Additional Regulatory Services

Response times

King County Code 6.64.730 establishes a schedule of optimum average response times for taxicab service. Each year this schedule is compared to actual response times as provided through dispatch record audits, and serves as an indicator of taxicab industry performance. While average responses for 2006 appeared to be within the optimum range, individual response times may vary considerably during peak periods, such as during rush hour traffic or when periods of high demand effect the availability of cabs.

In developing the optimum average taxicab response times, King County is divided into the following eight zones:

ZONE	SERVICE AREA	DESCRIPTION
A	North City	Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, North County
B	Northeast County	Bothell, Woodinville, Fall City, Sammamish, Issaquah
C	Eastside	Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond
D¹	South/Southwest County	White Center, Burien, Des Moines, West Kent, Airport (West of I-5)
E	North/Southeast County	Renton, Tukwila, May Creek, Newcastle, North Kent (East of I-5)
F	South County	Federal Way, Auburn, South Kent
G	Southeast County	Enumclaw, Black Diamond, Covington, Maple Valley
City	Seattle	All Seattle city limits

¹Sea-Tac Airport is serviced by 166 King County taxicabs. Taxicabs are available on demand; therefore, the response time is zero and is not included in Zone D (the airport area).



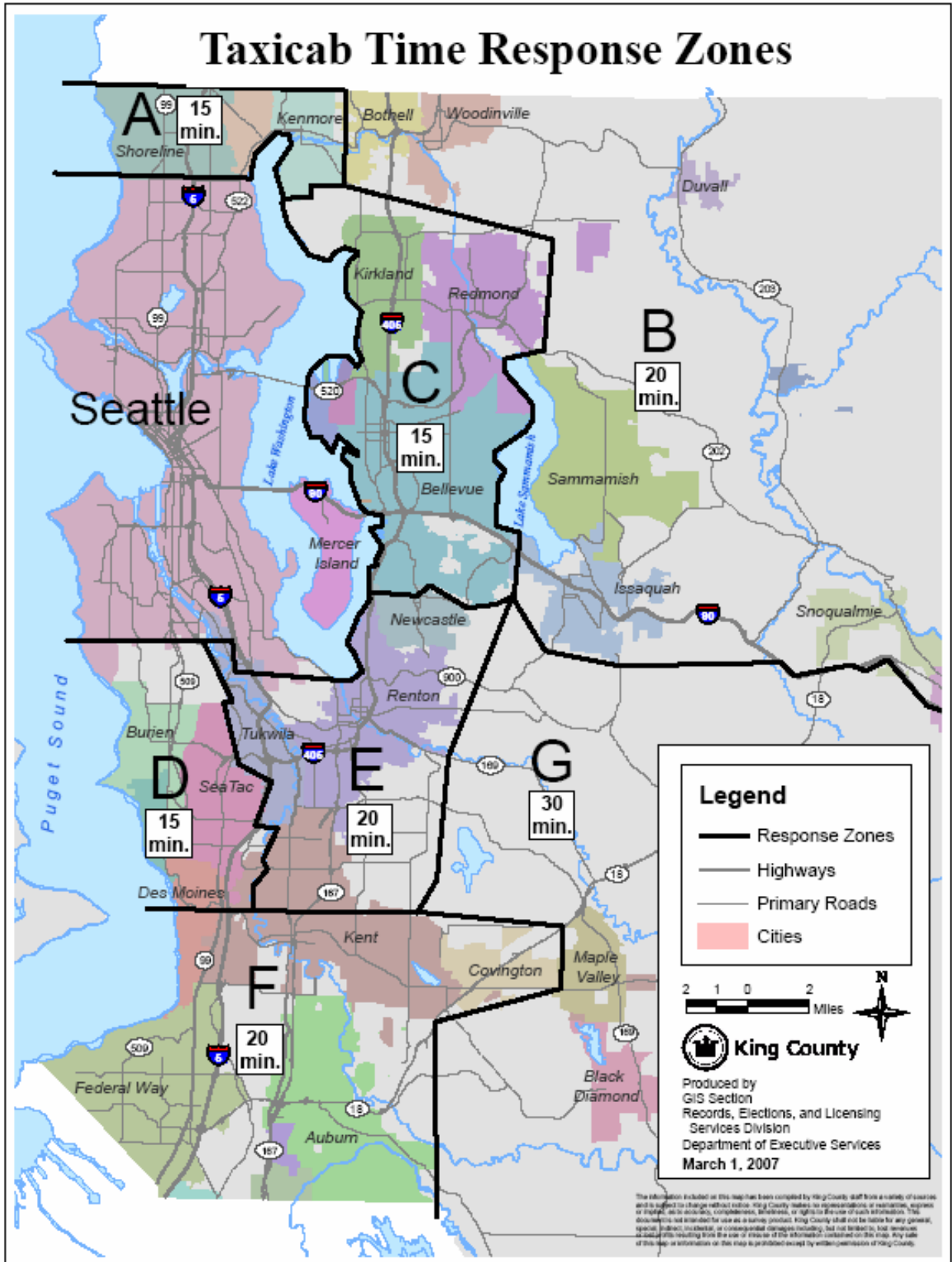
Actual average response time (minutes)¹

Zone	Service Area	Optimum Average	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06
