

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOR-HIRE VEHICLES

DFHV IN REVIEW: FY19 & FY20

DFHV
Government of the District of Columbia
Department of For-Hire Vehicles

WE ARE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DC GOVERNMENT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from Director Do	4
DFHV's Mission and Policy Goals	5
Brief DFHV History	6
Legal Authority	6
DFHV Department Functions	7
FY19 and FY20 Activities At a Glance	9
FY19 Highlights	10
FY20 Highlights	12
The Path Forward	15



MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR DO

For the past two years, I have had the honor to serve as the Director of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles (DFHV). DFHV oversees a robust transportation ecosystem under the leadership of Mayor Bowser. Throughout my time as Director, I have been dedicated to ensuring accessible and equitable for-hire vehicle services to residents and visitors of the District. I have also observed the incredible resiliency of the industry and want to highlight accomplishments we have made in achieving our goals.

At DFHV, our programs and policies are intended to expand economic opportunities, solve problems within the industry, and foster innovation to eliminate transportation barriers. We invest in data analysis to drive agency decisions on how best to service the needs of customers and operators. Outreach is

also an essential goal at DFHV as we have created many avenues to disseminate information and connect with staff. We remained committed to developing comprehensive actions that establish effective policies and programs to serve operators and passengers.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all industry stakeholders as they provide valuable feedback that continually informs our policies. I am also proud to work alongside passionate individuals at DFHV who prioritize serving the District. I am inspired by their hard work and look ahead to the horizon of possibilities. I continue to look forward to working together with operators, companies, passengers, and the public to achieve our shared goal of ensuring residents and visitors have a safe and pleasant ride experience in the District.

—DAVID

DFHV MISSION

Protect the public interest through appropriate regulation of the entire for-hire vehicle industry to allow the residents of and visitors to our nation's capital to enjoy their choices of safe, affordable, and accessible transportation options.



POLICY GOALS:

- ① Improving transportation equity and accessibility
- ② Reducing harmful emissions to address climate change
- ③ Expanding economic opportunities and fostering innovation
- ④ Openness/flexibility to new technology
- ⑤ Leveling the playing field among the various for-hire vehicle sectors (taxicabs, limousines, transportation network companies, etc.)

BRIEF DFHV HISTORY

A brief history of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles may be helpful to set the regulatory framework and context of the information in this report.

In 1985, the D.C. Council passed the District of Columbia Taxicab Commission Establishment Act of 1985 (“Act”). In summary, the Act created the DC Taxicab Commission (Commission) to consolidate the fragmented regulations of the taxicab and public vehicles for-hire industry. On July 1, 1987, pursuant to the Mayor’s Order 87-156, the Mayor’s authority to regulate public vehicles for-hire, i.e.: limousines, sedans, shuttles, vans, and private ambulances was delegated to the Commission. The Commission was established as a subordinate agency within the executive branch of the District government. The Commission had exclusive authority for intrastate regulation of the taxicab industry.

During the early 2000s and into the next decade, the public for-hire industry changed drastically. This was due the vast growth of transportation technology, introduction of private-vehicles-for hire through the newly developed Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), changing roles of the transportation industry placed upon drivers (i.e., partnering with restaurants, grocery stores, or delivery services, etc.) and regulatory constraints on the taxicab industry. The District of Columbia and the Commission addressed a need to amend its existing regulations and guidelines to promote health and fair competition across the entire for-hire spectrum. As a result, on June 28, 2016, with the passage of DCMR Title 31, the DC Taxicab Commission was transformed into the DC Department of For-Hire Vehicles.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

The DFHV is charge by the DC statute with the following responsibilities:

- ✓ Establish reasonable rates and conditions for providing for-hire vehicles services
- ✓ Establish standards for licensing for-hire vehicle operators and vehicles
- ✓ Establish standards for taxicab companies, public for-hire companies, associations, fleets, and independent taxicabs
- ✓ Establish standards for operator and passenger safety
- ✓ Establish civil fines and penalties for violation of DFHV’s for-hire rules, including licensing, insurance, wheelchair accessible (ADA) standards, and development of TNC standards



DFHV DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

The Department of For-Hire Vehicles (DFHV) aims to protect the public interest through the oversight of the vehicle-for-hire industry. DFHV strives to provide operators with a system of rules and regulations that are fair and transparent and that allow for technological advancements to be introduced to the industry and for properly qualified individuals to participate in the industry. Our duties include regulating taxis, limousines, private vehicle operators, digital dispatch services, and digital taxi solution (DTS) providers. Services include licensing, adjudication, enforcement, consumer complaints and transportation programs. Each department is responsible for the day-to-day management and administrative operations and enables DFHV to provide a wide range of complex and diverse consumer services and programs.

