



CITYWIDE DISPATCH APP FOR VEHICLES FOR HIRE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Driver FAQs

- **Why should I download and use this app?**
 - Additional source for trips instead of just the airport and cabstands
 - The app is configured to reward drivers who provide excellent customer service and consistently respond to trip requests. The more trips you take, the more trips you get.
 - For the first time in the history of the taxi industry in Houston, it allows all taxi drivers to have access to a central dispatch function.
- **Do I have to sign up?**
 - Yes. All taxi drivers will be required by ordinance to use the app and respond to trip requests when on duty. Limo drivers are strongly encouraged to use the app.
- **What happens if I don't sign up?**
 - It would be a violation of the proposed ordinance.
 - Drivers would be missing out on new business.
- **How do I sign up?**
 - Download the app.
 - Please update your contact information with us at <http://www.houstontx.gov/ara/vfh/> under VFH App Registration.
- **Can all vehicles-for-hire sign up?**
 - The app will initially be available to dispatch taxis and limos only.
 - As app functionality develops, it will eventually be able to support any permitted vehicle-for-hire.
- **How will I get paid?**
 - The app will transmit your earnings directly to a driver pay card on a daily basis. If you already have a pay card account, there is no need



to obtain a new card. The app will deposit your earnings into your existing account. If you do not have a pay card, the app will help you apply for an account.

- **How often will I get paid?**
 - You will receive same-day payment for all trips completed before 3PM. You will be paid for trips completed after 3PM on the following day.
- **How much will it cost me to use this app?**
 - The driver will pay less than \$1.00 per trip along with credit card processing fee of less than 3%. The passenger pays a small booking fee of less than \$2 per trip. You only pay for trips you take. The app only makes money if you make money.
- **Will passengers be able to tip me through the app?**
 - Yes.
- **How are tolls, parking and other miscellaneous charges handled on the app?**
 - These extra charges will be added to the overall fare.
- **Who sets the rates on the app?**
 - Rates will be set by the vendor, subject to approval by the City, based on a time/distance algorithm unless the passenger specifically requests a regulated taxi trip. Rates will be dynamic and responsive to market demand.
- **What equipment do I have to buy to use the app?**
 - Before October/November 2016: The app integrates with some existing taxicab equipment. If you have compatible equipment in your vehicle, you will be able to access the app immediately upon launch. The vendor will notify you if your current equipment is compatible.



- After October/November 2016: Drivers will be able to use their personal Apple IOS or Android smart phones to access the app.

- **What is the cost of equipment to get on the app?**
 - \$0 – if a driver chooses to use his/her own personal smart phone to access the app. The driver will only be responsible for paying for his/her data plan charges.
 - \$0.25 per trip – if a driver does not want to use his/her personal device, and would rather install compatible equipment in their vehicle. Installation of this equipment is free. Drivers are only required to pay a \$.25 per trip equipment rental fee in addition to a credit processing fee.

- **Will the app replace or allow me to remove my credit card device from the cab?**
 - No because the taxi driver is still required to accept all trips, which includes trips that do not originate on the app. The credit card processing device that is currently in the vehicle will continue to be used to process non-app credit card payments.

- **Can I use this and other apps at the same time?**
 - Yes.

- **Will the City own the app?**
 - No. However, the app provider will enter into a contract with the City that will allow the City to ensure app functionality evolves according to the City's vision for transportation.

- **Can I pick up a passenger who doesn't have the app?**
 - Yes. You can continue to serve any passenger that needs a ride.

- **Can passengers who don't have the app pay through the app?**



- If you pick up a customer who wants to pay through the app but didn't book through the app, he can download the app while in the vehicle and pay through the app.
- **Will passengers be able to rate me like they do other apps?**
 - Yes. The app will provide passengers with a driver rating system. The app rewards drivers who consistently achieve high ratings with more trips.
- **Will I be able to rate passengers?**
 - No.
- **If a passenger cancels, will they be charged a cancellation fee to reimburse me for my time?**
 - Yes.
- **Who is the app provider?**
 - The City is in the contract quiet period and cannot disclose the vendor until September 12, 2016.
 - Drivers who provide a valid email address to the City at <http://bit.ly/2c0ptYa> will receive updates as soon as information is released.
- **Why aren't limos required to be on the app?**
 - Limos are strongly encouraged to get on the app and the City will be working with a limousine working group towards modifications needed for the platform to accommodate the unique driver and payment issues in the limo fleets. Non-fleet limousine operators will be able to be on the app as soon as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) functionality becomes available at the end of October.
- **Does a passenger have to enter their pickup and drop off location into the app before requesting a trip?**
 - A passenger must enter his/her pickup location. Entering a drop off location is entirely optional.



