



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Ash Kalra

SUBJECT: TAXICAB DRIVER PERMITS

DATE: December 8, 2009

Approved

Date

12 / 8 / 09

RECOMMENDATION

1. Approve the December 4, 2009 memorandum put forth by Mayor Reed and Councilmember Liccardo putting in place a temporary moratorium on the issuance of new taxi cab permits during a downturn in the local economic climate.
2. Direct Department of Transportation staff to compile a report of the current system of allocation of taxi cab company airport permits and return to the Transportation and Environment Committee and subsequently to the full Council within 90 days. This report need not cover the criteria which allow companies to qualify for airport permits only the allocation process.

BACKGROUND

In 2005, a new system for the allocation of taxi cab company airport permits was put in place in San José. The latest iteration of that policy occurred over 2 years ago. In the over 4 years of this policy, there has not been a review of how the policy has been implemented and whether it has resulted in an efficient manner to distribute airport permits. When meeting with numerous interested parties, including representatives of taxi drivers and small cab companies, it appears they tend to feel that the current system may be improved upon. Department of Transportation staff thinks the system is working out as well as can be expected and does not see any glaring procedural omissions that need to be fixed. Even if we feel the City does have a fair and efficient system, in order to ensure it is working as expected and to allow for complete transparency to all interested parties, it is time for Council to review the existing policy. Department of Transportation staff indicates that they give routine staff reports to the Transportation and Environment Committee every 6 months. Furthermore, staff indicates that information reports are routinely sent to council, including a recent memo from Aviation Director Bill Sherry in March of 2009. The recommendations in the memo at hand suggests a report to the full Council in March of 2010, which will be approximately a year after the most recent informational memorandum to Council. Additionally, since staff indicates the policy was not fully implemented until April of 2009, this memo will allow for the full Council to receive a report in open session approximately a year after the policy has been in practice. Since staff indicates they routinely prepare these types of reports for committee and informational memos then the additional staff time to prepare a report with data on distribution of the permits for the full Council to review should not be incredibly burdensome.



The above recommendations' intent is not to review the criteria which allow companies to qualify for airport permits. The qualification process of companies for airport permits is fair. Furthermore, with a new airport in the making, we want to ensure that we are welcoming passengers who use our taxis to state of the art technology offered by navigation and an increasing number of clean air vehicles for them to choose from as they exit the airport. It is simply a good time to evaluate the data on the distribution of permits and to have staff report on the efficiency of the allocation system. After review, it may be possible that the Council will choose to maintain the current system; without first looking at the system, we cannot, in earnest, draw that conclusion. Some have said to not open this can of worms because it will lead the Council back to difficult discussions with disparate interests seeking alternative solutions. Our role as a Council should not be to avoid difficult discussions in lieu of necessary review. I am confident that we can parse through the rhetoric and differences those in the taxi community may have and come to a conclusion that continues to put San José forward and allows our new, world class airport to succeed. Our new focus on transparency demands that we choose open, honest review over the avoidance of discomfort when considering our existing policy. I am not putting this recommendation forward lightly or with an assumption as to whether the current system is working effectively or not. I hope my Council colleagues will choose not to ignore the need to review a policy that is almost 5 years in its existence.