A	North City	15	15	13	16	14	13	13	15	15	14	13	14
B	NE County	20	20	19	15	15	18	14	16	18	20	20	19
C	Eastside	15	15	14	13	14	11	15	14	13	15	14	14
D	South/SW County	15	10	12	12	11	13	15	14	14	14	13	15
E	North/SE County	20	14	15	14	15	13	12	13	18	19	17	18
F	South County	20	16	18	17	16	14	17	16	18	20	18	19
G	Southeast County	30	22	23	22	23	27	29	28	30	29	26	27
City	Seattle	10	9	8	9	8	8	9	9	10	8	9	10

¹ Response times are calculated as the time elapsed from when the trip is created in the dispatch system to the time the meter is engaged. The meter is engaged after the customer has been seated and the vehicle begins to move.



Taxicab Time Response Zones



Rates

King County sets by ordinance the meter rate a taxicab can charge the public. The drop is the initial charge. When the vehicle slows down below 17 mph, the passenger is charged based on wait time instead of per mile.

The following schedule illustrates King County taxicab rates from 1974 to the present:

YEAR	DROP	PER MILE	WAIT PER/MIN	EXTRAS
1974-76	.80	.60	.12	.20
1976-79	.90	.70	.12	--
1979-80	1.00	1.00	.30	.50
1981-84	1.00	1.20	.30	.50
1984-86	1.00	1.20	.30	.50 over 2
1987-92	1.20	1.40	.35	.50 over 2
1992-2005	1.80	1.80	.50	.50 over 2
2005 - present	2.50	2.00	.50	.50 over 2



Taxi Fares in Major U.S. Cities

Approved for publishing by Bruce Schaller, Schaller Consulting, www.schallerconsult.com

The chart below compares taxicab fares in the central city of 23 major U.S. metro areas, selected based on metro area size and number of licensed taxicabs.