CLIENT SERVICES

The Client Service Division is responsible for managing interactions between clients and the agency, from passengers, drivers,

companies, and registered agents. It provides an assessment of operations and helps accomplish program goals by bringing a disciplined approach to evaluating risk, controls, and governance processes.

COMPLAINTS

For-hire vehicle companies and operators offer services to millions of individuals a year within the District of Columbia. To ensure safety and service within the District, DFHV provides outlets for passengers and members of the public to file a complaint whenever a violation by a for-hire vehicle occurs within the District. Once a complaint is received by the agency, the complaint process begins, consisting of the following four stages: acknowledgment, investigation, resolution, and closed. Complaints are resolved within 20 calendar days.

COMPLIANCE AND FIELD ENFORCEMENT

The Compliance and Enforcement Division oversees the enforcement of District policies, practices, and

procedures, to ensure that passengers of vehicles-for-hire have a clean, safe, and enjoyable traveling experience. The Division addresses any instance of vehicle-for-hire non-compliance with Title 31 and Title 18 and works with other District enforcement agencies to achieve its mission of public safety. Additionally, DFHV's Vehicle Inspection Officers (VIOs) work with both the for-hire industry and the broader public to provide guidance on transportation safety, regulatory compliance, and agency services.

CONTRACT AND PROCUREMENT

DFHV's Contract and Procurement Department performs all agency procurements in collaboration with the District's Office of Contracting and Procurements (OCP) in accordance with District's laws, rules, and regulations to ensure a successful contract award. The department tracks and monitors the agency's Small Business Enterprises (SBE) goals to ensure that the annual spending goals are met and that our local businesses receive available opportunities.

DFHV Department Functions *(continued)*

FACILITIES

The Facilities Division oversees building and grounds maintenance as well as ensures security and emergency preparedness procedures are implemented properly. The division is key in ensuring the facility is fully operational with all utilities functioning properly. It also supervises the upkeep of equipment and supplies the agency utilizes.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The Human Resources (HR) Department provides effective HR management services by implementing internal policies and programs to support performance management, training and development, benefits, and talent acquisition to develop, retain and attract a qualified diverse workforce.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Information Technology (IT) Department is responsible for the agency's online application services, driver and vehicle data, and transportation trip data for all for-hire vehicles in the District. The IT Department was critical in shifting the industry to digital meters, which the department tests annually to ensure compliance with DFHV's standards. The department also provides computer equipment and helpdesk support for agency staff.

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) is responsible for the drafting and reviewing of administrative issuances, rulemakings and proposed legislation. OGC drafts and reviews enforcement actions, which include orders of immediate suspension, notices of proposed revocation or suspension, notices of infraction, and compliance orders. OGC is pivotal in providing guidance and legal advice on assorted issues and questions relevant to DFHV.

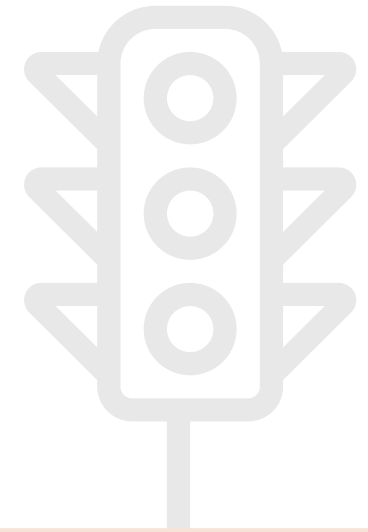
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Performance Management team directs the performance for the agency. This team focuses on continuous quality improvement and program evaluation techniques for the agency's strategic management framework. It is also responsible for analyzing collected data, measuring results, and developing and executing monitoring and accountability tools.

POLICY AND PLANNING

The Policy and Planning team led by the Senior Policy Advisor provides policy and advocacy expertise on new and changing legislation, positions, requirements, and special priority matters locally and regionally related to the for-hire industry. This team also analyzes, formulates, and recommends policies, plans, and guidelines, as well as potential legislation relating to and affecting transportation issues, programs, and projects.

