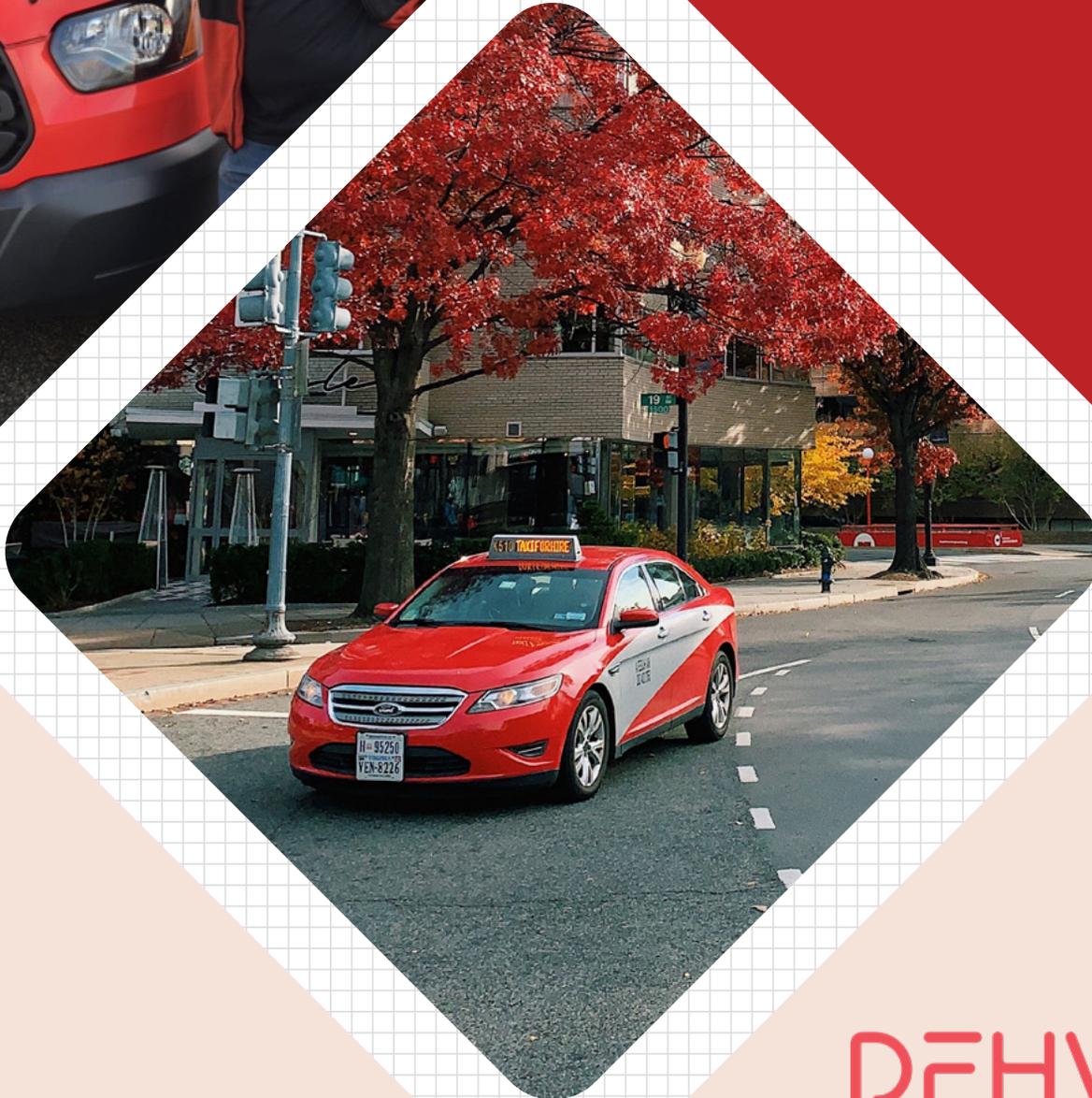




# Industry Recovery

## BLUEPRINT

DC DEPARTMENT  
OF FOR-HIRE VEHICLES



DFHV

WE ARE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DC GOVERNMENT OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR



**Copies of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles' *Industry Recovery Blueprint* are available online:**

[dfhv.dc.gov/](https://dfhv.dc.gov/)

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\*This document includes goals and aspirations for DFHV and the industry; the timelines and actions are suggestions only.

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# Letter from the Mayor



## Dear For-Hire Industry,

The past eighteen months have been a challenging time, especially for the for-hire industry. Since the start of the pandemic, you've heard me say many times: We are all in this together, and we will all get through this together. I am grateful to the residents, businesses, employees and entrepreneurs who helped get us through this by providing critical transportation services, especially to our older adults and people with disabilities. In particular, I want to give a big shout out to the many drivers and companies who mobilized to deliver meals to our seniors and to help ensure front line hospital workers could get to work during the height of the pandemic.

Of the many industries the pandemic and its economic impacts hit in Washington, DC, yours was among the hardest hit. Safe, reliable, and affordable transportation is one of the pillars of an equitable recovery, and the recovery of the for-hire industry has been at the forefront of my mind. I commend Director David Do and his team at the Department of For-Hire Vehicles (DFHV) for engaging with you during the pandemic on the needs of your industry and for your assistance in developing this visionary Industry Recovery Blueprint.

In turn, the significant investments in my Fiscal Year 2022 Fair Shot budget will help make these plans a reality and result in a stronger for-hire industry.

The Industry Recovery Blueprint includes a range of critical new investments and opportunities, just a sampling of which are the following:

- provide fee relief to help taxi and limo drivers get back on the road
- empower taxi companies to use innovative fare and payment methods
- promote more ways to connect passengers and drivers through e-hailing and digital dispatch
- expand for-hire business opportunities beyond traditional programs involving for-hire vehicles

DFHV's blueprint for recovery gives us a sense of hopefulness for the for-hire industry and our entire city to return healthier, safer, and stronger.

Sincerely,

Muriel Bowser  
MAYOR

# Letter from the Director



## Dear For-Hire Industry,

We are at a crossroads—having turned the corner on a time in history none of us will easily forget. Economic and industry recovery is happening—albeit slowly. We are coming out of a year and a half of loss—a loss of life, livelihoods and routines. We are doing this together and we will come out stronger. But a day hasn't gone by that I did not keep the fate of taxi companies and drivers and their families front of mind. Our whole staff has great empathy for the challenges you have absorbed.

I know the people who run the taxi companies, and I know many of the taxi drivers personally, as do my staff. We have seen your resilience during this difficult time. And we know for many of you that resilience will continue.

We know the road to a fuller recovery is further out. We also know that the industry will never look the way it used to. Although the pandemic caused a massive and excruciating shock to the whole taxi and for-hire system, it has forced all of us to rethink what makes the most sense as we advance. Business as usual certainly will not cut it. Economic and competitive forces had challenged our industry for half a decade before the pandemic struck. As we waited out each wave of COVID-19, this hiatus has given us the time and bandwidth to rethink, reimagine, and redesign to create a system that fits with the times and circumstances.

Thus, we are so excited about the Mayor's Fair Shot Budget and the Industry Recovery Blueprint—the level of investment will make Fiscal Year 2022 a hallmark year for the industry and the city.

DFHV has convened and talked with company owners and taxi drivers numerous times since the beginning of 2021 to help shape this Industry Recovery Blueprint. Your input has been invaluable to help craft recovery strategies that will make a real difference in 2021 and beyond for the industry.

I look forward to working with all of you to help foster a healthier and effective for-hire industry in the months and years to come.

## Best Regards,

David Do

DIRECTOR

# Introduction

**Washington, DC's for-hire industry has been hit hard the past 16 months by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting public health restrictions.**

This blow to the industry followed in the footsteps of a steep, half-decade decline in the District of taxi trips once Uber and Lyft established a formidable foothold on the for-hire-vehicle market.

The Department of For-Hire Vehicles (DFHV) has worked for the past year to look for ways to ensure the taxi industry has a genuine pathway to recovery as the public health crisis subsides, and the economy opens up in fuller force this summer. For-Hire vehicles are a key element to rebuilding our tourism and business travel too.

