

TAXI INDUSTRY OF MONTREAL
SECURITY OF DRIVERS AND USERS

A MEMORANDUM PREPARED FOR:
THE COMMISSION ON TRANSPORTS AND
PUBLICWORKS-CITY OF MONTREAL

SESSION OF 7TH OF MAY 2014

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The purpose of my memorandum is to focus on the financial security of taxi drivers and its effect on their mental state, physical state, as well as their security and the security of their clients.

So many factors have contributed to the decay of the taxi industry. These factors have forced drivers to work days and nights, 6 or 7 days a week, 12 or 16 hours a day, neglecting their social life, their family and friends, and their health.

Sitting down for long hours, eating on the run, not finding an open washroom at times, neglecting exercise, lack of sleep, stress, anxiety, have all contributed to illnesses far more dangerous than physical assaults.

A healthy taxi driver in a good state of mind and concentration will be less likely to engage in an accident and expose his or her life and the life of passengers to danger, and will be certainly more prepared to defend against assaults and avoid dangerous situations.

The lack of clients is sometimes forcing the driver to neglect the warning signs that are usually present before an assault, and proceed with the fare until the inevitable happens.

I strongly suggest a study on the security of health and well-being of taxi drivers, as it is a subject that is important to us.

I will first concentrate on two projects that I mentioned in previous memorandums that I feel are extremely important, and if implemented, most of our existing problems will be eliminated.

I will then address the proposed project of the bureau that concerns the security cameras and publicity.

The Two projects are:

1: ONE CITY ONE AGGLOMERATION WITH A UNIVERSAL G.P.S

2: COLLECTIVE TRANSPORT AS A SOLUTION TO ILLEGAL TRANSPORT

ONE CITY ONE AGGLOMERATION WITH A UNIVERSAL G.P.S

I propose the creation of a local and universal G.P.S Dispatch system that covers the entire island of Montreal which will break the agglomeration barrier that existed for decades.

I say “local” because some offshore phone applications have already broken the agglomeration barrier and the rules set within which are:

- *No driver should answer a call to transport clients in an agglomeration other than his if the destination is not known to be within his agglomeration.

- *No Driver is allowed to pick up a “hailing” client from another agglomeration.

Now these applications do not require that clients enter their destination as a condition to dispatch the call to proper drivers, the system simply sends the closest taxi regardless to which agglomeration it belongs.

Add to that, that the “hailing” clients have become in their most part “calling” clients because they can simply use their cellphone to “call” a taxi while standing on the side of the street.

Enforcing the regulation of agglomerations is also hard. Because drivers can simply pick up clients in any agglomeration if no bureau inspector is present on site to ticket them and no other taxi is there to place a complaint. (The A11 agglomeration is suffering the most because people hail cabs more in the A11)

So it would be easier for us to compete with these systems rather than trying to halt their operation because the laws in existence will not play in our favor and simply because this method of “calling” or “hailing” a taxi is slowly but steadily becoming the method of choice for clients.

Hence, the future is an inevitable merge of the 3 agglomerations to form one. The advantages are numerous: Better and faster service to clients, increased efficiency and income to drivers that no longer have to travel back to their agglomerations which will leave a positive impact on the environment .

COLLECTIVE TRANSPORT AS A SOLUTION TO ILLEGAL TRANSPORT

The demand to increase fines and authority of the bureau is a step on the right path, but the problem is that we are facing some individuals that are well established in illegal transport for years, and these are not easy to catch because they do not need to advertise.

If we want to effectively win the war with illegal transport, we need to use similar weapons! So maybe it is wise to know to whom it caters, what kind of clients? And what are the services offered, and the areas covered? So let's take a look at their advertisements (attached are some recent ads).

We can clearly see that most ads offer long distance service. That is to the airport and beyond, Quebec, Ontario, Etc....They are capable of offering cheaper prices than taxi because they do not have the expenses that we do as taxi drivers and owners, but most importantly because they engage in "Collective transport".

Illegal transport hurts the transport industry as a whole, not to mention that it is all cash money. But Taxi drivers suffer the most from it because it adds to the competition that we are facing from other legal public and private services that are Subsidised or helped by the city or government.

1: Illegal Transport caters to clients that cannot afford a relatively expensive ride to the airport or elsewhere in Quebec or beyond. It caters to people that want the convenience of the taxi without paying the high prices....

Individuals that are not using public or illegal transport are using their personal car, or asking for a lift from their family and friends, which dramatically increase the traffic in the city (notice when the metro breaks).

Conclusion: The universal G.P.S system can have an option to dispatch a taxi to 2 or more clients that are willing to share a ride to the airport or another long distance destination and split the fare between them. Clients that are in a rush and don't mind paying the full price will still order a taxi the usual way.

The “transport collective” for long distances will completely eliminate the epidemic of illegal transport and clients will no longer have to put their life in danger in an unsafe car or van with an unknown driver.

