



Legislation Text

File #: 0400-2013, **Version:** 1

BACKGROUND: This ordinance will increase the number of taxicab licenses from 500 to 530. It also designates the 30 additional licenses as Wheelchair/Specialty licenses to be issued to Wheelchair/Specialty taxicabs only. Each year, the Vehicle for Hire Board is required to recommend to City Council the total number of taxicabs which may be licensed. The VFH Board has not recommended a change in the current moratorium on new licenses since it was set in 1997.

Last year, the VFH Board created a Wheelchair/Specialty Subcommittee to examine the need for wheelchair accessible taxicabs in Columbus. The Subcommittee found that there was a demand and that the demand was not being met. Currently, individuals with limited mobility have to plan days in advance to reserve a wheelchair accessible vehicle and it is generally more expensive. The VFH Board reviewed and accepted the Subcommittee's findings. The VFH Board has recommended that the number of taxicab licenses be increased by 30 for Wheelchair/Specialty taxicabs only.

These vehicles are intended to be used for non-emergency medical transportation. Their owners will have to provide 24 hours a day, 7 days a week dispatch service, which means that these vehicles will be on-call and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They must also provide priority service to passengers requesting Wheelchair/Specialty taxicab service. The wheelchair accessible taxicabs will be a less expensive way to travel for many individuals with limited mobility.

Emergency Designation: Emergency designation is requested to enable the licenses to be issued so that Wheelchair/Specialty taxicabs can begin operating with minimum delay.

FISCAL IMPACT: No funding is required for this legislation.

To repeal Ordinance No. 1132-97, which limits the number of taxicabs permitted to operate in the City; to establish a new ordinance to provide for an increase in the limit of the number of taxicabs permitted to operate in the City for Wheelchair/Specialty taxicabs only; and to declare an emergency.

WHEREAS, Section 585.06(f) of the Columbus City Codes, 1959, requires that the Vehicle for Hire Board annually recommend to City Council the total number of taxicabs which may be licensed; and

WHEREAS, the Board has not recommended any change to the number of licensed taxicabs currently set forth in Ordinance No. 1131-97 since it was passed on May 19, 1997; and

WHEREAS, the Board created a Wheelchair/Specialty Subcommittee last year to study the need for wheelchair accessible taxicabs in Columbus; and

WHEREAS, the Subcommittee found that public demand for wheelchair accessible taxicabs exists and is not being met. The Subcommittee recommended to the Board to create twenty-five (25) new licenses to be issued to Wheelchair/Specialty taxicabs only; and

WHEREAS, the Board reviewed and accepted the Subcommittee's findings and recommended that the number of allowable taxicab licenses be increased from five hundred (500) to five hundred and twenty-five (525); and

WHEREAS, the Board further recommended that the twenty-five (25) additional taxicab licenses be designated as

Wheelchair/Specialty licenses to be issued to Wheelchair/Specialty taxicabs only; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing of the Board was held August 30, 2012, regarding this issue. Both the Board and the vehicle for hire industry agreed that the additional licenses were necessary to meet the demand for wheelchair accessible taxicabs; and

WHEREAS, Vehicle for Hire Board Member Habtesus Ocbazghi later submitted a letter asking for a reexamination of the distribution of the Wheelchair/Specialty licenses. The matter was discussed at the October 25, 2012 Vehicle for Hire Board Meeting; and

WHEREAS, on November 15, 2012, the Wheelchair/Specialty Subcommittee met to discuss the letter submitted by Mr. Ocbazghi. It was decided that the number of Wheelchair/Specialty licenses should be increased to thirty (30) to allow for broader distribution across the taxicab industry; and

WHEREAS, at a public meeting of the Vehicle for Hire Board on November 29, 2012, the Subcommittee presented its recommendation to increase the number of Wheelchair/Specialty licenses to thirty (30). The Board voted unanimously to recommend a total of thirty (30) Wheelchair/Specialty taxicab licenses; and

WHEREAS, on January 14, 2013, the Board sent a letter to Columbus City Council recommending that the number of allowable taxicab licenses be increased from five hundred (500) to five hundred and thirty (530) and that the additional thirty (30) licenses be designated as Wheelchair/Specialty licenses to be issued to Wheelchair/Specialty taxicabs only; and

WHEREAS, on January 30, 2013, the recommended thirty (30) Wheelchair/Specialty taxicab licenses were presented at a public hearing held by City Council's Public Safety and Judiciary Committee as part of a presentation on proposed changes to City's Vehicle for Hire code; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to repeal the existing Ordinance No. 1132-97 in that the provisions of that ordinance are no longer applicable; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the City of Columbus in that it is immediately necessary to adopt this ordinance as an emergency measure to enable these additional licenses to be issued so that Wheelchair/Specialty taxicabs can begin operating with minimum delay so as to ensure the preservation of the public health, peace, property, safety, and welfare; now, therefore

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

SECTION 1. That Ordinance No. 1132-97, adopted May 19, 1997, be and is hereby repealed.

SECTION 2. That expanded entry to the taxicab industry of the City of Columbus be permitted to a maximum of five hundred and thirty (530) licensed taxicabs.

SECTION 3. That the thirty (30) additional licenses be designated as Wheelchair/Specialty licenses to be issued to Wheelchair/Specialty taxicabs only.

SECTION 4. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its adoption and approval by the Mayor, or ten days after adoption if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.