

Starting a Local Taxi Camera Program

Context:

Driver safety is a significant concern to the taxi industry. The Passenger Transportation Board ("Board") recognizes that taxicab drivers are highly vulnerable to victimization, especially at night. The Board supports the efforts of taxi companies to make it safer to drive a taxicab.

The Board has established the *BC Taxi Camera Programs, Standards & Requirements* rule that applies to any taxi licensee that uses taxi cameras in the province. The requirements and standards are established so the usage of taxi camera are effective in deterring attacks against taxi drivers, helping police identify suspects and prosecute offenders, and protecting the privacy of taxi passengers and drivers.

Taxi cameras are mandatory in the Lower Mainland. As of March 31, 2009, all taxicabs in the Capital Regional District must use a taxi camera. Since February 2007, taxi companies in other parts of British Columbia have been able to use taxi camera equipment when Board standards and requirements are met.

This information sheet has been prepared for use by Passenger Transportation Licence holders that want to start a local taxi camera program.

Elements of the Taxi Camera Rule

1. **Terms & Conditions.** Licensees must not implement or participate in a taxi camera program until Board start up requirements are met, and unless the program is operated in accordance with Board taxi camera requirements.
2. **Start Up Requirements.** Some basic requirements must be met before a taxi company may start using taxi cameras. This includes submitting to the Board:
 - a Declaration of Compliance that Board equipment standards and procedural requirements are understood and will be complied with,
 - written confirmation from the head of the local police agency that it will be the sole organization to access taxi camera images, and that the local taxi camera plan will be satisfactory for police investigative purposes
 - a copy of written notice to local governments
 - a copy of a public notice published in local newspapers.

When start up requirements have been met, the Board will provide the taxi company with written acknowledgement and add the company to a published list of taxi companies that have a taxi camera program in British Columbia. Documents received and sent by the Passenger Transportation Board will be provided to the Registrar, Passenger Transportation Branch.

3. **Minimum Standards for Equipment.** The Board has established minimum standards for taxi camera equipment. Taxi companies may ask the Board for a written variance for a particular minimum standard for the equipment when warranted by local circumstances or the design of available taxi camera equipment.

Board taxi camera equipment requirements are partly an adaptation of "Section 4: Recommendations and Guidelines for Using Closed-Circuit (Analog) Television Security Systems in Commercial Institutions" as established by the International Association for

Identification's (IAI) Scientific Working group of Imaging Technology (SWGIT). For reference, SWGIT recommendations and guidelines are available at:

http://www.theiai.org/guidelines/swgit/guidelines/section_4_v2-2.pdf

4. **Procedural Requirements.** The Board has also established procedural requirements that must be followed for taxi camera equipment to be used in British Columbia.
5. **Compliance.** Failure to comply with applicable Board taxi camera standards and requirements may result in sanctions and other enforcement activities initiated by the Registrar, Passenger Transportation Branch.
6. **Cost Responsibility and Temporary Surcharges.** Taxicab licensees are responsible for costs arising from their local taxi camera program. This includes the costs of equipment purchase, installation, maintenance, inspection, and replacement or upgrade.

To help offset these costs, a temporary surcharge may be available to taxi companies that demonstrate a commitment to a program, installation of taxi cameras in all vehicles, and future equipment replacement or upgrade. A licensee may propose a temporary surcharge by submitting a letter that addresses the issues noted above, the proposed surcharge amount and duration, materials showing the cost of taxi camera equipment and an explanation as to how the proposed surcharge was calculated. The Board will not approve any temporary surcharge that shifts responsibility for the full purchase cost of taxi cameras to passengers.

Local Taxi Camera Program Roles and Responsibilities

Effective implementation of a taxi camera program involves cooperation among taxi companies, police, and installers. In some cases, municipal governments may have a role.

General Cooperation

It is important to the success of a program that the participants meet and discuss the following program matters before a taxi camera program is implemented:

- Taxi camera equipment options and whether the equipment to be used will meet police requirements and Board minimum standards.
- Police decisions respecting flash memory card retrieval, digital download of images to a laptop, and where retrievals and downloads will take place.
- The location of taxi camera recording units in the vehicle (i.e. trunk or under the dashboard).
- Identity and contact information of the taxi company's taxi camera representative, designated installer(s) and designated inspector(s).
- The types of incidents when police will use taxi camera evidence during an investigation, and protocols taxi drivers and dispatchers to report incidents to police.
- What must be done by taxi drivers, installers and police when police need to access recorded memory cards and images.
- Who will purchase and keep a surplus of flash memory cards that would be needed so replacement cards can be installed whenever a card is retrieved from a recording unit.
- Cost responsibility for labour and materials to retrieve and reinstall flash memory cards, including payment procedures (when applicable).
- Who will inspect taxi cameras and how often.