And best of all, we will finally convince a huge number of people to leave their car at home and use public transport. This will be by far the best thing that ever happened to the transport and the taxi industry in decades.

WHY IS THE TAXI INDUSTRY SUFFERING?

1: Years of neglect for the needs of drivers and owners in matters that are important to them. They were simply not fairly represented, or defended, and the whole industry was simply high jacked by groups or individuals that had clear conflicts of interests.

And In the midst of the economy crises, we were made to buy newer vehicles, pay more for our plates, insurance, gas, repairs, and inspections. We saw prices go up for almost everything, but our prices stayed the same because we could not afford to raise them and lose more clients.

2: The Recession and fair, unfair, and illegal transport competition which gives users other cheaper options such as:

- Metro (one of the best in the world)
- Busses (Regular, 747, long distance ,touristic ,special events, casino)
- BIXI (subsidised and rescued for several years)
- Communauto (subsidized).
- Car to go (given universal parking space in areas with virtually no taxi stands)
- Special events rental cars (courtoisie)
- Permis restraint (some 300 permits that could have originated from the existing taxi permits)
- Car sharing services on internet and transport for dancers (legal and illegal)

- Nez Rouge

- A planned train to the airport, and a tramway.

As we can see, some of these services represent a fair competition and some don't, and unfortunately they are receiving support from the authorities to continue to survive and offer low prices in this bad economy while the taxi industry is suffering in vain with no subsidies.

We are not asking the city to remove these services, all what we are asking is the some support from the city so we can all play a fair game.

The propositions of the taxi bureau

Oblige, by regulation, the installation of a security camera on board of vehicles:

The area inside a taxi vehicle is a public space (note the smoking ban), It does not differ from a space in a restaurant or a grocery store where installing a camera is not obligatory and is subject to the will of the owner of the business.

Since the object of the camera is to protect the general public, including the driver, then owners should not be held responsible to costs relating to its installation or reinstallation, since they might not benefit from it if they are only renting, and will not be able to pass the charges to drivers. Even though most of us taxi owners/drivers including me will welcome that project, we still don't Consider it as a priority at this time, so we would not like it to be imposed on us if there are significant charges. Some points to consider are:

- * The camera will cause us to lose some of our clients at least in the beginning.

- * The camera might cause the driver to ignore usual prevention methods.

THE PUBLICITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

I simply don't see a connection between a camera that is set to protect the public and an income that is supposed to go to owners who should also choose whether to accept or refuse an advertisement and its content in their personal car. Only a fraction of the income should be given to the bureau as a commission that they

can use, along with the money that 4500 taxis pay yearly, and the revenue from fighting illegal transport with higher fines, to jump start the development fund.

When we owners and drivers know in detail what is the function of the development fund, and how it will help the industry to generate income, then we will gladly contribute to it.

If funds are to be used to place publicities on billboards and in elevators to inform people that taking a taxi is “intelligent” or for the “campagnes de sensibilisation pour informer la population sur le fleau qu’est le transport illegal” as is mentioned in the bureau’s proposition, then this will not convince us to contribute!The clients know who is legal and who is not, but their pockets matter more to them.

*There is the a lack of space in some small vehicles for publicities, the only option might be to replace the head rest with one containing a screen, but the client should have the option to switch it off because it will be literally in his or her face.

Even though I was assured by the bureau in the presentation session that they are working on other priorities in parallel with these propositions, I still feel and I am not alone in that, that we should be consulted properly in the future about any project or proposition by the bureau before it makes its way to a public consultation....Drivers and owners have yet to build the bridges of trust that was lost in the past decade.

OBLIGATION TO INSTALL ELECTRONIC PAYMENT MACHINE

Installing such a machine will have a monthly fee which many owners/drivers will not be willing to pay since some of them are using a no fee credit card phone application that has zero monthly fees and charges 2.75% by transaction.

If the new charges by this proposed machine can be similar or lower than the above percentage, then we will have no problem installing it, but then the machine has to have the capability to identify the bank account of each driver, otherwise, two machines will be needed in some cases.

THE OBLIGATION TO ACCEPT ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS

I think it should be obligatory to accept credit cards but we would like to set a minimum of 10\$ per transaction.

Even though we believe that it brings convenience to clients, it still carries some inconveniences to drivers since they can't stop in a safe place in some cases to charge the client. They also have to pay the fees and not have immediate access to their funds if needed.

We ask the commission to understand our position that if a client cannot afford to pay a minimum of 10\$ for a 6\$ or 7\$ ride using his or her credit card, then simply pay us 6\$ or 7\$ in cash.

As for debit, I strongly disagree that it becomes obligatory since it is easier for a client to withdraw cash using debit than credit, but if it did, I think it should also carry a minimum of 10\$/transaction.