Taxi Permittee FAQs

- **Will a citywide app take business away from my company?**
 - This app is merely intended to supplement your existing business, not replace it. More people will request taxi trips if it becomes easier to hail a cab, which benefits all companies.

- **Why is it important that my company and my drivers take part?**
 - Houstonians are more likely to request a taxi if they can get a taxi quickly. As wait times decrease, the demand for taxis from ALL companies will increase.
 - The app also provides an extensive suite of fleet management tools.
- **Will I have access to the data generated by my fleet?**
 - Yes. The app vendor will provide each permittee with a web portal that allows him/her to run reports on the performance of his/her fleet.

General Policy & Implementation FAQs

- **What is the long-term vision for the app?**
 - The City's long-term goal is multi-modal transportation for Houston. Multi-modal dispatch is the long-term vision for the app, including potential integration with public transit, bikeshare, etc.
- **Who is this app for?**
 - This app is for anyone who needs to get around Houston – residents and visitors alike.
- **Will the City lose money if the app is not immediately successful?**



- The City of Houston is not spending any money on this initiative. The City issued a competitive procurement merely to identify an app platform that would ultimately accommodate all of our categories of vehicle for hire.
- **How does this app help visitors to Houston, particularly with respect to Super Bowl LI?**
 - Transportation is critical to the success of large national events such as the Super Bowl. Not only will this app integrate with the Super Bowl's app, but it will allow event organizers to send important messages to the taxi fleet during the event to ensure a smooth flow of traffic and in the event of a local emergency.
- **Why is the City getting into the app business?**
 - The City is not getting into the app business; the City will not own or operate this app. We issued an RFQ to find a digital platform that would promote a single, easy-to-use point of contact for all taxicabs and limousines in the City in the interest of promoting additional transportation options for Houstonians and visitors alike. The City of Houston has almost 9,000 taxi and limo drivers, yet fewer than half of those drivers have access to any form of dispatch. As a result, these vehicles are often functionally unavailable to the general public. As the fourth, soon to be third, largest city in the U.S. we believe these services should be readily available to anyone in the city who is seeking transportation, not just at airports, hotels and downtown cab stands.
- **Why now?**
 - Houston is at a transportation crossroads. We are a successful city with a growing population and growing industry. No matter how quickly lanes could be added to a freeway or streets could be widened, congestion will be a factor in a thriving city. With the Super Bowl only months away, it is critical to ensure we have multiple, viable transportation options throughout this sprawling city.



- **Is this App to replace Uber?**

- No. Uber and the other TNCs currently permitted by the City provide a valuable service and meet the needs of many Houstonians daily. This app is to help the many other Houstonians who rely on taxi service to go about their daily lives, and makes taxis more accessible to a larger audience. Ultimately, the long-term vision for the app is to integrate with all transportation options to provide multi-modal trip planning.

- **How did the city select the app?**

- The City issued an RFQ to select the app. This ensures that the City received as many proposals as possible and was able to select the best app that fit the City's vision.

- **How will people learn about the app?**

- The vendor is committed to a marketing plan and has primary responsibility for marketing the app. The City has also begun establishing a coalition of interested local stakeholders including the Super Bowl Host Committee, Metro, HoustonFirst, the Greater Houston Restaurant Association, the Hotel & Lodging Association of Greater Houston and the Downtown District to supplement the vendor's marketing campaign through their social media assets and local community contacts.



- **What is the timeline for app implementation?**

Date	Event
9/12	ARA presentation to City Council TTI Committee; App Provider Revealed
9/21	Proposed date for Council Consideration of App contract
9/21-10/31	"Soft" launch begins. Marketing begins. Recruitment of drivers. Development period for Bring Your Own Device option by app provider.
11/1-11/30	1) Public Launch of App 2) Bring Your Own Device option goes live 3) Virtual staging functionality becomes available 4) Concierge functionality becomes available
12/1/16-2/1/17	Super Bowl integration final (might include Metro trip planning)

- **Is the city getting any revenue from the app?**

- The primary intent of this app is to improve customer service, not to generate revenue, since the City already receives annual permit fees from all vehicles using the app.

- **If something happens to a passenger while in the vehicle, will the app provide a live customer service support line to receive complaints?**

- The app will provide a customer service support line to respond to complaints and assist in finding lost property. The app will also provide a link to the City's 311 call center in case passengers want to file a formal complaint against a driver with the City. In the event of a serious emergency, passengers are directed to call 911 immediately.