

## Agenda: Item 3

Staff Report and Commissioner Announcements [INFORMATION]



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HEIDI MACHEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**TO: TAXI COMMISSIONERS**  
**RE: RESULTS OF TAXI AVAILABILITY SURVEY**  
**FROM: HEIDI MACHEN**  
**DATE: JANUARY 8, 2008**

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**Background:**

MTA, SF Paratransit and the SF Taxi Commission performed two separate surveys in 2007 on ramped taxi availability.

**Dates of Surveys:**

1. May 15 – 21, 2007
2. October/November 2007

**Protocol:** Calls made from different cell phones or by business by at least 5 different surveyors in central areas of the city during the hours of 8 am – 8 pm.

This protocol was chosen for the following reasons:

- to mimic the typical ramped taxi call
- to optimize opportunities for good performance
- to limit diversion from “real” ramped calls

If the ramp taxi driver arrived, s/he was given \$5 for her/his time and a letter from the Taxi Commission explaining participation in the survey and stressing the importance of the ramped taxi program.

During the first survey, calls were made to all “underperforming” dispatch companies having ramped vans within their dispatch: Yellow and Luxor were exempted as they traditionally have provided most of the ramp taxi service reported to SF Paratransit.

After the first survey in May, we hosted a series of meetings with ramped medallion holders and some taxi company representatives. The second availability survey, in October/November, measured the progress of the original taxi companies and also included Yellow and Luxor.

**Results:  
May 2007**

| Company                                      | Number of calls made | Responses        | Comments  |
|--|----------------------|------------------|---|
| Black and White Checker – 13 ramped vehicles | 14 calls             | 100% - 14 showed | Courteous, always called back with estimate of arrival time, met 30min time |
| Desoto – 13 ramped vehicles                  | 14 calls             | 14% - 2 showed   | Phone out of service some of the weekend                                    |
| Regents – 2 ramped                           | 6 calls              | 0%               | “none available”  |
| American – 3 ramped                          | 5 calls              | 0%               | “none available”  |
| Citiwide – 3 ramped                          | 4 calls              | 0%               | “none available”  |

**October/November 2007**

| Company                           | Number of Calls | Responses        | Comments   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|--|
| American – 3 ramped               | 6 Calls         | 17%- 1 showed    | “None available”   |
| Black & White Checker – 13 ramped | 13 Calls        | 92% - 12 showed  | Consistently courteous and responsive; the one aberration: sent a regular rather than ramped taxi. |
| Citywide – 3 ramped               | 7 Calls         | 57% - 4 showed   | Good overall dispatch service; problem with not having enough taxis                                |
| DeSoto – 11 ramped                | 15 Calls        | 40% - 6 showed   | Dispatchers often rude. Couple of phone line problems, e.g. no answer or other prob.               |
| Luxor – 24 ramped                 | 11 Calls        | 82% - 9 showed   | Pronto service; 2/11 phone glitches  |
| Regents – 2 ramped                | 7 Calls         | 0% - None showed | Consistent with previous survey: “None available;” didn’t even try to provide service.             |
| Yellow – 16 ramped                | 18 Calls        | 39% - 7 showed   | Big issue with phone lines at over-capacity!   |
|                                   |                 |                  |  |

**Quick Comparison Chart of Two surveys:**

| Company               | May-07 | Oct/Nov 2007 |
|-----------------------|--------|--------------|
| American              | 0/5    | 1/6          |
| Black & White Checker | 14/14  | 12/13        |
| Citywide Dispatch     | 0/4    | 4/7          |
| DeSoto                | 2/14   | 6/15         |
| Regents               | 0/6    | 0/7          |
|                       |        |              |
| Yellow                | n/a    | 7/18         |
| Luxor                 | n/a    | 9/11         |

**Analysis:**

Black and White Checker Cab was a star in terms of consistently good response times for their ramped vans, rating between 92-100% in arrivals. Luxor came in second place with 82% arrivals. Both Citywide and Desoto showed some improvement from the first survey to the next. And, American and Regents were consistently disappointing, with only one arrival between a collective 24 calls made. Dispatchers at both American and Regents responded to callers almost

immediately by claiming that no ramped vehicle was available. The biggest surprise was Yellow Cab. Despite having 16 ramped vans in its fleet, it only scored 39% because even an able-bodied person would not have been able to get through on Yellow's phone system. There is some evidence that Paratransit clients have direct access to Yellow drivers by having personal cell phone numbers from drivers; however, this would not help wheelchair users who are not in the Paratransit program or who are casual or non-resident users.

**Conclusion:**

1. Taxi companies that consistently fail to deliver ramped taxi service should be stripped of the privilege of having ramped vans in their fleet. That would include Regents and American.
2. Taxi companies that are not delivering the service that they should be delivering should be reprimanded and provided an opportunity to improve service. That would include Yellow, Citywide, and Desoto. Of particular importance at Yellow is the phone system capacity.
3. Taxi companies that are delivering excellent service should be commended. That would include Luxor and Black and White Checker. They are models of a successful ramped taxi program and should share best practices with all other taxi companies serving the disabled community.