



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of April 23, 2022**

DATE: March 22, 2022

SUBJECT: Request to Advertise a Public Hearing by the County Board on Proposed Changes to the Taxicab Ordinance regarding maximum age of taxicab vehicles.

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize advertisement of a public hearing by the County Board on May 14, 2022, on proposed changes to the Taxicab Ordinance, Section 25.1 of the County Code (see attachment A), relating to extensions to the maximum vehicle age (Section 25.1-20) as follows:

- Increase maximum years of service from 10 to 12 for gasoline-only powered non-wheelchair vehicles;
- 10 to 15 years for wheelchair-accessible vehicles; and
- 10 to 15 years for hybrid, plug-in hybrid and/or electric vehicles.

ISSUES: The Taxicab Industry has requested to increase from 10 to 12 the years of service for taxicab vehicles.

SUMMARY: The Taxicab Industry has requested changes to the County's existing ordinance in Section 25.1-20 regarding the age of vehicles to help alleviate cost of doing business compared to Transportation Network Companies (TNCs). In addition, staff recommends an additional extension to years of service for low- and zero-emissions vehicles, as well as wheelchair-accessible vehicles that perform an essential service for the County, to incentivize operators to purchase these vehicles and keep them in service long-term.

County Manager:

County Attorney:

Staff: Angie de la Barrera, DES

BACKGROUND:

Arlington County has a total of 477 vehicles authorized through six certificate holders. In 2017, there were a total of 847 vehicles authorized to operate, but this number has declined greatly in the past few years due to cost to operate and increased competition from Transportation Network Companies (TNCs). Currently there is a disparity in the maximum years of service allowed for taxis and TNCs, with the County Taxicab Ordinance capping taxi years of service at 10 years and TNCs allowing a maximum service life of 14 to 16 years. This difference puts an inequitable cost burden on taxi operators to replace their vehicles more frequently than their TNC counterparts.

Transportation Network Companies’ (TNCs) requirements to operate in Virginia are posted on their websites as follows:

- Uber requires vehicles to be 15 years old or newer and
- Lyft requires vehicles to be 14 years or newer in Fredericksburg and 16 years or newer for the rest of Virginia.

At the same time, there have been significant changes in the manufacturing of vehicles, including the widespread availability of hybrids, plug-in hybrids and electric vehicles. Staff learned from the taxicab companies that about 35 percent of the non-wheelchair accessible vehicles currently in use are hybrids or plug-in hybrids. Due to COVID, not all vehicles authorized are currently in use.

Wheelchair accessible vehicles are also an important part of the taxicab fleet and provide an essential service as part of the STAR para-transit program. Out of the 477 currently authorized vehicles, 39 are authorized as wheelchair accessible.

Arlington County Taxicabs Authorized in 2022

| | Totals | Wheelchair |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Friendly | 39 | |
| Hess | 35 | |
| Crown | 37 | |
| Red Top | 195 | 20 |
| Arlington Yellow | 35 | |
| Blue Top | 136 | 19 |
| Total | 477 | 39 |

Source: Arlington County DES staff, 2022

DISCUSSION:

The County’s current ordinance specifies that vehicles must be retired once they exceed 10 (ten) model years of age. With proper maintenance and inspections performed by the manufacturing standards, vehicle life can extend beyond the current ordinance years of service requirements.

The proposed amendment would not change the existing service requirement to provide proof of a Virginia safety inspection from a licensed mechanic performed within 60 days prior to placing the vehicle into service. In addition, each taxicab vehicle should have records of all service maintenance and repairs performed, including the Virginia safety and emissions tests. All records must be kept and maintained for at least three years and available for review by the hack office or police officers at any time.

Vehicle safety inspections can be conducted by the hack office at any time. The hack officer will be able to reject vehicles if he or she believes the vehicles are not safe to operate in compliance with the requirements of the Taxicab Ordinance.

The proposed amendments to the Taxicab Ordinance are as follows:

- Increase maximum years of service from 10 to 12 for gasoline-only powered non-wheelchair vehicles;
- 10 to 15 years for wheelchair-accessible vehicles; and
- 10 to 15 years for hybrid, plug-in hybrid and/or electric vehicles.

This proposal meets the requests from the taxicab industry to increase the number of years a vehicle can be in used as a taxicab, therefore alleviating the cost of purchasing a new car if a current vehicle is in good working order, particularly during the current inflationary period. In most cases in Arlington County's taxicab industry, the costs of buying a new vehicle are the responsibility of each driver.

Additionally, this increase would help to level the playing field with TNCs such as Uber and Lyft. All vehicles in Virginia have to pass safety and emissions inspections to operate but in addition, Arlington County taxicabs will have to pass a safety inspection 60 days prior to placing the vehicle into service guaranteeing that the vehicle will be safe for the traveling public.

The proposal will incentivize operators to purchase and keep in service a wheelchair-accessible vehicle, which supports the STAR para-transit program and provides an essential mobility service to people with disabilities. A years of service extension that prioritizes these vehicles would reduce operator costs and incentivize their purchase and long-term use. The additional years of service extension for hybrid, plug-in hybrid and/or electric vehicles would also incentivize the purchase and long-term use of these low- and zero-emissions vehicles in Arlington, thereby supporting the County's emissions reduction and climate change goals.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

The appropriate level of engagement for this matter is Communicate & Consult.

Outreach Methods:

- At the March 28, 2022, Transportation Commission meeting, the Commissioners will make a recommendation to the County Board regarding the age of taxicab vehicles.

- The County Board is advertising the proposed amendments at the April 23, 2022 (or recessed) meeting.
- At the May 14, 2022, the County Board will consider approval to an extension of the age of vehicles under Chapter 25.1 (Taxicabs) of the Arlington County Code, Section 25.1-20.

Community Feedback:

Taxicab Companies: Crown, Hess, Friendly, Red Top, Arlington Yellow, and Blue Top Cab companies have requested this amendment.

FISCAL IMPACT: There are no fiscal impacts for Arlington County government.

Attachment A

AMENDMENT TO CHAPTER 25 OF THE ARLINGTON COUNTY CODE REGARDING MAXIMUM AGE AND MILEAGE OF TAXICAB VEHICLES AND UPOHSTRY MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS.

BE IT ORDAINED by the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia that Chapter 25, §25.1-20 of the Arlington County Code is amended, reenacted and recodified, effective June 1, 2022, to read in pertinent part as follows:

Chapter 25.1 TAXICABS

§ 25.1-20. Age of Vehicles.

- A. It shall be unlawful for any Certificate-holder to operate, or permit to operate, a motor vehicle for Taxicab Service any vehicle having a model-year age greater than ~~ten (10)~~ **years**.
- a. 12 years of service for gasoline-only powered non-wheelchair vehicles;
 - b. 15 years of service for wheelchair accessible vehicles and;
 - c. 15 years of service for hybrid, plug-in hybrids and/or electric vehicles.

Any Certificate-holder shall have each taxicab vehicle inspected by a certified Virginia state safety inspection facility within sixty (60) days prior to placing the vehicle into Taxicab Service in Arlington, County and shall present proof of satisfactory inspection.

B. Certificate-holders authorized to operate in Arlington County shall maintain a legibly, written or electronic (including digital) record of all service maintenance and repairs performed on each vehicle being used as a Taxicab and shall be made available for inspection by the Hack officer or any other law enforcement for a period of at least three years. (Ord. No. 16-05, 5-14-16)