The Industry Recovery Blueprint results from months of deliberation with taxi companies, taxi drivers, and city leaders to determine a robust set of strategies and actions to ensure the taxi industry recovers not to business-as-usual but to a new normal. This new normal would allow companies and drivers to more effectively compete with the Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) through more streamlined fee structures and new options for providing rides and diversifying revenue streams.

In June 2021, Mayor Muriel Bowser announced a level of funding that supports the Industry Recovery Blueprint and will allow DFHV to proceed with determination in implementing this agenda over the next two years.

Overall, the Industry Recovery Blueprint lays out 16 actions across eight thematic areas that support a healthy recovery for the taxicab industry.

Recovery will not return the industry to the 14 million trips it generated in 2016 or even the 8.5 million trips generated in 2019, at least not immediately. Yet, the Industry Recovery Blueprint's strategies do provide a new platform from which the industry can grow back in more agile ways. A platform in which drivers, fewer in overall numbers, have the potential to increase their daily, weekly, and annual income.



In the sections that follow, we address in more detail:

- DFHV Agency Mission
- The State of the Industry
- Guiding Principles for Recovery (2020)
- Important DFHV Actions During COVID-19
- Outreach to the For-Hire Industry
- The Mayor's Fair Shot Budget
- The Industry Recovery Blueprint: Vision Statement, Goals, and Actions
- Longer-Term Goals for the Industry
- Conclusion

Read on!!



# DFHV Agency Mission

The mission of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles (DFHV) is to protect the public interest by regulating the vehicle-for-hire industry to allow the residents and visitors of the District of Columbia to have safe, affordable, and accessible transportation options.

The DFHV is charged with protecting the public interest through the oversight of the vehicle-for-hire industry. Our duties include regulating taxis, limousines, and private vehicle operators, more commonly known as Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) like Uber, Lyft and Via. The agency also oversees digital dispatch services (DDS), which are either taxis or TNCs, and digital taxi solution (DTS) providers, which offer digital meter and credit card services to taxi drivers, among other things. DFHV services include taxi driver and vehicle licensing, adjudication of tickets to taxis and TNCs, enforcement, consumer complaints, and transportation programs.

In Fiscal Year 2021, DFHV has three strategic objectives to improve for-hire transportation for residents, visitors, and the industry:

- 1 **Ensure passengers have safe and excellent riding experiences.**
- 2 **Expand business opportunities and maintain economic viability within the for-hire industry.**
- 3 **Create and maintain a highly efficient, transparent, and responsive District government.**

See the sidebar to learn more about DFHV's legal authority.

## DFHV MISSION



The mission of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles (DFHV) is to protect the public interest by regulating the vehicle-for-hire industry to allow the residents and visitors of the District of Columbia to have safe, affordable, and accessible transportation options.

## LEGAL AUTHORITY: D.C. OFFICIAL CODE 50-301.01, ET SEQ.



- Establish reasonable rates and conditions for providing public for-hire vehicles services.
- Establish standards for licensing public for-hire vehicle operators and vehicles
- Establish standards for public for-hire companies, associations, fleets, and independent taxicabs
- Establish standards for operator and passenger safety
- Establish civil fines and penalties for violation of DFHV's for-hire rules, including licensing, insurance, wheelchair accessible (ADA) standards, and development of TNC standards

# The State of the Industry

## The Impact of COVID-19

Washington, DC's for-hire industry has been hit hard the past 16 months by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting public health restrictions. Year-over-year, taxi trips declined precipitously from more than 25,000 trips per day, pre-pandemic, to a low point in the spring of 2020 of approximately 1,000 trips per day. By May 2021, the slow economic recovery locally and nationally continued to impact the District's industry. Although trips per day had increased significantly from the nadir, taxi drivers still provided only about 2,500 trips per day, meaning the industry recovery thus far stands at about 10% of what it was pre-pandemic. Even as the economy opens more fully, as it has during June 2021, the industry may face a permanent retraction. However, 89% of taxi operators who said in May 2021 that they are not driving also said they plan to return when more people are vaccinated, and there is more demand for trips.

## TNC Competition

The pandemic provided the most recent and most significant blow to the taxi industry, but the industry had faced major headwinds in the years preceding it.

From 2016 to 2019, as **FIGURE 1** on page 8 shows, revenues generated by for-hire rides to the public grew from \$515 million to \$749 million. By 2016, the market share for transportation network companies (TNCs, think Uber or Lyft) had already risen to almost 61%. By the end of 2019, the TNC share of the market stood just above 90% and provided more than 20 million trips in a single quarter. Again, a giant leap in just four years.

The pandemic impacted the TNC and the taxi industries enormously. In the last three quarters of 2020, the industries combined provided about 12 million trips, as shown in **FIGURE 2** on page 9. By the end of the year, taxis

## WHAT IS THE FOR-HIRE INDUSTRY?



A For-Hire vehicle is any type of transportation that the general public can hire via a street hail, a phone call or app for a specific trip and includes:

Taxis, Limos or Black Cars, and TNCs (such as Uber, Lyft and Via)

The industry refers to all the various entities that provide for-hire transportation including companies, associations, drivers, and independent owner-operators.



were providing less than 4% of the rides overall. During the 4th quarter, for example, that meant only about 176,000 taxi rides (see **FIGURE 2** on page 9) compared to more than 4.5 million trips by TNC drivers. **FIGURE 3** on page 10 shows the stark decline in average daily taxi trips due to the pandemic beginning in March 2020.

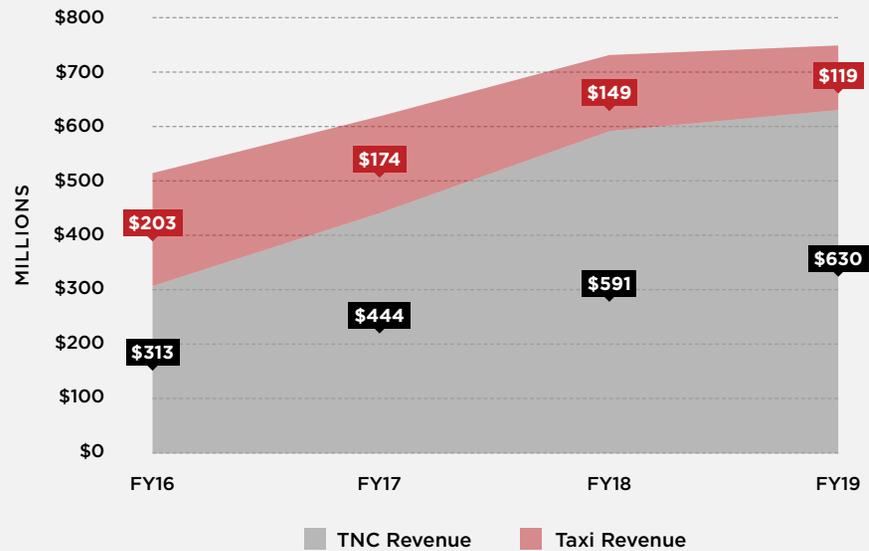
These trend lines are not unique to Washington, DC. From New York to Chicago and New Orleans to Las Vegas, nearly every urban taxicab industry could not escape the grips of the pandemic, nor had they escaped dynamic competition from TNCs in the half-decade before.

There are 1,100 limos actively registered with DFHV—compared with 4,561 taxicabs. Limo and black car companies and drivers experienced very much the same as taxis in terms of competing with TNCs for trips and the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

DFHV does not require TNC companies to register individual vehicles or drivers with the agency, so the agency does not have the same detailed data for that industry segment.

