

**TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT** relative to creating a program to allow rooftop digital advertising displays on a reasonable number of licensed taxicabs.

**Recommendation for Council action**, as initiated by Motion (Martinez – O'Farrell):

**INSTRUCT** the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to report with recommendations for a pilot program in 90 days whereby rooftop digital advertising displays can be safely installed on a reasonable number of licensed taxicabs.

**Fiscal Impact Statement:** Neither the City Administrative Officer nor the Chief Legislative Analyst has completed a financial analysis of this report.

**Community Impact Statement:** None submitted.

### **SUMMARY**

On August 13, 2019, Council considered Motion (Martinez – O'Farrell) relative to creating a program to allow rooftop digital advertising displays on a reasonable number of licensed taxicabs. Additionally, Motion directs LADOT to inspect a taxi equipped with any digital rooftop smart screen in accordance with Taxicab Rule 415(c), including compliance with the applicable requirements of Section 25400 of the California Vehicle Code, and report back on compliance within 30 days. Motion states that the Board of Taxicab Commissioners allow commercial advertising to be mounted on a taxicab roof or trunk. Currently the only users of digital dynamic messaging signs appear to be Transportation Network Companies (TNC). There is concern that the use of digital dynamic messaging signs will expand their citywide presence. However, given the advantage that TNCs have had on the transportation for-hire front, Motion movers believe that it might be worthwhile to explore how a digital dynamic messaging signs pilot program limited to taxicabs, might work. Council referred Motion to the Transportation Committee for consideration.

At its meeting held November 13, 2019, the Transportation Committee discussed this matter with LADOT and City Attorney's Office staff. During the public comment period, taxicab drivers expressed support for rooftop mounted digital dynamic messaging signs. Drivers stated that the signs would supplement their income by up to \$300 per month. Representatives of Firefly stated that the signs are not prohibited by State law. Los Angeles Municipal Code provisions pertain only to advertising on parked vehicles. A resident opposed to the signs stated they will district drivers and create unsafe conditions for other vehicles and pedestrians.

The General Manager, LADOT, stated that the Department prefers to report back with recommendations and guidelines for a pilot before proceeding. Also, additional staff is needed to conduct taxicab inspections. The City Attorney's representative stated that several legal issues must be resolved before the City can authorize the use of rooftop digital advertising displays on taxicabs. The devices are not consistent with State law and their use violates the LAMC's prohibition of mobile advertising on vehicles. If Council wants to proceed with Motion's recommendation to implement a pilot, State law and LAMC changes are necessary. It was further stated that legal authority may not exist for the City to solely permit the use of rooftop digital advertising displays on taxicabs. It is possible to foresee a scenario in which litigation leads to such signs mounted on other private vehicles in the City of Los Angeles.

Councilmembers Martinez and Koretz, expressed support for Motion stating a pilot would afford an opportunity to resolve stated concerns. They also stated struggling taxicab drivers would benefit from the additional income. The Committee Chair, Councilmember Bonin opposed the Motion. Mr. Bonin stated the digital signs are public safety hazards and that creating a pilot would lead to a proliferation of digital rooftop advertising on other private vehicles.

Committee recommended that Council instruct LADOT to report with recommendations for a pilot program in 90 days whereby rooftop digital advertising displays can be safely piloted on a reasonable number of licensed taxicabs (Martinez, Koretz: Yes; Bonin: No).

Respectfully Submitted,

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE



<u>MEMBER</u>	<u>VOTE</u>
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BONIN:	NO
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MARTINEZ:	YES
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KORETZ:	YES
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**-NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL COUNCIL ACTS-**