THE EVALUATION OF A PAYMENT IN ADVANCE

Requiring a payment in advance is considered an insult to most clients. Some clients will avoid taxis if this system was put in place because they will feel that they will lose control over a dishonest driver that might take longer routes for example. Losses exist in any business, and we understand that fact, so instead of putting such a system in place, we can consider that a taxi driver loses an X amount of money through theft each year and deduct that amount from taxes.

THE SECURITY COURSES

Most taxi drivers are against courses. We cannot afford to lose a day of work and pay 25\$ or more to be taught something that we already know after years of experience and dealing with all kinds of clients. We have seen it all!! We are like psychologists. An informative pamphlet to our mail box can be as effective.

OBLIGATION TO ACCEPT FARES BY G.P.S AND THE 911 BUTTON

If the object is to force the independent drivers to join a private company and pay 350\$ and 400\$ a month to receive calls, then this would be greatly opposed.

However, if the body that will take care of this system will work as a non-profit organization (coop) or another association at relatively low cost to the driver and guarantees good income from regular and adapted contracts with S.T.M then we will welcome that proposition. Again, further details are needed from the bureau before we make up our minds.

Taxi companies are “service providers”it is our choice whether to use their services or not.

THE “ ANTECEDENTS JUDICIERES”

This is required specifically for drivers willing to engage in “adapted transport” and is totally justified to protect the vulnerable clients. The only issue we have is the relatively high cost of 70\$ for this document.

We know, given the computer age that we live in, that a police officer can retrieve all info about a subject from the comfort of his car in a matter of seconds....so I don't see why we have to pay for it to begin with.

THE ELECTRIFICATION OF PART OF THE TAXI FLOTTE

Not sure what is meant by “part of the taxi flotte” and the “rejeunir la flotte” ??

If it involves buying more recent cars, then we will be greatly opposed to it because we simply cannot afford another project that will put us further in debt.

Clients do not care about the car model or year of make, all what they care about is the cleanliness of the car, and the driver's service, and since all taxi vehicles are inspected mechanically twice a year, then assuring these two factors is all that it matters.

Any project to force us to buy hybrid/electric cars should involve major financial aid incentives.

TAXI STANDS BY DESIGN MONTREAL

Not sure this is money well spent, since the taxi stands are always changing, and we should not worry since the clients can clearly stumble on a taxi given that we have 1000 taxis more than the city of Toronto that can't find enough work.

THE AIRPORT DRAW

Drivers are still waiting for the result of the negotiations between the bureau and the airport administration for the airport draw.

I urge the bureau to bear responsibility and declare the draw "illegal" and prevent drivers from participating in it if it is not done in a fair way to all drivers of all agglomerations. The draw should be carried out once to cover all applicants from all agglomerations equally and the charges of 713\$ every three months and the 2\$ should either be dropped or greatly reduced.

If no action was taken, I will proceed to expose the illegal practices, corruption, and abuse of powers of the ADM administration on radio and television.....and prepare for a big demonstration that will give them the needed attention.

I left my homeland partly because I hated having a state within a state.....

OTHER FACTORS THAT CAN HELP THE INDUSTRY

- 1: Synchronising traffic lights at 50km/hour.
- 2: putting a halt to restricted permits program.
- 3: A written contract to protect both driver and owner instead of CDG
- 4: Increase taxi stands and extend existing ones to reduce cruising times.
- 5: Increase the gas credit and credits towards the purchase of a hybrid car.
- 6: Reduce the SAAQ and the BTM fees.
- 7: Allow more left turns at intersections for taxis and allow "taxi only" access to closed festival roads.

I can assure you that my views are not mine alone, they represent the views of any honest taxi driver or owner in the city.....I talk to them constantly, and I know what they really want, and every time I do, I discover that we are all in the same boat.

I would like to thank each member of the commission for their honest interest in the well-being of our industry. And I would like to thank the SPVM and the Taxi Bureau inspectors and officials for their tolerance towards us especially when we park over stand in a desperate attempt to find an empty space on a taxi stand.

As for the “not so tolerant” cops, I will leave that job to Mme. Lefebvre to explain in her memorandum.

Thank you again

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DÉSIREZ VOUS RENDRE À L'AÉROPORT MONTRÉAL-TRUDEAU OU BIEN QU'ON
AILLE VOUS CHERCHER LÀ-BAS ? VOUS POUVEZ ÊTRE TRANSPORTÉS
AILLEURS AUSSI PEU IMPORTE...**

**NOUS SOMMES LÀ POUR VOUS MÊME À LA DERNIÈRE MINUTE: MÊME SI LE
RAMASSAGE EST DANS 2 HEURES :)**

**PEU IMPORTE LE NOMBRE DE BAGAGES QUE VOUS AVEZ ET LE POIDS NOUS
VOUS AIDONS À CHARGER ET DÉCHARGER LE TOUT DANS NOTRE MINIVAN
PRIX PERSONNALISÉ TOUT DÉPENDANT DE LA DISTANCE MAIS MOINS CHER
QU'UN TAXI ET SERVICE ULTRA-RAPIDE ET PONCTUEL**

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