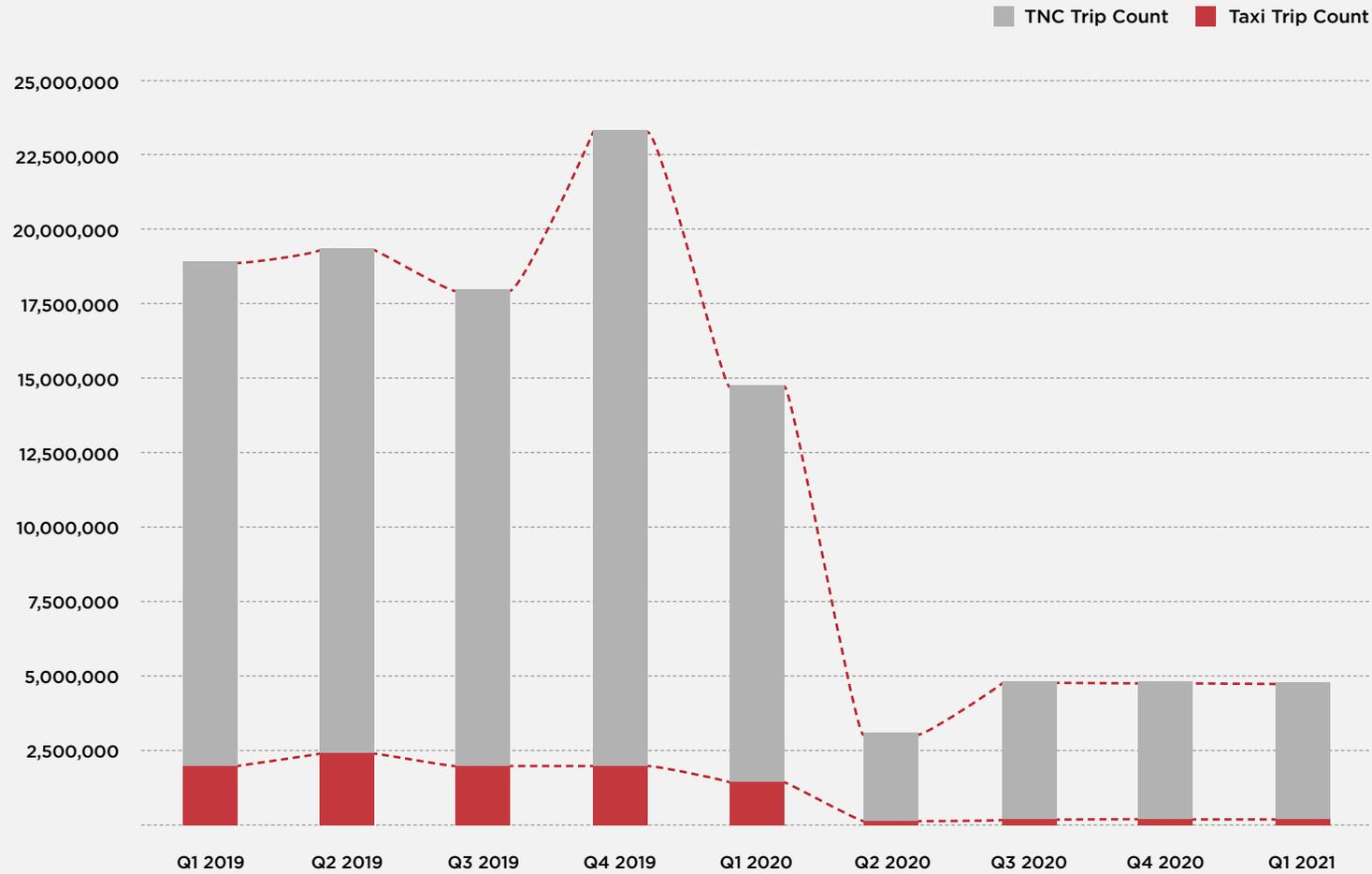
**FIGURE 1**

**TNC VS. TAXI MARKET SHARE (MILLIONS)  
FY16 TO FY19**



**FIGURE 2**

**TAXI VS. TNC TRIP COUNTS**  
2019 TO EARLY 2021 (BY QUARTER)



|                 | Q1 2019    | Q2 2019    | Q3 2019    | Q4 2019    | Q1 2020    | Q2 2020   | Q3 2020   | Q4 2020   | Q1 2021   |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| TNC Trip Count  | 17,009,753 | 16,990,495 | 15,911,508 | 21,312,420 | 13,408,422 | 2,823,518 | 4,633,229 | 4,633,616 | 4,621,926 |
| Taxi Trip Count | 2,072,343  | 2,423,369  | 1,944,720  | 1,954,188  | 1,437,811  | 152,361   | 198,082   | 173,761   | 176,254   |

## Customer Preferences

As dispatch and app transportation technology evolve, customer preferences are also evolving. Customers tend to want the following:

- A seamless experience in ordering a ride, paying for it ahead of time, and tracking the vehicle's location, using the company app.
- A quick response time.
- The less expensive choice, complemented by being the most customer friendly.

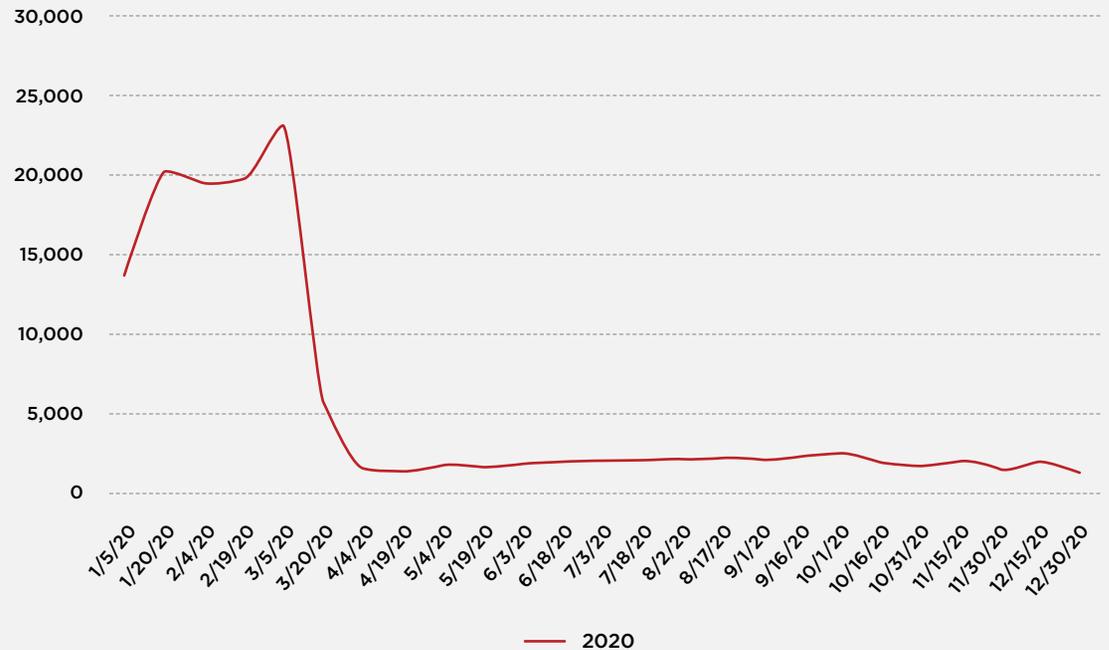
The taxi industry has recognized the need to take a hard look at the customer-friendly practices in ride-sharing companies that can be adapted to the taxi industry. This Industry Recovery Blueprint encourages taxi companies to continue to adapt and innovate in order to better compete with ride-sharing services.

Those who prefer taxi rides appreciate that surge pricing is not allowed, cabs can be street-hailed, cash is an option for payment, and each vehicle and driver has an identifying number.

Perhaps, most notably, those who have accessibility needs deeply appreciate wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs), and other riders appreciate the availability of electric cars in the taxicab fleets.

FIGURE 3

### TAXI TRIPS IN 2020 AVERAGE DAILY TRIPS



This recent history provides a critical backdrop for how the industry navigates the recovery process effectively, how taxis and TNCs compete more equally, and what must be done during the slow emergence from an unprecedented public health crisis.

**Those who have accessibility needs deeply appreciate wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs).**

# Guiding Principles for Recovery (2020)

DFHV created a set of guiding principles to help the industry during the pandemic and ensure public safety for the riding public and drivers during the public health emergency. These guiding principles informed many of the actions DFHV pursued throughout the pandemic, which are covered in the section “Important DFHV Actions During COVID-19.” In addition, the guiding principles laid the groundwork for this Industry Recovery Blueprint and the short-term actions it identifies to help the industry recover and thrive as well as shorter- and longer-term pathways drivers require.