Area costs	City	Fares for typical trips			Components of the fare					Last change
		Avg. U.S. trip	Short trip	Long trip	Initial charge	Initial distance	Mileage charge	Mileage distance	Wait time per hour	
**	Honolulu	\$ 19.75	\$ 13.04	\$ 40.75	3.00	1/4	0.75	1/4	30.00	Nov-05
**	San Diego	16.17	10.59	33.67	2.25	1/10	0.25	1/10	20.00	
*	Miami	16.10	10.73	32.90	2.50	1/6	0.40	1/6	24.00	Oct-05
**	San Francisco	15.90	10.85	31.65	2.85	1/5	0.45	1/5	27.00	Sep-03
**	Boston	15.45	10.08	32.25	1.75	1/8	0.30	1/8	24.00	Sep-02
**	Los Angeles	15.00	10.07	30.40	2.20	1/11	0.20	1/11	24.00	Nov-05
*	Seattle	14.80	10.29	28.80	2.50	1/10	0.20	1/10	30.00	Apr-05
	Las Vegas	14.75	10.27	28.75	3.20	1/8	0.25	1/8	22.00	Apr-05
	St. Louis	14.30	9.81	28.30	2.50	1/10	0.20	1/10	24.00	Jul-03
*	Philadelphia	14.17	9.47	28.87	2.30	1/7	0.30	1/7	20.00	Jul-05
	Atlanta	14.00	9.52	28.00	2.50	1/8	0.25	1/8	21.00	Oct-05
	Orlando	13.38	8.89	27.38	2.00	1/4	0.25	1/8	22.50	
	Minneapolis	13.37	9.11	26.67	2.50	1/5	0.38	1/5	21.00	Sep-05
	Denver	13.23	8.74	27.23	1.60	1/8	0.25	1/8	22.50	
**	New York	13.10	8.65	27.10	2.50	1/5	0.40	1/5	12.00	May-04
	Phoenix	12.87	8.83	27.10	2.50	1/6	0.30	1/6	20.00	
	Houston	12.85	8.81	25.45	2.50	1/6	0.30	1/6	20.00	Aug-05
**	Chicago	12.70	8.66	25.30	2.25	1/9	0.20	1/9	20.00	May-05
**	DC suburbs	12.08	8.35	23.70						
	Dallas	12.55	8.52	25.15	2.25	1/9	0.20	1/9	18.00	Nov-05
	New Orleans	11.80	8.21	23.00	2.50	1/8	0.20	1/8	18.00	
	Detroit	11.65	8.07	22.85	2.50	1/8	0.20	1/8	16.00	Aug-01
	Baltimore	11.60	7.99	22.80	1.80	1/8	0.20	1/8	24.00	Jul-05
	Cleveland	10.78	7.21	21.98	1.80	1/6	0.40	1/4	15.00	

Notes:

"Area costs" reflect cost of living in the metro area. Two stars indicates costs at least 25% above U.S. average; one star indicates living costs are 15-24% above U.S. average.

Source: ACCRA produces the Cost of Living Index (www.coli.org).

Fares shown exclude additional charges for extra passengers, luggage, time of day surcharges, airport fees, temporary gasoline surcharges, etc.

Trip lengths:

- Average U.S. trip = 5 miles and 5 minutes of wait time.
- Short trip = 2.8 miles and 4.77 minutes of wait time (New York City average trip)
- Long trip = 12 miles and 5 minutes of wait time

Updated January 2006



Additional Information

Taxicab Trips in 2006

King County and Seattle taxicabs combined, provided approximately 3.5 million taxi trips in King County in 2006. The number of trips seems to be leveling off in recent years.

The majority of County taxicabs 303 out of 502 also operate in the city of Seattle.

Seattle-Tacoma International Taxicab Association, known as “STITA,” represents 166 County-only licensed taxicabs out of 199. STITA reported only a 1.33% increase in the number of outbound trips, but set a new record at 648,275 trips. However this may be an indication that the number of trips are leveling out considering large growth in recent years. The numbers of trips from the airport have more than doubled over the previous decade.

Overall, outbound trips have increased by 70 percent since 1997. This increase is explained by growth in the tourism industry and business travelers. The airport suffered a temporary 4.4 percent drop in 2001, which can be attributed to the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks and a subsequent decrease in passenger airline travel.