FY19 AND FY20 ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE



As the DFHV looks back over the past two fiscal years at the actions of the for-hire industry and its own operational changes from passengers to service delivery-based functions due to COVID-19's impact, DFHV will illustrate the outcomes and lessons learned when the for-hire industry experiences a major interruption daily operations. In addition, DFHV wishes to highlight the herculean efforts to pivot grant programs, client services intake processing, enforcement, and our own standard operations to meet the demands of for-hire drivers, companies, and our DC residents who found themselves housebound, in need of non-emergency transportation service, COVID-19 testing, and life sustaining nutrition during this period of time.

The for-hire vehicle industry has responded to unprecedented change with steadfast resiliency and this report aims to recognize their accomplishments. DFHV also appreciates the unwavering guidance and support received from the For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council that helped us answer the needs and demands of drivers, riders, and companies.

TRIP COMPARISON OVERVIEW

In Fiscal Year 2019, the taxicab industry had approximately **5,000 registered vehicles** that completed **9,033,561 trips**. In FY20 between October 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020¹ the taxicab industry completed **3,519,699 trips**. From April 2019 to September 2019, the taxicab industry completed only **355,207 trips**. The economic impact was tremendous. Millions of dollars were lost. However, moving through the pandemic and pivoting programs, DFHV and the taxicab industry worked in unison in order to salvage for-hire jobs and serve the community.

To show DFHV's flexibility between the fiscal years, DFHV took several steps to stave off further economic impacts through its easing of enforcement restrictions, maintaining customer complaint investigation and negotiations, and developing innovative client service approaches.

¹ 3/13/20: Mayor Bowser introduces District of Columbia COVID-19 pandemic guidelines.

FY19 HIGHLIGHTS

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Enhanced options for the public to report complaints about all for-hire vehicle services (taxis and TNCs). In addition to phone, email, social media, and the agency's website, the public can submit complaints via DC 311, making the complaint process more accessible.



Provided additional training support to DFHV's VIOs to better understand their roles. In turn, VIOs were better equipped to educate operators on compliance with regulations and raise awareness about Vision Zero initiatives. VIOs conducted almost 8,000 vehicle safety inspections in FY19.



Launched the Union Station Fast Pass pilot program in partnership with Union Station to encourage wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) drivers to take more wheelchair customer trips. Top performing WAV drivers earned a "Fast Pass," which allowed them to go to the front of the taxi line at Union Station. Drivers with the "Fast Pass" averaged 100 trips from Union Station.



The for-hire ride service industry generated at least \$769 million in economic contributions in FY2019. Taxicabs produced about 8.8 million trips that averaged about \$14 per trip to generate more than \$112 million in fares.



Approximately 5 millions trips were taken per month in private vehicles.



TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

In FY19, DFHV provided more than \$7.3 million in grants to expand business opportunities and create innovative programs to support transportation equity. The specific programs developed include:



Transport DC, a premium same-day, alternative service to MetroAccess for eligible residents of Washington, DC. Transport DC provides \$5 taxicab rides to and from any location in DC—without location restrictions—from the 1st of the month through the 15th. For the remainder of the month, transportation is restricted to employment and medical treatment locations only.



Taxi-to-Rail (T2R), a pilot program created to give more transportation options through subsidized taxi rides to residents in neighborhoods East of the River to provide access to metro stations, grocery stores and public facilities. T2R addresses the first-mile/last-mile problem of connecting people to public transit options.



DC Microtransit was a unique public-private partnership between a local taxi company and a TNC. This pilot added a new type of transportation service that provides on-demand, shared rides in a defined zone across portions of Northwest and Northeast that includes neighborhoods such as, Michigan Park, Ivy City, Union Market and Trinidad. The agency set a goal for the program to provide 10,000 rides. Between June and December of 2019, nearly 27,000 people rode DC Microtransit, exceeding the goal by 270 percent.



Education First provided rides to and from school for foster children under the supervision of the Child and Family Services Agency.



VetsRide provides convenient, affordable, and efficient transportation for Veterans in DC seeking educational, health, employment, food distribution, or housing services. Program eligibility is restricted to veteran residents of Washington, DC with an annual income of less than \$30,000 or who were recently unemployed. Participants receive 10, one-way ride vouchers per month with the options of rolling over two unused vouchers every month. This program is a partnership between DFHV and the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA).

IATR

At the 2019 International Association of Transportation Regulators Conference (IATR), Director Do accepted the Clean Transportation Award for DFHV's work to improve the driving and revenue-generating experiences of taxi drivers with incentives to adopt electric vehicles. The theme for this conference was Regulatory Round-up!