## ① Build Public Confidence in Using For-Hire Vehicles

Both for-hire drivers and the riding public need to feel safe in for-hire vehicles during and after the public health emergency; DFHV recommended the following to accomplish this:

- **Mandating** partitions in taxis during the public health emergency; drivers could choose a partition that is either temporary or permanent that meets certain specs.
- **Ensuring** for-hire drivers have reliable and affordable access to PPE and cleaning supplies.
- **Conducting** a safety campaign (conducted from August to September 2020), featuring digital ads and door magnets that reinforced the steps taken to make taxis and ride-sharing vehicles clean and safe (e.g., partitions, cleaning protocol, passengers, and drivers must wear masks).
- **Promoting** the use of discounted and negotiated fares to drivers and the public.



## ② Addressing Taxi Workforce Issues

The pandemic and public health emergency presented drivers with two very difficult choices: (1) work even though the demand was precipitously low and possibly get exposed to COVID-19 by customers; or (2) stay home, protect themselves and any vulnerable family members but not generate income.

The federal government aided gig-workers like taxi and TNC drivers—through Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).

In June 2020, the D.C. Department of Employment Services (DOES) informed DFHV that approximately 5,100 drivers were receiving PUA, which included both ride-sharing drivers and taxi drivers. Further, DC taxi drivers were able to apply for PUA from the state in which they live. The DOES figure only includes those receiving it from the District.

In July 2020, DFHV sent a survey to taxi drivers to learn more about drivers receiving PUA and whether drivers planned to return to work. With 263 responding, DFHV discovered that:

- 82% said that they were receiving PUA; 44% from DC; 22% from Maryland, and 31% from Virginia.
- About 65% said that they would return to driving after treatment options/and or a vaccine are available. Approximately 52% said they would when tourism and hospitality business returns; and 11% said they'd return either when PUA ends or when it provides less money than can be made driving.
- About half of respondents said that they are interested in delivering food and parcels with their taxi.
- 8% of drivers said that they do not plan to return to the industry.

DFHV considered the need to balance both the availability of drivers for a healthy for-hire industry and the need to provide other opportunities to drivers to generate income. Short-term, DFHV pursued the opportunity for drivers to deliver food and parcels. Long-term, DFHV considered a potential vocational training program with the Workforce Investment Council for taxi drivers who no longer wish to drive. An example of such retraining would be a program to enable drivers to obtain a Commercial Driver License (CDL). DFHV can revisit such a program in the future should this be a desired action by the industry.

### ③ Supporting Regulatory Changes

The third and final principle was to “support the future of the for-hire industry with regulatory changes that focuses on the delivery of goods as well as passengers; make regulations flexible enough to support innovation, diversification, and universal transportation services.” This principle led to increasing the vehicle age limit from eight to 10 years and other regulatory and policy changes identified in this Industry Recovery Blueprint.

## DC'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY TEAM (DERT)



Throughout the pandemic, DFHV actively participated in the District government's Economic Recovery Team (DERT) to help shape the transportation goals necessary to get the District “back to better.” DERT is a multi-agency, multi-sector effort. The DERT is a cross-agency team led by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) that engages with non-governmental partners to support businesses, employers, workers, and housing needs. The goals of the DERT are to:

- Prepare the District to deploy federal funds effectively.
- Coordinate agency efforts to accelerate, adjust and create local programs.
- Make and implement long-term plans to restart the District's social and economic spheres, informed by the insights of other jurisdictions, economists, and practitioners.

The DERT coordinated the recovery efforts of the District's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency.

The DERT's recovery efforts influenced DFHV's Industry Recovery Blueprint, while DFHV's guiding principles for industry recovery informed DERT's other transportation strategies.

# Important DFHV Actions During COVID-19

DFHV has stayed active and attuned to rapidly changing (and, at times, deteriorating) conditions during the pandemic. For example, during the public health emergency, the agency:

- **Automatically extended** the Face IDs, renewals, registrations, and delayed fees.
- **Extended the vehicle age limit** permanently from eight to 10 years.
- **Clarified that taxi vehicles could deliver food and packages** to provide more income-producing opportunities for drivers and companies.
- Collaborated with the D.C. Department of Aging and Community Living to **enable taxi drivers to provide senior meal delivery**. The for-hire industry delivered food to 2,551 older adults.
- **Delivered 800 boxes of personal protection equipment** to dentists' offices in the District.
- Issued an emergency regulation to **require taxis to install a safety partition** between the front and rear seats to minimize the spread of COVID-19 for the duration of the public health emergency.
- **Distributed 1,000 free safety barriers** to taxi drivers to help prevent the spread of disease between the front and back seats. Decals were distributed to the drivers to alert the public about the added protections.
- **Conducted a digital "Ride Safe Campaign"** to raise awareness with the riding public about the safety measures being taken in for-hire vehicles, such as cleaning protocols, safety partitions, and reminding the public about the need to wear masks. The "Ride Safe" campaign started in August 2020 and by September 30, 2020 had reached an audience of more than 528,000 through Facebook and Twitter ads. The campaign



also included a video played on backseat monitors in taxis and on the Chinatown billboard.

- **While the Mayor requires that masks be worn by the driver and passenger, private companies can impose stricter rules.** For-Hire companies are encouraged to consider stricter rules and advertise additional safety measures, such as requiring drivers and passengers to be vaccinated.

- **Provided more than 1,300 trips to hospital workers** on late shifts by repurposing the microtransit, DC Neighborhood Connect program throughout the pandemic.

During that time, Uber donated 20,000 in free rides for hospital workers to and from home.

- **Provided 24/7 service for Transport DC**, which gave critical support for residents with disabilities and more than 130,000 rides since the start of the public health emergency. The service added grocery stores as an eligible destination during the restricted part of the month, raised the reimbursement rate for the providers by \$5, and raised wheelchair trip incentives for drivers from \$5 to \$10.
- **Shared information** with drivers on how to protect themselves and passengers, hosted a **Taxi Tele-Townhall** attended by more

than 250 operators and added a **driver resource page** to our website with information on unemployment benefits and other resources available to help them during the pandemic.

- **Launched the Operator Wellness Project**, where DFHV’s Office of Consumer Complaints engaged in daily calls to taxi operators to inquire about their wellbeing and provide information on available resources. Since August 2020, DFHV has reached more than 2,500 operators.

- **Added online licensing services** for taxicab registration (One-Stop) and taxi driver licensing (Face ID) so drivers can engage our services at their own convenience and without having to come into the office.

DFHV also augmented the **Taxi-to-Rail program** during the pandemic to help residents with essential trips and give the industry more business. The program was expanded from Ward 7 and 8 to citywide, providing residents with taxi rides for any essential trip, such as to grocery stores, pharmacies, and medical providers. It also provided essential workers a way to get to and from work. By October 2020, 40% of the Taxi-to-Rail rides were for essential employment, 31% were for grocery store visits, and 19% were for medical and pharmacy visits.



Finally, DFHV promoted the **Mayor’s Microgrant program**, which resulted in more than 440 taxi drivers receiving \$1,000 awards and five companies receiving \$27,000 in much-needed support.

**A digital “Ride Safe Campaign” raises awareness with the riding public about the safety measures being taken in for-hire vehicles.**

# Outreach to the For-Hire Industry

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, DFHV has wrestled with what the economic landscape would look like for the for-hire industry once the pandemic receded. When the pandemic started, DFHV reached out to taxi companies and drivers to check how things were going and offer resources, such as the microgrant program, loan programs like the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), and the automatic extension of licenses and registrations. A tele-town hall was held on May 15, 2020, in which more than 250 drivers attended. These sessions helped inform DFHV's guiding principles for industry recovery and the actions that ultimately are part of this Industry Recovery Blueprint.

From January to July 2021, the agency gathered key stakeholders to share these ideas for recovery that could make a significant difference in helping the industry recover while also looking to understand the concerns, challenges thoroughly, and hopes stakeholders had when a recovery genuinely began.

