

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DC Department of For-Hire Vehicles**

**Fiscal Year 2022  
Performance Oversight Hearing**



Testimony of  
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Before the

Committee on Public Works and Operations  
Chairperson, Brianne K. Nadeau  
Council of the District of Columbia

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Good morning, Chairperson Nadeau, members of the Committee, and staff. I am Dory Peters, and I am the Interim Director of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles also referred to as DFHV. I appreciate this opportunity to testify on behalf of Mayor Bowser on the agency's performance over the past year. Before I get started, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the for-hire industry for their resilience over the past few years. I would like to also thank the For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council for sharing its valuable wisdom and the Accessibility Advisory Committee for its partnership. Most of all, I would like to extend a special appreciation to the DFHV staff for their work over the last year.

For those who are unfamiliar with DFHV, I would like to give you a brief overview of who we are and what we do. DFHV's mission is to protect the public interest by regulating the for-hire industry in the District and to ensure that residents and visitors have safe, affordable, and accessible transportation options. We regulate taxis, ridesharing companies, and limousines. We provide licensing, enforcement, adjudication, and lost and found services for both DC residents and visitors alike. Through grants, and in partnership with several sister agencies, we provide transportation programs that serve various populations in the District, including older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, school children, and others. The programs we manage offer accessible and affordable transportation options while providing economic opportunities for the for-hire industry.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic in March 2020, the taxicab industry was still adjusting to the increased competition from rideshare companies. Then the COVID-19 pandemic decimated the industry. Demand for both taxis and rideshare plummeted and for-hire drivers stopped driving. In all of 2022, demand was still incredibly low, taxi and ridesharing trips were only 34% and 60% of their 2019 levels, respectively. In 2019, DFHV counted an average of 4,400 active taxi drivers, which dropped precipitously when global travel restrictions in 2020 became

commonplace. Over the last 2 years, drivers have slowly been coming back and now, the District is seeing an average of 2,100 active taxi drivers. That is a 52% decrease in active taxi drivers since 2019. However, as in the case of most cities, drivers' return to the industry is slow, and many are choosing to retire or seek other professions.

As a response to these pandemic pressures, DFHV released a plan called the Industry Recovery Blueprint in 2021, with action items to assist the industry. In the short term we provided fee relief and grant opportunities for drivers and companies. In 2022, DFHV identified ways to simplify how we regulate the industry as reflected by our soon to be proposed Title 31 rewrite including, for example, the elimination of outdated systems such as the DC Taxiapp, clarification and expansion of requirements for digital taxi solutions, including the ability to allow fixed or upfront pricing for passengers, just to name a few.

There have also been other challenges impacting the industry this past year including volatile fuel costs, difficulty in acquiring new vehicles, and working within a new normal. As a result, DFHV provided additional economic relief for the industry. These included a one-dollar fuel surcharge to offset the high cost of fuel and a vehicle age waiver which allows taxicab owners to keep older vehicles a little longer until supply chains recover.

DFHV has also been implementing innovative ideas to assist the industry. Based on the data we gathered and analyzed, we have developed and will soon release Next Fare DC, a website map that provides taxi drivers information about where to find customers. This will mean more readily available taxis for customers. We continue to collaborate with our agency partners to better understand the impact of our programs on the overall transportation network in the District. This collaboration is also important when it comes to roadway safety.

Safety is a priority for us. We have been collaborating with other agencies to work toward the Mayor's Vision Zero goals. Our enforcement team's commitment to public safety has strengthened through their participation in other multi-agency initiatives, such as the Mayor's Nightlife Task Force. DFHV has also been given more authority over food and parcel delivery through emergency legislation this fiscal year. This new authority allows our Vehicle Inspection Officers to enforce moving violations on District streets and to ensure that pickups and drop-offs do not create unsafe conflicts between all road users. Another facet of our focus on safety includes our transportation programs, specifically, DC School Connect.

In 2021, we launched DC School Connect, a shared ride shuttle service that provides students a safe way to and from school. DC School Connect specifically serves students that attend school in the Safe Passage zones within Wards 7 and 8. Due to a robust outreach campaign and the value of the service offered, DC School Connect currently transports up to 300 students.

DFHV also fulfills its mission of increasing accessible transportation options through grant programs we create and manage. One of our popular programs is DC Neighborhood Connect, which provides a link to jobs, shopping, healthcare, and more. In FY22, DC Neighborhood Connect expanded to include Fort Lincoln, the NoMa Metro Station, and Ivy City. The expansion is intended to provide transportation linkages in neighborhoods with fewer transportation options and easily connect riders to Metro stations or other transportation hubs. For many of our programs, we partner with other DC government agencies to provide rides for DC residents seeking social or medical services.

Another popular program is Transport DC, which is an alternative transportation service for MetroAccess customers. In 2022, DFHV added some incentive programs to encourage taxi drivers

to drive wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) for Transport DC. We restarted the Fast Pass program to reward drivers who provide the most rides for customers using wheelchairs. Fast Pass allows them to jump the taxi line at Union Station. We also instituted a new fee to compensate drivers for the empty leg of their trip to reach a customer who uses a wheelchair. As we work on these incentives, we are evaluating what works best to encourage more drivers to drive WAVs to transport customers who use wheelchairs.

Looking forward, we intend to continue to improve our agency services to meet the ever changing and modern needs of the District of Columbia and to ensure that residents and visitors have safe, affordable, and accessible transportation.

In closing, I am grateful for Mayor Bowser's and the Council's continued support during these challenging times. Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I am happy to address any questions you may have.