

## **Southern Nevada Tourism Infrastructure Committee**

Presenter: Ileana Drobkin, Chairwoman of the Nevada Taxicab Authority

### **State of Nevada Taxicab Authority**

#### **History**

The State of Nevada Taxicab Authority (TA) was established by the Nevada Legislature in 1969 to regulate Clark County's Taxicab Industry.

#### **Reasons for the Creation of the TA:**

- **Mostly Unregulated Industry**
- **Unavailability of Safe Private-Car Metered Transportation**
- **Rampant Violence Amongst Drivers**
- **Rampant Violence Amongst the Public**
- **Complete Disarray**

The infamous taxicab wars in the late 60's forced the State's leadership to act. In 1965, the news media throughout the country carried headlines reading, "When arriving in Las Vegas, be prepared to be met with violence, despicable service, rude conduct, money hustling tactics, and idiotic taxi driving."

**With the formation of the TA came a complete rebirth of the private-metered car and has helped catapult Las Vegas' Taxi Industry to becoming the number one rated Taxi Industry in the World!**

When the Taxicab Authority first began operations they had 8 employees and regulated 8 taxicab companies, a total of 275 taxicabs and oversaw approximately 600 drivers. In 2015 there are 16 companies with 9-operators and approximately 3,500 cabs with more than 10,000 permitted drivers. Currently there are approximately 63 TA employees.

With Las Vegas as an international tourist destination and the leading Convention Destination the Taxicab Industry has been and remains the most crucial supporting industry. There is NO mass transit and there can be NO amount of TNC's added on our roadways that will have the efficiency or effectiveness as the Taxi Industry does in moving our visitors around the city. For example the Airport loads up to approximately 40 vehicles at a time. In 2014 the Industry provided 27,614,166 trips.

The TA's function can be divided into two parts:

- 1) The regulation and enforcement of rules and regulations governing the Taxi Industry and
- 2) The allocation of medallions (plates representing authority to operate a taxicab)

#### **TA Overview**

The TA's mission is to provide for the safety, comfort and convenience of the taxicab riding public.

The Taxicab Authority is divided into two sections, administration and compliance/enforcement.

**Under Administration is:**

- Testing
- Criminal History
- Licensing
- Permitting
- Administrative Court

**Under Compliance/Enforcement:**

- Vehicle Inspectors
- Dispatch
- Enforcement
- Driver Training

There is a five member Board who's main responsibilities are to adopt regulations for the administration and regulation of the Agency and render decisions on rates, charges and fares, applications to operate as a company, number of taxicabs able to operate and hear driver appeals.

**Industry Faces**

Before mentioning the Infrastructure obstacles facing the Taxicab Industry I'd like to mention TNC's (Transportation Network Companies), who do not have the same or even similar regulations as the Taxicab Industry, are the largest threat. There is no way to know the exact impact they will have on the Industry or what the Industry will evolve to look like.

**Infrastructure**

The greatest need for Taxi's is found within the Golden Triangle, this encompasses the Airport, Convention Center and the Strip Corridor. Downtown Las Vegas has emerged as a big consumer of taxi's with it's booming business redevelopment efforts and this has changed Downtown's transportation dynamics. Currently we are operating within an incredibly taxed infrastructure making moving hundreds of thousands of visitors around within a relatively small area beyond challenging. The only way we are currently able to provide service is from the advanced knowledge of larger events occurring however there is no mechanism for the Industry to quickly and efficiently respond to customer staging at any particular location. At any point and time there are people cueing up following a show or

smaller event and we have no way of adequately servicing them. We are looking forward to the help of technology to resolve this issue.

### **Future Outlook and Growth**

The technological revolution of the transportation industry has given birth to new ways of servicing the riding public. As the Taxi Industry begins and continues to evolve it will continue to alter the course of its' own history.

As Las Vegas moves into new stages of it's own evolution, becoming the City we all envision it will become, the transportation infrastructure will conceivably look vastly different, developing light rail and other forms of desperately needed mass transit. As Dr. Robert Lang has said on numerous occasions light rail has shown to provide an even larger need for taxis.

Looking out over the next 10-years and then 20-years and ultimately 30-years some things steadily remain as critical components.

#### **Safety**

- Licensed Drivers
- Inspected Vehicles
- Standards of Conduct
- Over Site and Accountability
- Safe Place for Drop-Offs and Pick-Ups

#### **Availability and Reliability**

- Mechanism to keep up with Growth within the Riding Public
- Tracking of Wait Times
- Central Communication Hub
- Rate Transparency for the Riding Public

#### **Infrastructure**

Ability for Taxis to move freely and easily move throughout the City

IE: Dedicated Lanes

Light Synchronization

Coordination and Compliance with Construction and Maintenance

In the Golden Triangle

Planning and Coordination of New Construction Taking into Account the Movement of the Riding Public

Out of the Box Thinking for all Transportation

Providing for Additional Staging

Providing for Additional Loading Assistance

Providing for Breaking up the Super Blocks

(Creation of Easements on the Strip)

## Summary

Our current Taxi Industry was born out of controversy and violence and it is because of the actions of past leadership the Taxi Industry has been the most important supporting Industry to our life's blood, tourism. The nature of our City is vastly different than any other city as the majority of the rides are within a small area. It's one of the few destinations where one-hundred to two hundred-thousand people converge to or exit the same destination around the same times. Please also keep in mind we do not currently have any real form of public transit so the only way for people to move around is predominately via private cars.

Our current infrastructure is challenging for the Taxi Industry. The need for taxi service continues to increase as does the level of expectations for service from the riding public. We applaud the efforts of the Transportation Steering Committee, which I am apart of, and this Committee.

Until we are ready and able to invest great sums of money for the mid-range and long-term solutions there are some short-term solutions that can help the Taxi Industry

- Add Additional Staging
- Develop an Event/Traffic Coordinator Group
- Better Coordination of Road Work/Construction and Maintenance during large Conventions
- Open all Options for Drivers and Routes

As far as in the long-term we really don't know what the Taxi Industry will look like. There are some who feel this is an antiquated Industry and will cease to exist because the TNC's (Transportation Network Companies). **There are NO amount of TNC's we can add to our streets that can move around our population as efficiently and effectively as the Taxi Industry. The Industry is currently adapting to similar technology as used by the TNC's but still within a very regulated environment. This is for the safety and well being of the riding public.**

As I understand there have been times the Taxi Industry cleared up as many as 200 people waiting in-line at a strip hotel within 20-minutes. It's by the sheer volume of people, all moving within a small crowded area, that make the Taxi Industry a necessity for our survival and ability to grow.

We know the Taxi Industry and have come to depend on it. They will not only modernize but they will continue to advance and push the technological envelope in order to discover better ways to service the riding public. Integrating the app is only the beginning...

The wholesale elimination of nearly forty years of history and what has been, for the past several years, described by several national tourist publications as “the number one taxi industry in the country,” is not prudent.

Eliminating safety, adding to congestion, removing any meaningful oversight is foolish. If and when an incident occurs it will be as a direct result of allowing the operation of a hybrid industry, without any real regulation and oversight, and it can be laid at the steps of less than thoughtful lawmakers and bureaucrats.

As regulators, as community leaders, and as citizens we have a symbiotic relationship with the Taxi Industry and if the Industry is healthy they will be able to properly service the riding public.