In January 2021, DFHV held an industry roundtable with about a dozen stakeholders representing the larger taxicab companies in the District. Company representatives discussed their concerns about TNC competitors, the regulations they feel impede their viability, the challenge of providing WAV rides during the public health crisis, and the need for the taxi industry to shift significantly based on the changed economic conditions. For the latter, companies emphasized the need for the entire taxi industry to move entirely to dispatch to compete and survive.

In March, DFHV convened a summit for nearly 200 taxi drivers, most of whom were veteran drivers and not currently driving because of the pandemic. Drivers considered five recovery options presented by DFHV staff developed based on industry input. Drivers also offered additional ideas beyond the five options presented, focusing mainly on regulatory relief and various types of citywide promotion once the recovery begins.

## LEARN WAYS TO EXPAND YOUR BUSINESS! DC Taxi Drivers Summit

Saturday, May 2, 2020 | 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Kellogg Conference Hotel at Gallaudet University

800 Florida Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20002



**When the pandemic started, DFHV reached out to taxi companies and drivers to check how things were going and offer resources, such as the microgrant program, loan programs like PPP, and the automatic extension of licenses and registrations.**

In April, the For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council (FHVAC) chair Linwood Jolly reconvened company owners virtually with DFHV to share key takeaways from the drivers' summit and discuss the most current issues on the table for companies at the beginning of the spring. Company representatives discussed the pressing need for digital dispatch to become the new norm, the need for a single, unified app for taxis (which the industry is currently developing), the need for



regulatory reform in this new post-COVID environment, and the importance of responding to evolving customer expectations.

DFHV used the industry feedback from the March and April convenings to refine eight recovery options that had emerged from the first four months of deliberation.

The For-Hire Vehicle Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) engaged several times in the deliberations. The AAC advises DFHV on accessibility for people with disabilities in for-hire vehicles and comprises disability advocates, representatives from taxi companies and TNCs, and District government agencies. The DFHV presented an outline of the Industry Recovery Blueprint to the AAC at its May 11, 2021, meeting. AAC members stressed that the availability and wait times for wheelchair-accessible taxis have been a challenge during the pandemic and asked that the Industry Recovery Blueprint address these issues.

DFHV also involved the For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council (FHVAC) in several outreach events on industry recovery in 2020 and 2021, and DFHV staff presented the major components of the Industry Recovery Blueprint at the FHVAC's June 22, 2021 meeting.

---

**“Listen to the drivers. You cannot run a viable business without listening to the people that do the work.”**

On May 18, 2021, DFHV held a virtual information session to get feedback from the industry on an updated list of potential recovery actions and share the March summit's takeaways. More than 100 taxi drivers attended.

Finally, in early June and July 2021, DFHV convened a focus group of taxi drivers and a forum for company owners and associations to vet the final proposed Industry Recovery Blueprint.

At the briefing with drivers on June 30, 2021, at which about a half-dozen participated, drivers raised concerns about fare jumpers and the oversaturation of cabs in the District.

When discussing the proposed long-term goals, drivers expressed skepticism about driverless cars and the need for DFHV to focus on getting drivers business in the short-term rather than too much focus on long-term goals because the pandemic has hit drivers so hard.

On July 8, more than six representatives from taxicab companies and associations participated in an in-depth discussion about the recovery actions in the Industry Recovery Blueprint. Taxi companies and associations told DFHV that they are most challenged with getting drivers back right now and getting WAV drivers is a real problem. Every owner spoke of wheelchair-accessible taxis sitting on their lots that they are having trouble getting drivers to rent. The taxi company representatives also expressed concerns that DFHV grants may go to TNCs rather than taxi companies after reiterating how important the grants are to the economic viability of the taxi companies. Participants also recommend that DFHV require WAVs to be on dispatch much sooner (within the next one to two years) than later (within five years) at no cost to the driver.

The result of all these discussions is the set of Recovery Actions you will find in the next section.

The top-level takeaways from the entire outreach and engagement process can best be summarized as the need:

- For companies and drivers to have enough options to make their businesses work for them (flexibility and diversification).
- To keep driver costs reasonably low.
- For less regulation—to encourage rather than mandate. “To be as lenient and responsive to our customers without undue impact on our bottom line.”
- To move towards digital dispatch (that complements street-hailing), which is the future of the industry.
- To be responsive to customer’s expectations in for-hire service.

This feedback articulates well the trifecta that DFHV looks to enact with this Industry Recovery Blueprint—it must include agency actions, policy changes, and regulatory changes that benefit the drivers, the companies, and the customers.



**This Industry Recovery Blueprint must include agency actions, policy changes, and regulatory changes that benefit the drivers, the companies, and the customers.**

# The Mayor's Fair Shot Budget

On May 27, 2021, Mayor Bowser announced a transformative \$23.3 million FY2022 budget allocation for DFHV to support an ambitious taxi industry recovery from the pandemic through a series of innovations and improvements that better serve the riding public's needs.

The Mayor's FY2022 Fair Shot Budget prevails as one of the most significant public investments the DFHV has ever seen, allowing flexibility for drivers and companies while providing innovative and accessible transportation options for District residents. (See box at right for details on Mayor Bowser's budget priorities for the industry.)

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**The Mayor's FY2022 Fair Shot Budget allows flexibility for drivers and companies while providing innovative and accessible transportation options for District residents.**

## MAYOR BOWSER'S FY2022 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS FOR DFHV



- **Provide fee relief** to help drivers get back on the road.
- **Create a new initiative** to provide transportation to support services for residents at-risk of, or impacted by, gun violence in partnership with Building Blocks DC.
- **Restart the successful Microtransit program**, DC Neighborhood Connect, in Wards 1, 4, 5, and 8, adding service in the Union Market, Ivy City, and Fort Lincoln area.
- **Begin an innovative new transportation service** for schools in Wards 7 and 8 that are part of the "Safe Passage" program in partnership with the Deputy Mayor for Education.

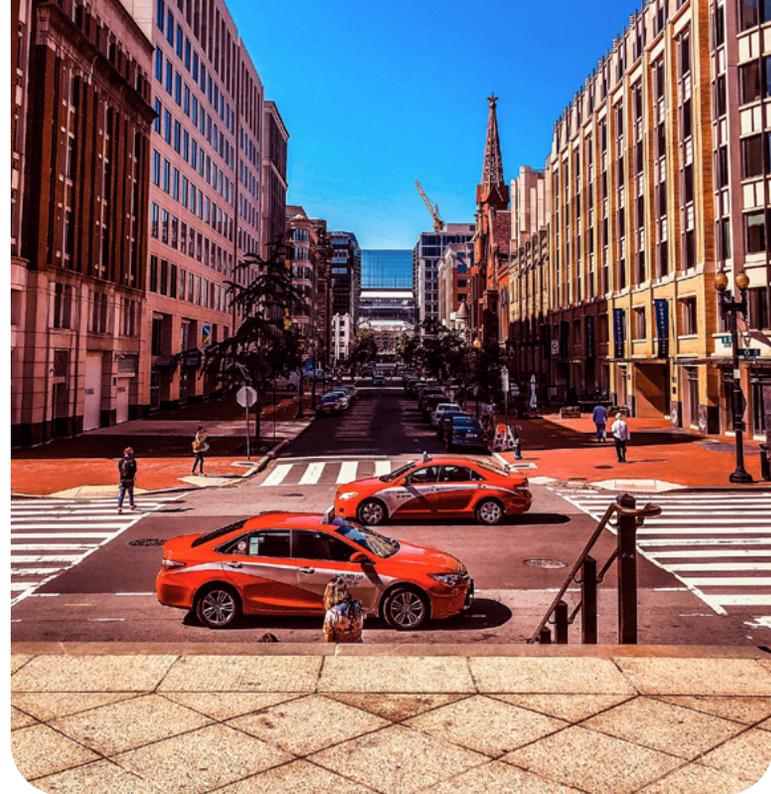


# The Industry Recovery Blueprint: Vision Statement, Goals and Actions

DFHV organized the Industry Recovery Blueprint around a vision: five goals for long-term industry recovery, short-term actions (next 12 months), medium-term actions (one to two years), and three long-term goals (two to five years). Together, they chart a viable path for the for-hire industry for the years to come. Given the uncertainty of the overall economic recovery and COVID-19 variants continuing to plague other parts of the country and the world, DFHV will vigilantly assess actions that may need to be revised and refined over the next year or so.

