

**DEPARTMENT
OF
FOR-HIRE VEHICLES**

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUANCE

Title: Service Enhancements
During Metrorail SafeTrack
Series/Number: AI-2016-003
Approved: June 2, 2016
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I. BACKGROUND

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (“WMATA”) has announced the SafeTrack program, which will accelerate necessary repairs to the Metrorail system. *See* <https://wmata.com/rail/safetrack.cfm>. According to WMATA, SafeTrack is likely to cause trains and platforms to be extremely crowded during peak periods, and to cause customers to experience extended delays. Passengers are encouraged to use alternate travel options whenever a SafeTrack “safety surge” project is underway.

To ease the burdens on commuters, residents, and visitors in the District and surrounding communities during SafeTrack, the Department of For-Hire Vehicles (“Department” or DFHV”) is rolling out a series of service enhancements, including two provided in this administrative issuance: (1) the expanded use of shared-riding for taxicabs on days when safety surge projects are underway anywhere on Metrorail; and (2) special event vehicle decals for Maryland- and Virginia-licensed black cars, with pooled-riding required during peak hours.

In addition to the for-hire ride enhancements created by this administrative issuance, customers affected by SafeTrack may also book a taxicab by telephone or by digital dispatch (e-hail) (Web-based application or smartphone-based app), or book a private sedan by digital dispatch. Companies providing telephone dispatch and digital dispatch for taxicabs are listed at: <http://dfhv.dc.gov/page/dispatch-companies>. Companies offering private sedan service are listed at: <http://dfhv.dc.gov/page/digital-dispatch-services-black-cars-and-private-sedans>. For more transportation alternatives during SafeTrack, visit <https://wmata.com/rail/safetrack.cfm>.

Taxicabs: shared-riding expansion on SafeTrack safety surge project days

To give taxi cab customers more options, DFHV is authorizing a recurring expansion of taxicab “shared” riding as follows: on any day or portion of a day when a SafeTrack safety surge project is in underway, any DFHV-licensed taxicab operator may organize and start a shared ride at any point within one (1) mile of a Metrorail location or any designated taxicab stand. Licensed taxicab operators may act as starters by organizing any two (2) or more passengers at these locations into a single shared ride, where the passengers provide common or different destinations. Group rides – which are organized by passengers – are not affected. The schedule for SafeTrack safety surge projects is available at <https://wmata.com/rail/safetrack.cfm>.

There will be no demand-based pricing (also known as “surge pricing”) for shared taxicab rides organized pursuant to this administrative issuance; all trips will use the standard metered street hail taxicab rates in 31 DCMR § 801. Taxicab operators will be permitted to act as starters to

organize passengers into groups based on destination. Operators will be held to regulatory standards for grouping passengers objectively and professionally. *See* § 808.2. Operators are encouraged to work together for this purpose, but no operator may solicit or accept a payment in addition to the metered fare. *See* § 801.1. Taxicab service may also be booked through digital dispatch, in which case the fare will be set by the digital dispatch service selected by the customer; these fares may include surge pricing.

Black cars: special event decal with pooled-riding during peak hours

To give black car customers more options, DFHV is authorizing the issuance of special event decals for black cars licensed in the State of Maryland or the Commonwealth of Virginia for trips booked through a digital dispatch service registered with the Department under Chapter 16. *See* § 1016. Each black car participating in this program shall at all times display a current and valid special event decal in the manner required by the Department. A black car displaying the decal may conduct a point-to-point trip in the District provided the trip is booked by a digital dispatch service registered with the Department under Chapter 16 and is conducted in compliance with all applicable rules in Title 31.

Digital dispatch services arranging special event trips pursuant to this administrative issuance shall ensure that all point-to-point trips in the District are pooled rides when originating during peak hours, as defined below. The fare for all black car special event trips shall be set by the digital dispatch service and may include surge pricing. A list of digital dispatch services providing black car service is available at <http://dfhv.dc.gov/page/dispatch-companies>. Black cars may not accept street hails.