Taxicab Ownership

	Independent (no association)	Farwest	Yellow/ Graytop	Northend	STITA	Orange	Other Associations	TOTAL
95/96	35	143	120	23	166	16	--	503
96/97	30	145	114	23	166	25	--	503
97/98	19	143	113	24	166	37	--	503
98/99	1	145	117	23	166	36	14	502
99/00	1	135	117	22	166	47	14	502
00/01	0	132	119	22	166	47	13	502
01/02	0	90	131	23	166	76	16	502
02/03	0	94	131	22	166	76	13	502
03/04	0	86	144	20	166	73	13	502
04/05	0	86	146	20	166	73	11	502
05/06	0	76	148	20	166	92	0	502



Taxicab Scrip Vouchers

King County Metro's Accessible Services program issues taxicab scrip to King County residents who have a reduced bus fare permit and have income at or below 70 percent of the state median income. Participants who register for the paratransit OPTIONS program can use limited paratransit van service weekdays to travel to and from the nearest Metro bus stop, or subsidized taxi scrip with the cab company of their choice.

Registrants can purchase up to six books of scrip each month; scrip does not expire. Each booklet has a \$10 face value and contains coupons in \$0.50 and \$1 denominations.

Registrants pay 50 percent of the face value or \$5 per booklet. Currently, eight taxicab companies participate in the taxicab scrip program. Historically, most trips are short and taken in the urban Seattle area where taxi service is more available and destinations are closer together, but statistics indicate that the trips are becoming longer.

APPENDIX A

King County Taxicab History 1976 to 2006

The number of taxicabs licensed by King County from 1976 to the present:

Licensed Year	Total	Licensed Year	Total
1976/1978	73	1988/1989	603
1978/1979*	402	1989/1990	589
1979/1980	426	1990/1991	561
1980/1981	474	1991/1992	551
1981/1982	436	1992/1993	541
1982/1983	552	1993/1994	518
1983/1984	648	1994/1995	504
1984/1985	567	1995/1997	503
1985/1986	562	1997/1999	502
1986/1987	581	1999/2000	502
1987/1988	468	2000/2006	502

*Deregulation and reciprocity

1976: King County, the City of Seattle, and the Port of Seattle embarked on a program to regionalize taxicab regulations and licensing by developing consistent regulations and services across jurisdictions. The intent was to promote public safety and customer service by standardizing fees, regulations, enforcement, and rate review procedures throughout King County (King County Motion 2362).

1976 to 1979: Regionalization is implemented. The “need and necessity” provision for limiting entry was deleted, resulting in an increased number of licensed taxicabs. The Port terminated its exclusive contract for taxicab services at Sea-Tac Airport, and a growing number of independent taxicab operators obtained permits to service Sea-Tac Airport.

Prior to 1979, King County regulated entry into the taxicab market and rates charged to passengers. Entry was restricted by a population ratio formula and the King County Council set rates after reviewing prescribed criteria. This “need and necessity” provision required new applicants to show that there was a bona fide need for taxicab service in that zone.



1979 to 1984: The County and the City of Seattle passed ordinances deregulating entry standards and rates (King County Ordinance 4232). With no restrictions on the numbers of licenses issued, taxi owners set their own rates. The deregulation of taxicab licensing resulted in many problems in each jurisdiction. As deregulation continued, consumer views of taxicabs continued to slide; conditions were viewed as deteriorated and rate differences created the perception of price gouging.

1984: Regulation returned and a conscious effort was made to address the rate variation problem and to increase safety and improve cab conditions. A moratorium was placed on the issuance of new taxicab licenses and returned to setting taxi rates by ordinance.

1985: The county's entry moratorium on licenses expired in 1985, returning the county to open entry; however, rates continued to be set by County ordinance. Also in 1985, the Port of Seattle placed a moratorium on permits to operate at Sea-Tac Airport.

1986: The Ad Hoc Taxi Committee was created to study and recommend a method for determining the optimum number of taxis to operate in the county, the criteria and method for setting and/or changing taxicab rates, and a plan for developing reciprocity in enforcement and licensing of taxicab businesses. The work of the committee resulted in Ordinance 7964, which created a process to establish rate and entry recommendations based on objective data rather than industry requests, while also placing a moratorium on the issuance of new taxicab licenses.