## Vision Statement

DFHV's vision statement for the Industry Recovery Blueprint (see adjacent box) answers the question: "What are we trying to accomplish?" The goals set guideposts for where we want to head in the long term, and the actions describe how we intend to get there.



## INDUSTRY RECOVERY BLUEPRINT VISION STATEMENT



DFHV will support the District's taxi industry in building back better with policies and regulations that promote the industry in leveraging dispatch and other innovations to meet the needs of the riding public; and moving both people and goods in a safe, accessible, and equitable manner as part of a world-class transportation ecosystem.

## OVERALL GOALS FOR THE INDUSTRY RECOVERY BLUEPRINT

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DFHV looks to support the for-hire industry, District residents, and visitors to the city with a robust and effective recovery framework with the following goals:



### 1 Expanding economic opportunities, rebuilding the tourism sector and fostering innovation.

Transportation systems should be designed to continually encourage innovations that further broader social and economic goals and improve the quality of life for all people who live and travel through the District. The For-Hire industry plays a key role in rebuilding the District's tourism sector.



### 2 Demonstrating openness and flexibility to new technology.

The District should draw on the innovative technology to test new technology and create new applications.



### 3 Improving transportation equity and accessibility.

Special attention should be paid to make the for-hire industry accessible and equitable to all user groups, helping to remove barriers to work, health, and recreation for Washingtonians across all eight wards.



### 4 Reducing harmful emissions to address climate change.

Traffic congestion wastes time and energy, negatively affecting the economy. It also increases greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to climate change and air quality degradation.



### 5 Leveling the playing field among the various for-hire vehicle sectors (taxis, limos, and TNCs).

DFHV actions, policies, and regulations will encourage innovation and focus on ensuring a safe and accessible ride responsive to customers' expectations regardless of mode (taxis, limos, and TNCs).

## Blueprint Actions: Short-Term

🔔 6-12 MONTHS

DFHV will carry out its recovery vision and goals in three overlapping phases. Seven actions comprise the most immediate phase, focusing on the industry’s most urgent and critical needs. These will all be implemented within the next 12 months, directly supporting the for-hire industry in recovering from the pandemic through innovation that meets the riding public’s needs. These actions will also help rebuild the tourism sector in the District.

An eighth action, simplifying Title 31 regulations, will begin during this initial time frame but will not be fully accomplished until the next 12 to 24 months.

The final, longer-term phase consists of three overarching strategies that frame the industry’s future over the next two to five years: making fleets greener, planning for automated vehicles, and a continued and expanded focus on accessibility and equity.

### ① Providing Industry Fee Relief to Get Drivers Back on the Road

Mayor Bowser has provided support to drivers and taxi companies directly around fee relief that helps get many more drivers back on the road.

Drivers continue to experience economic hardships due to the pandemic, and the Mayor has provided economic relief that reduces taxi and limo driver’s costs to get back on the road. Trips are gradually increasing, and drivers are in short supply. If the budget is approved, DFHV and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DC DMV) will be applying fee waivers to the following:

- For Hire Licenses (Renewal Licenses)
  - DC DMV-issued Driver Records
  - MPD Police Clearances
- One-Stop Vehicle Registrations
  - Renewal Registration
  - Inspection
- Non-District Limousine Renewal Permits
- Operating Authority (Renewals)

Digital Taxicab Solution (DTS) fees for drivers will be subsidized for six months.

These fee waivers are covered by an investment from the Mayor’s budget of \$4.4 million. This subsidy will help both drivers and the DTS companies.<sup>1</sup> Now that the economy is fully open, DFHV hopes that the taxi industry can recover more quickly to pre-pandemic trip levels and support rebuilding the tourism sector.

### ② Launching New Opportunities and Programs for the Industry

The Mayor has asked DFHV to restart the successful Microtransit program, DC Neighborhood Connect, in Wards 1, 4, 5, and 8 and add additional service in the Union Market, Ivy City, and Fort Lincoln areas. Neighborhood Connect is a low-cost shared ride shuttle service for anyone needing to travel within a zone. This investment expands the program that initially served a single zone, including parts of Wards 1, 4, and 5; service in this zone has resumed. DFHV has also restarted service in a second zone, east of the Anacostia River, in Ward 8. A DC taxi company and taxi

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1. In 2017, DTS replaced the analog dashboard-mounted meters with digital taximeter apps. “DTS companies” are the providers of DTS, which includes the digital meter, the credit card processing system, and the dome light. Each year drivers can change DTS providers during “open season.” Currently, all six DTS providers are taxicab companies: Capitol Cab/Transco, DC VIP Cab, Democracy Cab, Grand Cab Company, UVC and Yellow Cab.

drivers provide the service, and Via provides the technology and the app. The DC Neighborhood Connect service expands the number of residents with access to a lower-cost form of travel in parts of the District. It is available 14 to 18 hours per day, depending on the day of the week. Go to [dcneighborhoodconnect.com/](https://dcneighborhoodconnect.com/).

Mayor Bowser has also created a new initiative that DFHV will implement to support transportation for gun violence prevention in partnership with Building Blocks DC. Residents at-risk of gun violence or impacted by gun violence will get direct transportation to support services, trauma treatment, or for employment-related purposes. This \$150,000 investment builds upon the Mayor's launch in February 2020 of the Gun Violence Prevention Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which deploys a public health approach to gun violence prevention. In 2020, District officials found that 2% of the District's blocks were the scenes of 41% of all gun-related crimes. This program started in FY2021.

## BUILDING BLOCKS DC

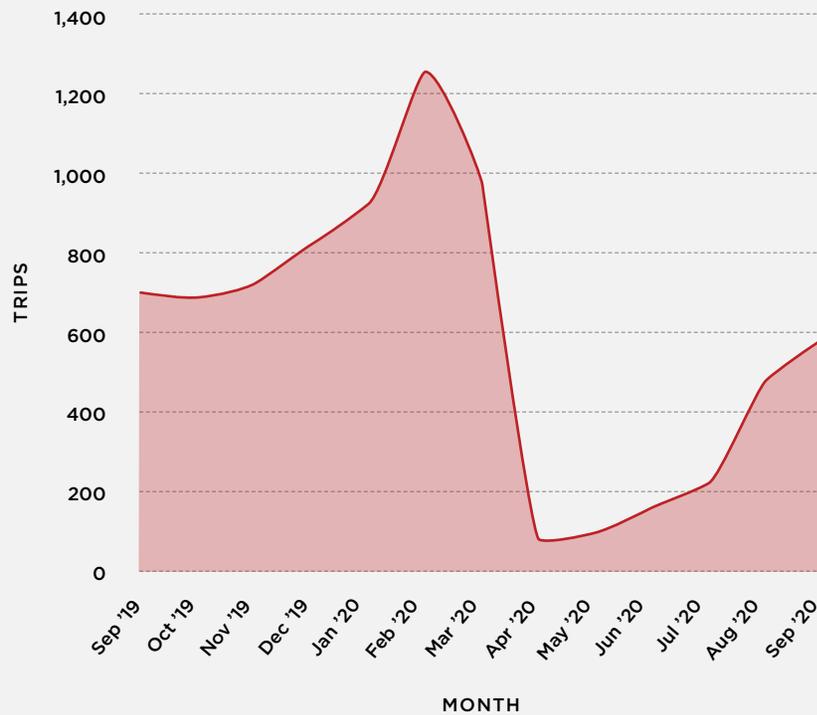


Building Blocks DC, and its Gun Violence Prevention Emergency Operations Center, is the first-of-its-kind in the country to address gun violence using a public health approach. Through Building Blocks DC, the Bowser Administration will first serve residents by focusing on the small number of individuals responsible for a significant percent of gun violence in the District. DFHV will be supporting the Building Blocks program with a transportation program to give rides to residents at-risk of gun violence or those impacted by it.