Specific Roles

To help clarify the roles and responsibilities of each participant in a taxi camera program, before and after implementation, the following notes are provided.

Taxi Companies

- Taxi companies are responsible for initiating a local taxi camera program. Initiation and operation involves the research, selection, purchase, installation, operation, inspection, maintenance and replacement of taxi cameras for taxicabs in their fleet. It also involves advance consultation with each local police agency, meeting Board start up requirements and giving notice to affected local governments and the public. Taxi companies should also have internal support of company directors, owner/operators and drivers.
- After start up, taxi companies must maintain and operate taxi camera equipment in accordance with applicable minimum equipment standards and procedural requirements until the Board gives written authorization to remove taxi cameras.
- Taxi companies are responsible for all taxi camera related costs.
- Taxi companies are responsible for ensuring that existing and new drivers (regardless of the contractual arrangement between drivers and the licensee) are aware of the taxi camera equipment, how it works, what drivers must do to ensure that the camera is working properly at all times, applicable restrictions on access, and protocols with respect to police access to recorded flash memory cards and images.
- Taxi companies are responsible for having a representative contact person for police and public enquiries about taxi cameras. One person may be the contact person for a group of licensees that have a common trade name or share the same dispatch.
- Licensees own the equipment that records the images. However, to safeguard

personal privacy of the traveling public and taxi drivers, companies are not permitted to see any images or access any recorded memory cards.

Local Police Agencies

- Only local police have the authorization and equipment to access, view, use and reproduce the digital images that are recorded by a taxi camera.
- Local police agencies are involved in decisions respecting the location of recording units and download ports in taxicabs, and whether images are obtained by download onto a police laptop or by removing the flash memory card. As such, local police agencies establish internal protocols with respect to image and card retrieval, liaison protocols with taxi companies, search warrant requirements, and chain of evidence management. It is recommended that basic protocol information be communicated to local installers who maintain contact with both taxi companies and police members.

Manufacturers

- Manufacturers may be a source of information for taxi companies that want to implement a local taxi camera program. The manufacturers need to be aware of current taxi camera program objectives, standards and requirements so that BC taxi companies have good product options that enable them to achieve the driver safety, suspect identification and privacy objectives of a taxi camera program.
- Manufacturers must designate qualified installers, and provide training and support for designated installers, police, and any other designated equipment inspectors. After-sales service is important throughout the full life of the products to keep all equipment operational, and to support upgrades and system changes as needed.

Designated Installers

- Installers are designated by the taxi camera manufacturer. Only designated installers can install, set up, replace and remove a taxi camera system.
- Installers work with taxi companies, taxi drivers, police officers, police agencies and equipment managers as clients and suppliers. In meeting the client and supplier commitments that suppliers have, they need to know the applicable Board requirements so they can provide the services that their clients and suppliers need for the taxi camera program to function. It also means that installers may be involved in a number of taxi camera program activities that may include:
 - providing documentation and keeping records
 - assisting with the protection of image privacy
 - assisting police in managing the chain of evidence
 - buying and reselling stock (e.g. spare camera systems and memory cards)
 - taxi camera program communications with the local taxi industry and police (including the sharing of current taxi camera program information among their clients and suppliers)

Designated Inspectors

- Taxi companies must identify an individual, company or agency to inspect taxi camera equipment systems in accordance with applicable Board requirements. The agency or individual who inspects taxi camera systems may have other responsibilities under the taxi camera program. For example, a designated installer may perform installation work and inspection work. Systems inspectors will require software necessary to perform system inspections.

Taxi Associations

- There are presently two taxi associations in British Columbia: The British Columbia Taxi

Association (BCTA) and the Vancouver Taxi Association (VTA). These associations have played and continue to play facilitative and coordinating roles with respect to the participation of their members in driver safety initiatives, including taxi camera programs.

Passenger Transportation Board

- The Board establishes minimum equipment standards and procedural requirements to achieve taxi camera program objectives of deterrence, police identification of suspects, and privacy protection.
- The Board receives declarations of compliance from taxi companies, acknowledges that start up requirements have been met, and maintains a published list of taxi companies with an active taxi camera program. The Board may approve requested variances in Board equipment standards when circumstances warrant.
- The Board considers requests from taxi companies for a temporary surcharge respecting taxi camera purchases.
- The Board may consult with stakeholders and update its minimum standards and procedural requirements from time to time.

Passenger Transportation Branch

- The Registrar, Passenger Transportation Branch, is responsible for enforcement activities, including licensee audits, and initiating applicable sanctions for non-compliance—in relation to the Passenger Transportation Act, Passenger Transportation Regulation, and applicable terms and conditions of licence.

For more information, go to the Board web site at <http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/ptb/cameras.htm>.