Since 1986, open entry existed for three brief periods, once during the verification process of a referendum in 1987, in early 1988, and for approximately one month in 1989.

September 1988: King County, the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle formed the Regional Taxicab Commission to recommend rates, entry restrictions, and other related revisions to the King County Code. This was allowed through King County Ordinance 8450, March 21, 1988.

December 1990: In the fall of 1990, county and city staff drafted an ordinance incorporating many of the 1988 Regional Taxicab Commission entry model recommendations. Recommendations included increased standards for licensing and operations of taxicab vehicles and for-hire drivers; and proposed closed entry and maintained a single ordained rate

at an increase of approximately 8 percent from \$1.20 drop/\$1.40 mile, to \$1.30 drop/\$1.50 mile. The fixed rate proposed was the same as the highest rate the city allowed (ceiling rate). County Proposed Ordinance 90-948 and City Ordinance 108357 were submitted to the City and County Councils in November 1990. A joint hearing was held on January 14, 1991, and the City of Seattle adopted the proposed ordinance. The City of Seattle, however, maintained its ceiling rate approach.

June 10, 1991: The King County Council passed Ordinance No. 9986, permanently closing the issuance of new taxicab licensing.

July 1992: The County Executive's original rate submission in 1990 of \$1.30 drop/\$1.50 mile was increased in July 1992 to \$1.60 drop/\$1.60 mile. The industry heavily lobbied for a higher rate, and the County Council adopted its request of \$1.80 drop/\$1.80 mile/\$.50 per minute waiting time.

August 17, 1992: The County Council passed Ordinance 10498 which dramatically changed the for-hire vehicle/taxicab and for-hire driver standards and regulations.

Sweeping changes included in Ordinance 10498 were:

- continued closed entry system
- increased taxicab rate fee from 1.60 drop/\$1.60 mile to \$1.80 drop/\$1.80 mile
- changed the quarterly data collection process to an annual filing
- eliminated the required use of net profit ratio formula in rate and entry recommendations
- enhanced the mechanical certification process for vehicles
- enhanced the safety and cleanliness requirements for vehicles
- increased the number of mandatory safety inspections
- increased for-hire driver standards for entry and denial of licenses
- established several provisions to address consumer protection issues

August 1995: King County and the City of Seattle entered into an interlocal service agreement. The agreement grants authority for the county to issue City of Seattle for-hire driver's licenses as an agent for the city and for the city to issue county taxicab vehicle licenses as an agent for the county. This agreement also grants authority for county and city license inspectors to enforce both city and county taxi codes and both licenses can be obtained at one convenient location.



Fall 1996: In late 1996, the City of Seattle proposed changes to its taxicab ordinance to streamline its laws with county regulations. However, the City of Seattle went further in several areas. Most significant was the requirement that taxicabs belong to associations. Associations are separately licensed entities that maintain a level of oversight liability for operations by vehicle owners and drivers, thereby placing some of the burden/cost to improve service standards on the industry itself. A monetary penalty schedule was established that set fines for violations by drivers, owners, and taxicab associations. Vehicle age restrictions were also implemented. In 1997, all city drivers were required to retake the written examination, and all city drivers, new and renewals alike, were required to take an oral test to demonstrate English-language proficiency. These changes affected approximately 80 percent of county licensees since drivers were required to have both city and county licenses.

November 2000: The County Council passed Ordinance 13984 amending standards for the denial of a for-hire driver's license. The ordinance added mandatory denial language for applicants with bail forfeitures or convictions within five years of the date of application for vehicle assault, vehicular homicide or reckless driving. In addition, the ordinance itemized a number of criminal offenses as set out in state law (RCW Title 9) as discretionary grounds for the denial of a license.

