

## **Taxi Supplement and Taxi Saver Programs**

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### **handyDART & Your Community**

handyDART provides convenient transportation for people with disabilities from and to accessible building entrances. Any person who is unable to use regular transit due to a physical or mental disability is eligible for handyDART service.

While the handyDART staff try to accommodate as many passenger trips as they can each day, there are times when this is not always possible. Passengers sometimes request trips when handyDART is fully booked. Other riders may wish to travel outside of the regular handyDART hours of operation. During those times when handyDART is unable to meet passenger needs, taxi companies can play a valuable role in providing services to people with disabilities. BC Transit's Taxi Supplement and Taxi Saver Programs are two ways for taxi companies to help provide this type of transportation.

### **What are the Taxi Supplement and Taxi Saver Programs?**

While both Taxi Supplement and Taxi Saver involve the use of taxis and a partnership between the handyDART operator, the Municipality, BC Transit and participating local taxi companies, the two programs are quite different in terms of how they are administered. Each program will be described separately.

### **Taxi Supplement Program**

The Taxi Supplement Program enables the handyDART operator to book trips in taxis when the regular vehicle(s) is unavailable, either because of capacity issues or because the trip cannot be accommodated in a timely manner. In essence, the handyDART operator becomes one large regular client to the taxi company, while in turn the vehicles of the taxi company act like extra vehicles to the handyDART operator.

For instance, if a passenger requests a trip when the handyDART vehicle is unavailable, Taxi Supplement enables the handyDART dispatcher to fax the passenger's name, pickup and drop off details to a participating taxi company. The taxi company then slots that passenger into their bookings for the day and picks up and drops off the passenger at the assigned locations and times. There

may be restrictions on the use of this service including requirements for ride sharing and budget limitations.

### **Taxi Supplement Payment**

Just as on handyDART, the passenger must pay the regular handyDART cash fare or ticket to the taxi driver. Any escort of the passenger should also pay the handyDART fare, however an attendant needed to help the handyDART rider travel may ride for free. These attendant and escort rules are identical to those used in the handyDART vehicle. As with handyDART, other passengers may be picked up and dropped off en route.

### **Taxi Supplement Responsibilities and Billing Practices for:**

- **Participating Taxi Companies:** At the end of each month the taxi company invoices the handyDART operator for the total amount of Taxi Supplement trip costs minus the total amount of fares collected by drivers. The invoice should clearly outline the date of each trip, the number of passengers carried, the total trip meter amount, the amount of cash or tickets tendered (i.e. the handyDART fare), and the net trip charge (the meter amount minus the fares collected). Any collected tickets should also be enclosed with the taxi company invoice. The handyDART operator will then pay the total net trip charge for that month to the taxi company.
- **handyDART Operators:** After reimbursing the taxi company, the handyDART operator then invoices BC Transit for *the total trip meter amount*. The handyDART operator invoices for the total trip meter amount rather than the net cost because the operator is responsible for providing collected trip revenues to the municipality. Therefore, the handyDART operator must be reimbursed for not only the net trip charges already paid to the taxi company but also for the revenue collected directly by the taxis.

When invoicing BC Transit, the handyDART operator should attach the applicable taxi receipts. The total number of Taxi Supplement passengers dispatched for the month should also be recorded in the appropriate space in the Monthly Statistics sheet. Any tickets returned by the taxi company should be kept on hand for one year (for auditing/accounting purposes) and then be shredded and recycled.

## **Taxi Supplement Budgeting Tips**

For participating communities, a Taxi Supplement Program budget is specified for each year. While handyDART operators may exceed the monthly budgeted amounts from time to time, care should be taken on the part of dispatchers to not exceed the annual amount. In order to budget Taxi Supplement trips, it is useful to know the average taxi meter charge for your area. For instance, a system with a yearly Taxi Supplement budget of \$6,000 would have a monthly budget of about \$500. If the average cab ride in your area is \$10, a dispatcher can safely book up to about 50 trips per month, or 100 trips per month if the average cab ride is \$5.

## **Taxi Saver Program**

As outlined above, the Taxi Supplement Program enables the handyDART operator to book trips for passengers by taxi. Other than the vehicle used (taxi versus handyDART vehicle), a Taxi Supplement trip is identical to that on handyDART: passengers pay the handyDART fare and the handyDART dispatcher has complete control over which trips are sent to the taxi company.

The Taxi Saver Program, on the other hand, puts more control into the hands of the actual handyDART user, providing greater convenience for spontaneous travel. Taxi Saver provides a 50% subsidy towards the cost of taxi rides. Eligible individuals can purchase a \$60 package of Taxi Saver coupons at a cost of \$30. This package can be purchased once every month, or once every two months in some locations. Denominations of \$1 and \$2 Taxi Saver coupons are included. The purchaser is then free to book the taxi trip of his or her choice directly with participating taxi companies and uses the coupons to pay the dollar meter rate of taxi fare.

The Taxi Saver Program can be administered by either the handyDART operator or Municipality in your community, and therefore the term "Taxi Saver Administrator" will be used in the following descriptions. Contact BC Transit for information on the Taxi Saver Administrator in your area as well as for handyDART operator and Municipal contact information.

## **HandyPass and Taxi Saver Registration**

Any individual who is 16 years or older and *who is registered with the handyDART system* can obtain a HandyPass. A HandyPass is a photo identification card, issued by BC Transit, that is needed to buy Taxi Saver coupons. A HandyPass must also be presented to the taxi driver at the time of fare payment. To register for the Taxi Saver Program, applicants provide two passport-style photos, (or pictures of a similar size) plus a completed Taxi Saver

registration form to either the handyDART operator or Municipality as specified. Passengers can then purchase Taxi Savers from the Taxi Saver Administrator once a HandyPass has been obtained.