FIGURE 4

**E-HAIL TAXI TRIPS**  
SEPT 2019–SEPT 2020



**③ Promoting More Ways to Connect Drivers and Passengers**

If it was not entirely clear before the pandemic, it is now: for taxi drivers and companies to remain competitive, the entire industry needs to be on dispatch. Although DFHV will not require all drivers to subscribe to dispatch, the department will strongly encourage and even incentivize it where that makes sense. The more ways that customers have to order a taxi—whether by phone or by app—the more likely it is that the taxi business will increase. Drivers will benefit from being on dispatch by obtaining more trips and increasing their income each day. The pandemic made it crystal clear that dispatch is the future of the taxi industry. Drivers who were on dispatch during the pandemic fared much better than those who relied on street hails.

DFHV will conduct intensive outreach to drivers during the next year to promote the benefits of being on dispatch. At the same time, the agency will support the taxicab companies in a District-wide public awareness campaign about the availability, ease of use, and advantages of e-hailing when they need a taxi ride.

During the coming year, DFHV will also explore what incentives, such as reducing DFHV fees, would persuade far more drivers to sign up for dispatch. (The 25 cent surcharge will not change.) As you



## UPFRONT PRICING, PREPAYMENT AND DISCOUNTING FARES

### UPFRONT PRICING

- Customers would be offered a competitive fare if they prepay through an app or over the phone
- DTS companies can offer
- Allows for contactless payment which customers often prefer

### DISCOUNTING TAXI FARES CITYWIDE

- DTS companies can set fare discounts as a way to increase business (e.g., \$1 to \$2 off fare)
- Results from study: When taxi business is 30% back, driver's income would increase due to higher number of trips.

can see in **FIGURE 4**, in the final six or so months before the start of the public health emergency, the e-hailing of cabs was on a significant upswing.

During the pandemic, the DTS companies are collaborating to create an industry-wide taxi e-hailing app. This new app will allow customers to request any available taxi in the District. It will simplify, enormously, the process for customers, in ordering the nearest cab to them, regardless of the taxi company. **FIGURE 4** also shows the taxis e-hails regaining popularity after the rides hit bottom early in the pandemic.

### ④ Introducing Fare and Payment Innovations

In the past half-decade, it has become self-evident that when securing for-hire rides, customers prefer “contactless” payment, knowing the cost of their trip ahead of time, paying for it before entering the vehicle, and not having to worry about any money exchange as they exit.

DFHV is introducing fare and payment innovations to its regulations that will now allow upfront pricing and prepayment for dispatch trips (through the phone or an app) by DTS companies and for any taxi driver taking a dispatch trip. Customers who order a taxi trip by dispatch (through an app or over the phone) with a DTS company can be offered a competitive taxi fare if they pre-pay. These innovations will reduce fare anxiety for the passenger and reduce “fare jumpers” (which have increased during the pandemic).

At the same time, DFHV will make it easier for taxicab companies to provide discounts citywide for any taxi trip, whether dispatched or street hailed. Any DTS taxi company offering a discount (such as \$1 or \$2 off in a given period) must publish that rate first. A recent study showed that discounted rates for cab rides lead to an increased demand for trips, which means additional trips for drivers and companies. DFHV may not enact this immediately, as that same study indicated that providing discounts would be the most effective in increasing driver income when industry recovery reaches 30%. As of June 2021, the industry was 13.5% recovered—meaning that taxi trips were down 86.5% in June 2021 compared to June 2019.

DFHV likes to refer to these innovations as a “trifecta!” The trifecta means: It helps customers with an easier payment process and discounted fares. It helps drivers to obtain more trips and income. And it helps companies by increasing their overall revenues.

## ⑤ Providing Drivers Opportunities to Diversify How They Generate Income

For several years, the number of taxi drivers in the District has continued to decrease. Because the TNC side of the industry has captured increasingly large market shares in recent years, individual cab drivers have found it increasingly difficult to stay in business. The pandemic worsened these trends. Companies and drivers learned from the pandemic that they need to be able to diversify how they generate income. This section addresses how DFHV will try to provide drivers more opportunities than just traditional taxi fare to increase their income, potentially, when business is slow.

DFHV will work toward allowing taxi drivers to provide TNC trips in their taxi—including TNCs like Uber, Lyft, and Via. Taxi drivers would sign up with Uber and Lyft as an Uber or Lyft operator, provide rides through the Uber or Lyft app, and receive the same Uber or Lyft fare as TNC drivers receive. Taxi drivers who rent their vehicles would need to get permission from their rental company to do this.

DFHV will also make permanent in the regulations the ability for taxi drivers to deliver parcels and food to residences and businesses in the District. Early during the public health emergency, DFHV issued Administrative Issuance AI-2020-02, which allowed taxis to deliver food and parcels. The issuance responded to an increased need for delivery of food during the pandemic. The new rule also supported taxi drivers' ability to expand their income and companies' capacity to increase their revenue. DFHV views this rule as a way not only to help drivers diversify how they make money but also address the ongoing demand for delivery services.

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**Companies and drivers learned from the pandemic that they need to be able to diversify how they generate income.**



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR DRIVERS TO DIVERSIFY HOW THEY GENERATE INCOME

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### UBER, LYFT AND VIA

- DFHV would allow taxis to take regular/mainline Uber and Lyft trips in their cab.
- Drivers would sign up to Uber and Lyft as an operator. (Drivers who rent their taxi may not be allowed to do this—that would be up to the taxi company.)
- Trips would occur as an Uber or Lyft trip (through the app, same Uber/Lyft fare, same driver pay).

### DELIVERY

- Taxi drivers would be allowed to permanently to deliver parcels and food to residences and businesses in the District.

## ⑥ Ensure Accessibility and Equity for Customers

The pandemic has made clear that issues of accessibility and equity in the District and every agency are essential. DFHV has amplified its focus on both during the pandemic and is committed to ensuring accessibility and equity for all for-hire riders wherever they are in the city and wherever they may be traveling.

### ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Transport DC is an alternative transportation service for MetroAccess customers. Transport DC provides taxicab rides to and from any location in the District—without location restrictions—from the 1st of the month through the 15th. For the remainder of the month, transportation is restricted to employment and medical treatment locations only.

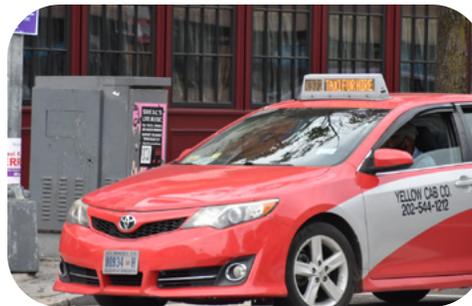
DFHV is committed to sustaining this program, making changes as necessary, especially by offering users more choices in the future.

At the beginning of FY2022, on October 1, 2021, DFHV will introduce changes into the Transport DC program: users will be given 10 one-way trips a month, and the trip restrictions will be lifted.

The 10 trip-cap will not apply to dialysis trips. The fare will be raised from \$5 to \$7 a trip, which is closer to the MetroAccess fare. The \$10 incentive for WAV drivers to provide service to passengers in wheelchairs will continue. DFHV will conduct outreach to Transport DC customers on these changes to give them time to plan out their transportation needs.

The District has a wide range of accessible transportation choices for people with disabilities, including MetroAccess and its Abilities-Ride program, public transportation, Senior Med Express, and Medicaid transportation.

DFHV will continue to monitor and incentivize wheelchair-accessible taxi availability for people who need accessible rides. It will also seek funding to help incentivize more WAVs and continue to look for non-monetary incentives for drivers to participate.



Taxi companies also report having difficulty in finding WAV drivers. Requiring WAVs to be on dispatch will make these taxis more available to both Transport DC customers and for private-pay trips by customers who use mobility devices.

### RACIAL EQUITY

DFHV is wholly aligned with the Racial Equity Achieves Results Act of 2020 (signed by Mayor Bowser). DFHV leaders are participating in the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure’s racial equity council to develop a practical roadmap for addressing equity within and across all agencies under the Deputy Mayor’s purview. The agency is also working diligently to increase its own understanding of racial equity, its applicability to its internal departments, and to find effective ways to align with the Act. DFHV is ensuring its leadership team, and all employees receive racial equity training.