Spring 2001: Beginning in the spring of 2001, King County, the Port of Seattle, and the City of Seattle formed a "Regionalization Workgroup" to study the feasibility of opening access at Sea-Tac Airport to all licensed taxicabs. The desire was to create efficiencies by further regionalizing the County, City and Port ordinances and reducing "dead-heading" (taxicabs unable to pick-up passengers must travel back empty), reduce excess pollutants, and expand the number of taxicabs that operate across the entire region. Port Commissioners declined to open entry to all taxicabs operating in King County at Sea-Tac Airport and re-signed an exclusive operating agreement with one taxicab company, STITA.

June 2001 – Sept. 2005: The county, lead by Metro's Accessible Services, joined a task force with representatives from the City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, and other stakeholders to address the issue of taxicab accessibility for citizens with wheelchairs and other mobility devices. In late 2003, Metro Accessible Services secured grant money from the state and began meeting with King County Licensing and City of Seattle representatives to develop implementation plans for licensing and placing into service wheelchair-accessible taxicabs. Ordinances were passed by

both the County and the City of Seattle to initiate a one- to two- year demonstration project to study wheelchair accessible taxicab service issues. City of Seattle (Ordinance 121857) and King County Ordinance 15263 became effective August 17, 2005 and September 18, 2005 respectively.

November 2004: Ordinance 15059 increased taxicab vehicle and driver fees to help recover licensing and enforcement costs and reflect inflation. Vehicle fees increased from \$240 to \$300 per year and for-hire driver application fees increased from \$60 to \$75 per year (plus a \$5 photo fee).

December 2004: A taximeter rate increase was proposed (Proposed Ordinance 2004-0466) to increase rates from \$1.80 drop/\$1.80 per mile to \$2.50 drop/\$2.00 per mile. Rates had not been increased in nearly twelve years (since 1992) and the cost of living had increased 36 percent. In addition, operating costs such as fuel had soared by more than 78 percent since 1992. Based on a 15-mile trip, the proposed rate represented only a 13 percent increase. The increase was proposed by the City of Seattle's Taxicab Advisory Group, which included taxicab drivers, owners and associations; senior and disabled citizens from the community; and Department of Social and Health Services providers. There was no opposition to the increase; By all accounts, the general public agreed with the need to increase fees to keep up with inflation.

April 2005: Ordinance 15132: passed and increased taximeter rates to \$2.50 drop/\$2.00 per mile. The rates went into effect on April 1, 2005, for both the County and the City of Seattle. County and City of Seattle inspectors worked together to ensure all 842 taxicabs had their meters tested and sealed by early afternoon that day. As an added convenience to the taxicab owners and drivers, County and City of Seattle staff arranged the special meter inspections to occur at the taxi company lots.

September 2005: Ordinance 15263: Established the Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab (WAT) Demonstration project, and also included minor changes which affected taxicab insurance, added an additional driver safety training requirement, added a mandatory oral English test, and changed the taxicab licensee year. The ordinance became effective September 18, 2005, and the pilot project was implemented in October 2006.



November 2005: Ordinance 15309 approved a methodology for issuing additional taxicab licenses and made taxicab licenses issued after January 1, 2006, nontransferable (effective November 13, 2005). Taxicab licenses issued before January 1, 2006 are transferable meaning that they can be bought and sold on the open market. The nontransferability issue arose from complaints and comments received from taxicab drivers during public hearings on the WAT Demonstration project.

September 2005: Ordinance 15282: Council established the Accessible Taxi Advisory Committee to be selected in the Spring of 2006. The committee consists of nine members recruited by the Executive in consultation with the Council. Membership of the committee reflects the diversity and geographic distribution of county residents and seven of the members will be appointed before start-up of the WAT Demonstration project and the remaining two positions will be filled later by WAT users having experience with the service. This committee will help ensure that the pilot project is implemented in a way that will accurately gauge the demand for and viability of accessible taxi service in the Seattle and King County markets. The committee will monitor the preparation for and implementation of the pilot project and will advise the King County Licensing and Metro Accessible Service sections.

