



Legislation Text

File #: 1548-2013, Version: 1

BACKGROUND: This ordinance enacts new Columbus City Code Chapters 585, 587, 589, 591, 593 and 594 and repeals the existing versions of those Chapters. Chapters 585-594 constitute the City's Vehicle for Hire code which regulates for-hire vehicles such as taxicabs, livery vehicles and horse carriages.

In April 2012, the City Council in concert with the Mayor's administration initiated an effort to modernize the entire Vehicle for Hire code. The code has not been substantially changed since 1988. The primary goals of this effort were to increase public safety, improve the customer experience and support the progress of Columbus' vehicle for hire, tourism and hospitality industries.

This was a comprehensive effort which proposed changes to both City code and to rules and regulations supplemental to the code. Throughout the course of 2012, changes to rules and regulations were presented to the Vehicle for Hire Board for deliberation, revision and voting. The Vehicle for Hire Board currently consists of representatives from the City, vehicle for hire owners and drivers, the Chamber of Commerce, the airport authority, the convention or visitors bureau and private citizens. The changes to rules and regulations focused on improving standards and included an 8-year age limit for vehicles, prohibiting smoking in vehicles at all times, a dress code for drivers, and restricting license transfers from one vehicle to another based on vehicle condition.

The Vehicle for Hire Board was also consulted regarding the proposed code changes over several months in 2012 and at a special meeting of the Board on January 9, 2013. Furthermore, representatives from City Council, the Department of Public Safety, and the City Attorney's office met with a committee representing independent taxicab owners on January 16, 2013 and at subsequent times to discuss the changes and listen to concerns. In response to input received at these numerous meetings, compromises were reached and further changes were made to the proposed code.

The proposed code was presented at a public hearing held by City Council on January 30, 2013. The hearing was well attended and additional feedback was received. In the months following the hearing, City representatives met again with industry stakeholders and interested parties to further garner feedback and discuss concerns.

Drawing on feedback and best practices, the proposed changes to the Vehicle for Hire Code Chapters 585-594 include:

- Updating terminology, clarifying phrasing and reducing repetitions
- Removing the authority of the Board to revoke or suspend licenses, authority is given to the Director of Public Safety
- Increasing license fees
- Increasing liability coverage required for taxicabs
- Extending background check look-back period to 7 years
- Requiring the vehicle for hire driver's identification card to be posted in the rear compartment of the vehicle for clear driver identification
- Requiring a credit card machine to be installed in the rear compartment of all taxicabs
- Increasing maximum drop rate for passengers from \$2.75 to \$3.00
- Increasing maximum credit card fee for passengers from \$0.50 to \$1.50
- Adding a representative of the pedicab industry and the Greater Columbus Lodging Council to the Vehicle for Hire Board

Throughout this process, the City has worked with stakeholders of the vehicle for hire industry and associated industries to devise clear and fair regulations that support public safety and economic development. The vehicle for hire industry is

an integral transportation option in Columbus. As tourism increases and Columbus becomes a more nationally recognized visitor destination, we need to help the vehicle for hire industry make progress that reflects and contributes to the growth and economic activity in our city. Vehicle for hire owners and drivers have a vested interest in ensuring that the public has a safe, successful experience that reflects well on the industry and our city as a whole.

This ordinance will help our vehicle for hire industry make changes that will be beneficial to its members and customers. It will facilitate the adoption of industry standards and best practices focused on modernizing our fleet, protecting passengers and drivers and promoting the industry. Taxicab drivers are often the city's first ambassadors to visitors. We want to insure that our visitors have a great first impression and remember our city as progressive and vibrant.

Following consideration of this legislation, City Council and the Department of Public Safety will continue to work on some outstanding matters that require further research and discussion.

FISCAL IMPACT: None

To modernize City regulations pertaining to vehicles for hire through the enactment of new Chapters 585, 587, 589, 591, 593 and 594 of the Columbus City Code; and to repeal the existing versions of Chapters 585, 587, 589, 591, 593 and 594 of the Columbus City Code.

WHEREAS, Chapters 585, 587, 589, 591, 593 and 594 of the Columbus City Code, governing the vehicle for hire industry in the City of Columbus, have not be substantially updated since 1988; and

WHEREAS, it is the goal of this Council to modernize Chapters 585, 587, 589, 591, 593 and 594; and

WHEREAS, this ordinance will make the code more accessible by updating terminology, clarifying phrasing and reducing repetitions; and

WHEREAS, this ordinance implements changes that will increase the safety of passengers and vehicle for hire operators; and

WHEREAS, this ordinance implements best practices in the vehicle for hire industry that will support the progress of the industry and ensure a more positive experience for customers; and

WHEREAS, these changes will also support economic development and tourism in Columbus; and

WHEREAS, this ordinance establishes language and authorizes the amendment of Chapters 585, 587, 589, 591, 593 and 594 of the Columbus City Code for the above-described purpose; now, therefore

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That Chapter 585 of the Columbus City Code is hereby amended through the enactment of new Chapter 585 to read as follows:

See attached file: "Chapter 585 - Vehicle for Hire Board"

SECTION 2. That Chapter 587 of the Columbus City Code is hereby amended through the enactment of new Chapter 587 to read as follows:

See attached file: "Chapter 587 - Vehicle for Hire Owner's License"

SECTION 3. That Chapter 589 of the Columbus City Code is hereby amended through the enactment of new Chapter 589 to read as follows:

See attached file: “Chapter 589 - Vehicle for Hire Driver’s License”

SECTION 4. That Chapter 591 of the Columbus City Code is hereby amended through the enactment of new Chapter 591 to read as follows:

See attached file: “Chapter 591 - Taxicabs”

SECTION 5. That Chapter 593 of the Columbus City Code is hereby amended through the enactment of new Chapter 593 to read as follows:

See attached file: “Chapter 593 - Livery Vehicles”

SECTION 6. That Chapter 594 of the Columbus City Code is hereby amended through the enactment of new Chapter 594 to read as follows:

See attached file: “Chapter 594 - Horse Drawn Carriages”

SECTION 7. That existing Chapters 585, 587, 589, 591, 593 and 594 of the Columbus City Code are hereby repealed.

SECTION 8. That this ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.