Finally, the agency will work closely with the entire for-hire industry to serve all District residents, regardless of race or where they live, especially for residents in Wards east of the Anacostia River. Historically, Black residents and people of color have experienced the most discrimination by the for-hire industry.

## Blueprint Actions: Medium-Term

🔔 TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 12-24 MONTHS

### ⑦ Require all Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) To Be on Dispatch

As part of the previous action on ensuring accessibility for customers with disabilities, DFHV will require that WAVs be on dispatch so that more WAVs are available to those who need them in one to two years. During the pandemic, DFHV heard from customers in wheelchairs that wait times for WAVs have been longer than they were pre-pandemic. In some cases, no WAVs were available at all for passengers with disabilities.

### ⑧ Identifying Additional Ways to Simplify Title 31 Regulations

DFHV will spend the next six to 12 months identifying ways to simplify Title 31 and lessen the regulatory burden on taxi drivers and taxicab companies. DFHV has made necessary, discrete changes to Title 31 in the last couple of years, some temporary, others permanent. Still, this renewed effort will involve an additional review of the regulatory and statutory framework to determine which sections will continue to serve the industry well, which items need to be tweaked, and which need to be rewritten entirely and reconceived.

Among the issues we will examine are:

- Reducing licensing requirements to get a permit to drive a taxi or renew a license, such as drivers' dress code requirements and getting a physical exam from a physician
- Reducing vehicle requirements
- Simplifying the taxi company and association structure and definitions
- Simplifying/lessening regulations on DTS and DDS taxi companies

Because approval on changes to Title 31 is likely to take a while, DFHV projects that after DFHV completes its internal review, the overall process required for the District government to approve the changes will last longer than the initial 12 months of this plan. Thus, this action is considered to be medium-term.



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**DFHV will require that wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV) be on dispatch so that more WAVs are available to those who need them.**

# Longer-Term Goals for the Industry

## Three Long-Term Goals

 MORE THAN TWO YEARS

As discussed at the beginning of this section, the overall goals for the Industry Recovery Blueprint are:



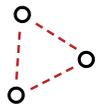
**1** Expanding economic opportunities, rebuilding the tourism sector and fostering innovation;



**4** Reducing harmful emissions to address climate change; and



**2** Demonstrating openness/flexibility to new technology:

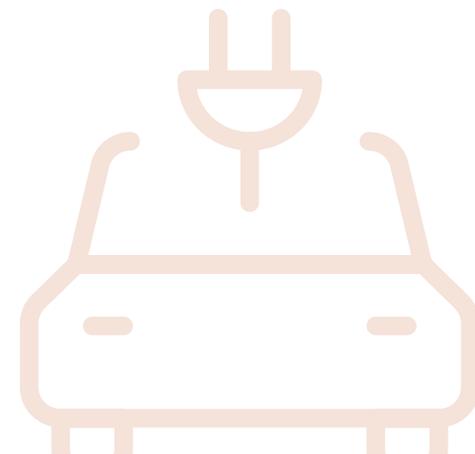


**5** Leveling the playing field among the various for-hire vehicle sectors.



**3** Improving transportation equity and accessibility;

These inform the overall recovery vision. Within those overall goals, the Industry Recovery Blueprint has three distinct, longer-term goals for the industry that it will pursue over the next two to five years.



### ① Making Taxi Fleets Greener

DC’s Clean Energy Omnibus Amendment Act of 2018 (the CEDC Act) represents one of the country’s most aggressive and impactful clean energy actions to date and establishes the District of Columbia as a global leader in the fight against climate change.

The Act’s Transportation Electrification Program mandates that 100% of public buses, public fleets, private fleets of more than 50 vehicles, and taxis and limousines are zero emission by 2045 (and 50% zero-emissions by 2030). It includes a provision to incentivize the development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including the authorization of the Public Service Commission to consider the electric company’s application to build infrastructure that promotes the deployment of electric vehicles.

To move the industry towards meeting this mandate, DFHV will require that by January 2024, all new taxi vehicles entering the market must be Plug-in Hybrid or Electric.

### ② Planning for Automated Vehicles for Future For-Hire Fleets

In a few years, DFHV hopes to be granted authority to regulate autonomous for-hire vehicles. The District government has already enacted a

law that enables the eventual testing of automated vehicles (AV) or driverless cars.

DFHV is on the District government’s AV working group, which will make recommendations about the rules of the AV testing program.

DFHV has started the early planning stages for AV for-hire vehicles exploring:

- What does it mean for the for-hire industry?
- What is the appropriate level of regulations for AVs to protect the riding public?
- How can accessibility and equity in the use of AVs be ensured?

### ③ Continuing to Ensure Equity and Accessibility for Customers

Ultimately, DFHV must ensure the for-hire industry serves everyone with quality service, regardless of where they live or their race, ethnicity, and disability status.

DFHV will continue to pay special attention to make the for-hire industry accessible and equitable to all user groups, helping to remove barriers to work, health, and recreation for Washingtonians across all eight wards. Specifically, the agency will continue to require a certain

percentage of taxi fleets to be wheelchair-accessible and continue to examine incentives for WAVs.

Over the next few years, DFHV will continue to engage with the District’s Chief Equity Officer, for-hire industry stakeholders, and the community to discuss historical discrimination of Black residents and people of color by the for-hire industry. Based on these discussions, DFHV is committed to developing recommendations that ensure the robust availability of for-hire rides in all eight wards and provide needed programs that positively impact the lives of Ward 7 and 8 residents such as DC Neighborhood Connect and DC School Connect.

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**DFHV will continue to engage with the District’s Chief Equity Officer, for-hire industry stakeholders, and the community to discuss historical discrimination of Black residents and people of color by the for-hire industry.**

FIGURE 5

## SUMMARY OF INDUSTRY RECOVERY BLUEPRINT ACTIONS

SHORT, MEDIUM, AND LONG TERM



### Short-Term Actions

🕒 6-12 MONTHS

**Provide** operator fee relief to get drivers back on the road

**Launch** new opportunities and programs for the industry

**Promote** more ways to connect drivers and passengers



### Medium-Term Actions

🕒 12-24 MONTHS

**Require** all wheelchair-accessible vehicles to be on dispatch

**Identify** additional ways to simplify Title 31



### Long-Term Actions

🕒 MORE THAN 2 YEARS

**Make** fleets greener

**Plan** for automated vehicles for future for-hire fleets

**Continue** to ensure accessibility and equity for customers

# Conclusion

After enduring one of the longest public health emergencies in U.S. history, the road to a robust recovery for the for-hire industry will be lengthy. The recovery will put the industry on a new path, separate and distinct from the course it followed throughout the 2010s and into the first part of 2020.

DFHV's Industry Recovery Blueprint provides an immediate injection of innovation and reform to support the District's taxi industry in building back in new, different, and hopefully robust ways. This Industry Recovery Blueprint aggressively seeks to implement actions that better meet the needs and aspirations of drivers and companies, aligned with the needs and expectations of the riding public.

Specifically, the Industry Recovery Blueprint:

- **Promotes more ways** to connect passengers and drivers using e-hailing and digital dispatch.
- **Allows drivers to diversify** their income in two ways—by providing trips on different TNC platforms (e.g., Uber, Lyft and Via) and permitting them to continue delivering parcels and food.
- **Gives passengers an option** to pre-pay a lower taxi fare for trips dispatched from an app or by phone and, in general, compete vigorously in the e-hail market.
- **Encourages taxi companies** to offer discounted fares hailed on the street, ordered by phone or by app.
- **Commits to examining** additional regulatory relief for drivers and companies.

DFHV remains committed to the long-term recovery and health of the taxi industry and the health of the overall for-hire transportation ecosystem for District residents and visitors. Although there will continue to be economic and other social forces that present unpredictability in our market, the agency will persist in its focus to serve drivers, companies, and the riding public in the most effective ways in the months and years after the pandemic.



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**DFHV's Industry Recovery Blueprint provides an immediate injection of innovation and reform to support the District's taxi industry in building back in new, different, and hopefully robust ways.**

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