APPENDIX B

City of Seattle Ordinance History

In late 1996, the City of Seattle adopted comprehensive amendments to its taxicab/for-hire vehicle regulations. They adopted rate and entry standards, and for-hire driver and vehicle standards that paralleled the County's. However, the City of Seattle adopted several new provisions that are different from the County's; specifically:

Taxicab Associations: All taxicabs must affiliate with a licensed taxicab association in order to operate in the City of Seattle. Associations must represent a minimum of fifteen taxicabs. Associations, in addition to drivers and owners, can receive penalty points for violations. Associations must provide one week of training for all new drivers to include three shifts on the road and instruction in geography. Complaint logs must be maintained and open for random audits. Associations must have their taxicab color scheme and driver uniforms approved by the city, maintain a regular business office during business hours, keep insurance records for vehicles in the association, collect and provide service information to the director annually, and notify the director when certain events occur; for example, accidents or arrests of owners/drivers.

Vehicle Age Restrictions: An eight-year age limit went into effect on August 31, 2002, which had been slowly phased in over the next three years.

Penalty Points: The City sets out a specific monetary penalty schedule for violations. Each violation results in penalty points attributed to the taxicab association. For example, a third "Class B" violation (such as worn tires) would result in 10 penalty points assessed against the association. As soon as the association accumulates more than five penalty points per affiliated taxicab, on average, it must pay a penalty to the city of \$100 per affiliated taxicab; more than seven penalty points per affiliated taxicab, on average, an additional penalty of \$150 per affiliated taxicab; more than 10 penalty points per taxicab, on average, an additional penalty of \$250 per affiliated taxicab. Associations, in addition to payment of penalty points, are jointly and severally liable for each monetary penalty assessed against any for-hire driver or taxicab affiliated with the association. Taxicab and for-hire vehicle owners are also jointly and severally liable for each monetary penalty assessed against any for-hire driver who commits a violation.



The City of Seattle reports improvements in the appearance and condition of taxicabs. The most dramatic examples are the reduction in the age of taxicabs and the decrease in non-compliance with vehicle safety standards. For example, the average age of vehicles used as taxicabs in 1995 was 10 years. During 1997, the City began a three-year phase-in of limiting the maximum vehicle age to eight years. As a result, many of the older vehicles have been replaced and the average vehicle age is now 6.5 years. Similarly, noncompliance with vehicle safety and equipment standards has declined sharply. During scheduled vehicle inspections in 1995, 71 percent of all taxicabs licensed by the City of Seattle were found to be in violation of one or more of the vehicle standards. That rate has declined considerably to 20 percent. This dramatic improvement is attributed to the inspection fees and monetary penalties provided in the new taxi code.

The seriousness of violations has also been significantly reduced over the past decade. For instance, the number of Seattle taxicab licenses summarily suspended for vehicle standard safety violations declined from 410 in 1995 to only 78 in 2004. Part of the improvement is due to efforts by taxicab associations to pre-inspect vehicles in order to avoid collecting penalty points. Also, drivers are now required to conduct safety checklist inspections of taxicabs prior to starting each shift.

March 2000: On March 15, 2000, the city passed an ordinance amending its taxicab code. Among the amendments was a \$25 flat rate charged for all trips from the downtown hotel district to Sea-Tac International Airport. The flat rate is only charged on trips originating in the downtown area, while meter rates apply on trips originating at the airport. The county has not received any complaints from the public or recommendations from the Port of Seattle to adopt a similar flat rate from Sea-Tac Airport to the downtown hotel district.

April 2001: The city amended its taxicab rules on April 1, 2001. The principal changes included: definition of "operating a taxicab;" requirement for quarterly service information reports; requirement for monthly summary of vehicle collision reports; provision for monetary penalties for complaints about refusal of service to disabled persons or because of racial discrimination; requirements for evidence of vehicle insurance; and designation of non-smoking vehicles.

