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Transportation Bureau still has not analyzed service data

News Article



This is a two-year follow-up to our 2016 report, "Transportation Network Companies and Taxicabs: Transportation Bureau needs to monitor service, not just safety."

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Transportation network companies, such as Uber and Lyft, have operated in Portland since 2015. In 2016, we audited how the Portland Bureau of Transportation monitored these companies and taxicabs.

In our audit, we found the Transportation Bureau had made progress towards some City Council goals, such as competition and public safety, but other goals, especially for service, could not be measured because of data collection and reliability issues. We made recommendations for the Transportation Bureau to monitor service levels and make other improvements.

In the two years since our audit, the Transportation Bureau has made some progress in implementing our eight audit recommendations. The Auditor's Office considers three to be resolved, as of February 2019. Substantial work

Contact

Minh Dan Vuong
Performance Auditor II

✉ minhdan.vuong@portlandoregon.g

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remains in analyzing data for long wait times or disparities in wheelchair-accessible service. We will follow up again in one year to check if the remaining recommendations are implemented.

Recommendation Status: Resolved

2016 Recommendation

Use customer complaints and collision reports systemically to inform inspections, enforcement, and education actions. Also revise the collision report form to obtain sufficient information.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

The Transportation Bureau reviewed customer complaints and collision reports and has updated the collision report form. Collision data informs where the Bureau inspects cars.

Recommendation Status: Resolved

2016 Recommendation

Determine what information is needed to measure the use of and effects of dynamic pricing to best achieve Council's policy goals.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

The Bureau has decided not to obtain any data on dynamic pricing from transportation network companies. This determination resolves our recommendation. The Bureau said that dynamic pricing was an effective way to maintain short wait times for riders.

Recommendation Status: Resolved

2016 Recommendation

Adjust inspection processes so resources are deployed to areas of highest risk. Ensure inspections are a surprise to drivers and companies and are not targeting the same companies and drivers too frequently.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

The Bureau has continued inspections in areas of risk and in the central city, where most of the transportation network companies' traffic was. For example, it has chosen to look for unpermitted drivers and companies and check areas where bicyclists and pedestrians are at risk.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2016 Recommendation

Educate companies about the data required and take enforcement action against companies that don't provide it.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

All transportation network companies and some taxicab companies reported data to the City as required, but some smaller taxicab companies still did not have the systems to report on unfulfilled rides and wait times. The Bureau did not want to penalize small taxicab businesses and plans to provide technical assistance to those businesses.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2016 Recommendation

Ensure that companies' self-reported data is accurate and complete. Accurate data is needed to collect fees and to measure service levels.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

The Bureau asserted that transportation network companies' data was accurate, and it regularly verified that a small sample of actual rides was included in company-reported data. Some taxicab companies still reported incomplete data to the City.

Recommendation Status: In Process

2016 Recommendation

Determine if \$0.50 per ride is appropriate to recover regulation costs as part of the annual fee- setting.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

During our 2016 audit, fees were too low to cover program costs, but they now exceed costs. The Bureau has never adjusted the \$0.50 ride fee. The program cost \$3 million in 2017-18, and the Bureau planned to use a cumulative surplus of \$6 million to expand its programs.

Recommendation Status: Little Progress

2016 Recommendation

Analyze data regularly for service levels and disparities.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

Rides provided by transportation network companies continue to grow. The Bureau built a database to collect ride data and has reviewed ride statistics on occasion, but no in-depth analysis of service levels or disparities has been done since 2015.

In 2018, this industry and taxicabs provided about 12 million rides, according to Transportation Bureau estimates. The Bureau calculated that riders waited 6 minutes on average for their car. But the Bureau has not studied this data in depth or analyzed disparities in wheelchair-accessible service.

Recommendation Status: Little Progress

2016 Recommendation

Establish goals and performance measures for inspections. This can inform staffing levels, too.

2019 Auditor's Status Update

The Bureau continued to inspect drivers and cars in the field and more staff was added, but no numeric goals have been set.

View the [original 2016 audit report](#).

Visit our online dashboard to track the status of recommendations from other reports