Several DFHV team members also attended, presented, and chaired subcommittees at the International Association of Transportation Regulators. They described how we successfully launched innovative programs such as Transport DC and DC Microtransit, and also shared DC's best practices for technology innovation in the for-hire sector.

FY20 HIGHLIGHTS

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In response to the Public Health Emergency², DFHV worked tirelessly alongside the industry and our stakeholders to pivot and adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. The agency's work during this past year prioritized the safety of our drivers and the riding public. Operators were able to deliver safe and efficient transportation to the public. DFHV also provided operators with guidance and support to get through the challenging times. DFHV continued to enact measures that safeguard drivers, passengers, and the community during the public health emergency. With the guidance of the For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council, we also ensured the public had the information and resources needed to drive or ride safe.

² Link to Mayor Bowser's Relevant Orders and identifying Phases of Re-Opening the government: <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/page/stay-home>





MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ✓ Delivered daily meals and monthly **groceries for older adults**.
- ✓ Delivered **800 boxes of PPE** to dentists across the District.
- ✓ Provided more than **30,000 essential trips** through DFHV's expanded Taxi-2-Rail program.
- ✓ Provided more than **1,300 trips to hospital workers** on late shifts.
- ✓ Provided **24/7 service for Transport DC**, which has given critical support to residents with disabilities and more than 130,000 rides since the start of the public health emergency.
- ✓ **Shared information** with drivers on how to protect themselves and passengers, hosted a **Taxi Tele-Townhall** attended by more than 250 operators, and added a **driver resource page** to our website with information on unemployment benefits and other resources available to help them during the pandemic.
- ✓ Distributed **1,000 free safety barriers** to taxi drivers to help prevent the spread of disease between the front and back seats. Decals were distributed to these vehicles to alert the public about the added protections. This was coupled with a digital Ride Safe Campaign to re-enforce safety protocols.
- ✓ Launched the **Operator Wellness Project** where DFHV's Office of Consumer Complaints engages in daily calls to taxi operators to inquire about their wellbeing and provide information on available resources. DFHV has reached more than 1,600 operators since August 2020.
- ✓ Added **online licensing services** for taxicab registration (One Stop) and taxi driver licensing (Face ID) so drivers can engage our services at their own convenience and without having to enter DFHV offices during or after the pandemic.

INDUSTRY RELIEF

DFHV also provided flexibility to the industry by providing regulatory relief including:

- ✓ Extended the vehicle age limit permanently from eight years to 10 years.
- ✓ Clarified that taxi vehicles can deliver food and packages to provide more opportunities for drivers.
- ✓ Automatically extended the expiration dates of Face IDs, renewals and vehicle registrations and delayed fee collection.
- ✓ Promoted the Mayor's Microgrant program, which resulted in more than 445 taxi drivers receiving \$1,000 awards and five companies receiving more than \$27,000 in much needed support.

IATR

The 2020 International Association of Transportation Regulators Conference (IATR) annual conference was held virtually. The theme was Resilient Regulation. As an IATR COVID-19 Task Force member, Director Do worked closely with stakeholders to propose practices and model regulations regarding health, safety, and resiliency in response to the pandemic. The goal of the model regulations is to provide regulators with specific rules and guidelines based on best and accepted practices as well as potential long-term implications of current regulations.

DFHV congratulated for-hire vehicle operator Dawit Dagneu, who was recognized at IATR's 2020 annual conference as International Driver of the Year. Dawit has been a taxi and limo driver in the District since 1985. He has served on DFHV's For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council since 2017 and is a true advocate for the industry. During the public health emergency, Dawit helped taxi drivers apply for DC Microgrants, advised on DFHV's application process, and assisted 50 drivers in applying for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.



Dawit Dagneu



THE PATH FORWARD

The for-hire transportation industry continues its dynamic evolution. Non-cash payments, app-based hailing, driverless and electric vehicles are shaping the industry. Competitors now include technology companies, auto manufacturers and car rental services. Today's passengers want better service at lower prices. Economic pressure on the industry makes it clear that better service or premium offerings is critical to the market.

DFHV will continue to promote safety and welfare, encourage advance planning, and streamline regulations. The industry must become agile enough to respond to consumer preferences, technology and other factors that continue to evolve. At DFHV, leveraging technology to help keep the industry nimble and responsive is vital. As the industry recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, DFHV will find ways to offers economic opportunities to the industry.



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