In 2006, the City of Seattle implemented a number of ordinance changes that passed in 2005. These ordinances aimed at improving driver safety, increasing fees, meter rates, and improving reporting requirements as set out below:

City of Seattle Recent Ordinance Changes	
Ordinance 121737	Taximeter rate, flat rate, and temporary fuel surcharge. [effective April 1, 2005]
Ordinance 121738	Taxicab license fees, wheelchair accessible taxicabs, taxicab association reporting, taxicab association supervisors at designated taxicab zones, taxicab insurance, receipt-issuing taximeters, Braille information notices, security cameras, monitored silent alarms, GPS, driver personal safety training, refusal of service, methodology for issuing additional taxicab licenses, hearings, and passenger complaints. [effective April 1, 2005]
Ordinance 121857	Taxicab associations, security cameras, and wheelchair accessible taxicabs. [effective August 17, 2005]
Ordinance 121942	Compliance dates for passenger information decal, Braille signs, security cameras, and silent alarms. [effective November 12, 2005]

City of Seattle Recent Rule changes	
Rule 6.310.320 J	Temporary suspension of flat rate to airport [effective July 1, 2005]
Rule 6.310.320 S	Requirement to install digital security cameras in taxicabs [effective August 15, 2005]
Rule 6.310.530 I	Temporary fuel surcharge to compensate drivers for increased gas prices [effective October 24, 2005]
Rule 6.310.420 A	Written and oral examination requirement to improve driver safety [effective October 24, 2005]
Rule 6.310.320 P	Vehicle type and size to encourage fuel efficient, and low emission taxicabs [effective October 24, 2005]
Rule 6.310.320 M	Passenger information [effective October 24, 2005]
Rule 6.310.320 T	Standards for installing silent alarms in taxicabs [effective October 24, 2005]



APPENDIX C

Business Licensing

Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division
Department of Executive Services

King County Taxicab Survey

Draft Schedule of Optimum Taxi Response Time

King County Taxicab Licensing regulates taxicabs in unincorporated King County and several contract cities which include Auburn, Bellevue, Burien, Covington, Enumclaw, Federal Way, Kenmore, Kirkland, Maple Valley, Redmond, Renton, Sammamish, Seatac, Shoreline, Woodinville, and the Port of Seattle (Sea-Tac Airport). King County Code 6.64.740 requires King County publish a "draft schedule of optimum response time" for taxicab drivers. The schedule below indicates the amount of time it should take for a taxicab to respond to a call from selected areas within King County. Please provide public comment on the following schedule:

SELECTED POINTS		OPTIMUM RESPONSE TIME
Zone A	North King County (North County, Lake Forest Park, Kenmore, Shoreline)	15 min.
Zone B	Northeast King County (Bothell, Woodinville, Fall City, Sammamish, Issaquah)	20 min.
Zone C	Eastside (Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond)	15 min.
Zone D	Southwest King County (White Center, Burien, Des Moines, West Kent, Sea-Tac Airport)	15 min.
Zone E	Southeast King County (Renton, Tukwila, May Creek, Newcastle, North Kent, East I-5)	20 min.
Zone F	South King County (Federal Way, Auburn, North Kent, Maple Valley, Covington)	20 min.
Zone G	Southeast King County (Enumclaw, Black Diamond, South Kent)	30 min.

A 10-day comment period from March 15 to 25 is provided. If you have any comments, please submit them in writing or by email to Diana Toledo at Diana.Toledo@metrokc.gov or send your comments to:

King County Licensing
Attn: Diana Toledo
King County Administration Building, Room 403
500 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Comments must be received by 5:00 p.m. March 25, 2007.
Updated: Mar 15, 2007





King County

**Records, Elections and
Licensing Services Division**
Department of Executive Services

500 Fourth Avenue, Room 403
Seattle, WA 98104-2337
206-296-2713

www.metrokc.gov/lars/business/taxicabs.htm