Discrimination is prohibited

Discrimination in providing any public or private vehicle-for-hire service, including discrimination based on destination, is prohibited. Passengers wishing to file complaints may visit or call the complaints hotline at (855) 484-4966.

II. PURPOSE

To expand the use of shared riding for taxicabs and to authorize the use of special event vehicle decals for non-District black cars during the Metrorail SafeTrack program. A shared taxicab ride shall be considered within the scope of this administrative issuance if it begins on any day when a SafeTrack safety surge project is under way on that day or portion of that day.

III. POLICY

District Taxicabs

On any day or portion of a day when a SafeTrack safety surge project is in under way, a DFHV-licensed taxicab operator may organize and start a shared ride at any point within one (1) mile of any Metrorail location, or at any designated taxicab stand. Operators may organize any two (2) or more passengers at these locations into a single shared ride, where the passengers provide

common or different destinations. Operators may work cooperatively to organize rides based on destinations, but no operator shall solicit or accept any payment in addition to the metered fare. *See* § 801.1. Fares shall be calculated according to the method provided in § 801.8. All shared riding trips shall use the metered taxicab rates in 31 DCMR § 801.7. For purposes of shared rides under this administrative issuance only, taxicab operators may ask passengers their destination prior to the passenger entering the vehicle; otherwise, operators may not ask passengers their destination prior to the passenger entering the vehicle. *See* § 819.9. Group rides are not affected by this administrative issuance. No operator shall refuse to transport a pre-formed group at any time. *See* § 808.1.

Maryland and Virginia black cars

The Department may issue a special event vehicle decal pursuant to § 1016 for any black car vehicle if both the vehicle and the operator are licensed either by the State of Maryland or by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Non-District operators and vehicles other than those licensed in Maryland or Virginia are not eligible to participate. Decals shall not be valid for a period exceeding that allowed by § 1016, but the Department may allow operators to purchase up to two (2) decals each, covering two contiguous licensing periods. The administrative fee for a special event vehicle decal issued pursuant to this administrative issuance shall not exceed one dollar (\$1.00) per day. Decal fees will not be refunded in the event that the special event vehicle decal program authorized by this administrative issuance is modified or discontinued. Each decal shall be displayed on the vehicle in the manner required by the Department at all times while operating in the District. A Maryland or Virginia black car displaying the special event vehicle decal may conduct point-to-point service in the District of Columbia provided the operator and vehicle are in compliance with the applicable provisions of Chapter 8, 10, 12, and 14, as well as the requirement in this administrative issuance for pooled-riding during peak hours. An operator providing service pursuant to a special event permit who violates any provision of Title 31 shall be subject to a civil fine for operating a public vehicle for hire without a vehicle license. A decal shall be subject to immediate suspension if the operator takes a street hail or engages in false dispatch. You may submit an online application for decal by going to the following link: www.tinyurl.com/SpecialDecal.

IV. DEFINITIONS

“Black car” – a luxury class vehicle which operates exclusively through advance reservation made by a digital dispatch service, which may not solicit or accept street hails, and for which the fare is calculated by time and distance. Fares may include surge pricing.

“Peak hours” – 5:00 to 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. weekdays, except holidays.

“Pooled ride” – a black car trip for two (2) or more passengers arranged by a digital dispatch service using any reasonable means to group passengers.

“Shared ride” – a taxicab trip for two (2) or more passengers arranged by a starter or by a taxicab operator. Operators may not solicit or accept a payment for arranging a shared ride.

V. AUTHORITY

District of Columbia Taxicab Commission Establishment Act of 1985, effective March 25, 1986, D.C. Official Code § 50-307(c)(1), (c)(12), (c)(13), and (c)(19); 31 DCMR §§ 701.3, 801.1, 801.7, 801.8, 808.1, 819.9; and 1016.1.

VI. PROCEDURES:

None.