HandyPasses are not transferable to other passengers or other transit systems. The pass is also invalid without the user's photograph or if altered in any way. HandyPasses and Taxi Savers may be obtained in person or via mail (by cheque only).

### **Using Taxi Savers**

As mentioned above, passengers are responsible for directly contacting participating taxi companies to arrange Taxi Saver trips. Use of Taxi Savers is entirely at the discretion of the registered user and so trips may be taken at any time and may be of any dollar amount, as long as the rider has the ability to pay. The passenger may have one or more friends accompany him or her free of charge, up to the capacity of the vehicle. However, the taxi company may only provide trips within the specified Transit Service Area.

At the time of payment, the passenger must present his or her HandyPass to the driver. The passenger will pay the dollar amount of the fare shown on the meter with Taxi Savers. If the meter fare is not an even dollar amount, the passenger should pay the extra amount. For example, if a taxi fare is \$5.80, the passenger pays \$5.00 in coupons and 80 cents in change.

Change is not given on Taxi Saver coupons, nor should Taxi Saver coupons be used to tip drivers. In situations where the passenger does not have sufficient Taxi Savers to cover the full dollar amount of the fare, the passenger is responsible to pay cash to cover the difference.

### **Taxi Saver Responsibilities and Billing Procedures for:**

- **Participating Taxi Companies:** The taxi company must maintain a monthly manifest of Taxi Saver trips showing for each trip the date, passenger name or HandyPass number, pick up address location, meter charge and amount of taxi saver coupons received. BC Transit provides a form for this purpose, but participating taxi companies may also duplicate this form in their own computerized billing systems.

On a monthly basis taxi companies may then submit the Taxi Saver form and collected Taxi Savers to the Taxi Saver Administrator for reimbursement.

- **Taxi Saver Administrators:** BC Transit provides two forms to aid in the administration of the Taxi Saver Program. The Sales Record Inventory Control form is used to track Taxi Saver sales to users as well as to record the amount of remaining Taxi Savers in stock. This form should be completed on an ongoing basis as each sale is made.

The Taxi Saver Monthly Report form summarizes monthly Taxi Saver sales and inventory and also sums all taxi company meter charges, redeemed coupons and invoices. Both forms are available in electronic format.

At the end of each month, the Taxi Saver Administrator should submit completed forms, plus copies of taxi company invoices, to BC Transit for reimbursement. The total number of Taxi Saver passengers carried for the month should be recorded in the appropriate space in the Monthly Statistics sheet. Returned Taxi Savers should be kept on hand for one year (for auditing/accounting purposes) and then be shredded and recycled.

### **How Can Taxi Companies Participate in These Programs?**

Taxi companies can participate in the Taxi Supplement Program--where available-- by expressing their interest to the local handyDART operator and by providing proof of a Motor Carrier license and of comprehensive general and automobile liability insurance that is not less than the following minimums:

- Bodily injury limits of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) per occurrence; and
- Property damage limits of Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) per occurrence.

Proof of insurance coverage should be provided at least once per year and the handyDART operator should be notified if coverage drops below the stated minimums.

Participation in the Taxi Saver Program is somewhat more formalized. Taxi companies should first complete a Statement of Qualifications for Taxi Saver Program form, available from BC Transit. This form identifies the taxi company, a contact person name and the number of regular and/or accessible vehicles in the company's fleet. It also details the amount of insurance coverage presently held and whether there are currently any driver training programs in place.

If the qualifications meet the Taxi Saver standards, the Taxi Company will be asked to sign a Taxi Saver Program Agreement with the Municipality and BC Transit. This agreement formally sets out the procedures outlined above, service area boundaries, the insurance minimums to be maintained (the same as those used for Taxi Supplement), and guidelines for drivers and equipment. Statement

of Qualifications forms and sample Agreements are available by contacting BC Transit at the address listed below.

### **A Special Note on Taxis and Accessible Transportation**

It should be noted that since both the Taxi Supplement and Taxi Saver Programs are provided for the benefit of handyDART users, the passengers who will use these programs are people who have physical or mental disabilities. As such, passengers will require special assistance and care.

Participating taxi companies should do their best to assign drivers and equipment capable of providing these passengers with the assistance and care they require. BC Transit can provide a copy of the manual "Tips for Taxi Drivers: Transporting People with Disabilities," which outlines driving and passenger assistance techniques particular to the transportation of people with disabilities. Additional driver training can be obtained by contacting the Justice Institute of BC's Taxi Host Program, care of the Pacific Traffic Education Centre, at (604) 528-5808.

In terms of equipment, taxi companies are encouraged to invest in accessible vehicles if none currently exist in their fleets. Since handyDART operators and passengers with mobility difficulties much prefer to use those taxi companies that can provide wheelchair-friendly vehicles and excellent service, accessible vehicles are a sound investment. As the population ages, this market will only grow.

Finally, maintaining a healthy relationship with the local handyDART operator is an invaluable way to learn more about the transportation of people with disabilities and to improve your service to the general public.

### **Contact Information**

For more information on the Taxi Supplement and Taxi Saver Programs, Statement of Qualifications forms, sample Agreements, *Tips for Taxi Drivers* Manual and other related materials, please contact:

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