Taxicab Policy in New Orleans, Louisiana

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the United States, and even the world, regulation of safe and reliable ground transportation within urban areas helps maintain a stable traffic flow and address the satisfaction of the citizens who rely upon the transportation system. Traditionally, an operator's entry into the taxicab portion of this system has been regulated and restricted by municipal governments to provide a fair and balanced arrangement that is both capable of handling cities' needs as well as being profitable for the operators.

Recently, citizens in New Orleans asked whether the city's taxicab regulation system provides safe and reliable service. New Orleans regulates issuance of operational permits for taxicabs. The city provides operators with a license known as Certificates of Public Necessity and Convenience (CPNC). Most cities similar to New Orleans utilize a formula, based on a number of factors such as population, vehicle ownership, and other transportation variables to derive a specific number of taxicabs. Similar cities also regularly evaluate these numbers to ensure that a sufficient number of taxis are available throughout the city. Currently, New Orleans does not have such a system in place and as a result, it maintains an overabundance of nearly 1,100 taxicab permits, or 67% of its current licenses. This over-saturation of taxicabs created a system that forces taxi operators to battle for the most convenient fares instead of focusing on providing services throughout the city.

Specific considerations should be accounted for New Orleans' allotment of CPNCs: since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, New Orleans' population and tourism levels have deflated and increased without a reexamination of the appropriate number of operational permits issued each year. Prior to Katrina, New Orleans sustained a tremendous reduction in its residential population. In addition to New Orleans' population changes, the city faces CPNC reduction strategy challenges. Currently, city legislation allows permit holders to leverage their city-owned licenses for monetary loans. New Orleans should prohibit the monetary leveraging of CPNCs. Prohibition of the allowance of the value-based transfers will help the city to regain control of the CPNCs present in the city. In addition to an overhaul of the CPNC process, New Orleans should continue to enforce legislation present in the ground transportation section of its code of ordinances, and seek to be a leader in the field of urban, for-hire, ground-transportation management.

INTRODUCTION

When compared to cities with similar demographics, New Orleans' taxicab system is clearly an inferior system laden with flaw. These flaws allow for uncapped trading of licenses among taxi operators. Through our research and analysis of systems in comparable cities, as well as academic research conducted by others, we conclude that reformulating New Orleans' license delegation process will create a better and more effective taxicab system. In addition, these measures limit the system's vulnerability to corruption.

I. NEW ORLEANS TAXICAB SYSTEM

The New Orleans taxicab system relies upon two major factors: entry and operational regulation. Entry is the process of a new taxicab operator obtaining a license to work in the city. Operational regulation is the city's supervision of taxicab service within the New Orleans. The number of taxi permits allotted for operation within Orleans Parish stands at 1,600. Research was unable to discover the origination of the specification of the 1,600 number. In 1957, however, the Mayor and City Council enacted The Taxicab Ordinance, MCS 1004, which created extensive regulation of the taxicab industry in New Orleans. One of the specific regulatory items enacted in the 1957 ordinance was a CPNC issuance clause. The issuance clause limited the number of CPNCs to 1-per-500 residents.[1] The main enforcement officer of the taxicab system in New Orleans is the Director of Safety and Permits. The operational division of the Department of Safety and Permits that facilitates regulation is the Taxicab Bureau, which regulates specifics such as vehicle inspections, license issuance, renewals, and transfers.

City legislation defines the process that allows taxi operators to transfer their licenses between each other. In the current system, operators can "scalp" CPNCs to each other, as long as the city is informed of the value and parties involved. The current license holder is the sole source of determining the worth of the CPNC. Because the city has limited the total number of available CPNCs, operators can demand enormous prices in a sort-of bidding process. Operators can transfer their licenses for values in excess of $30,000. Beyond the value association, another concern with the transference of CPNCs is the understanding of the "ownership" of the certificates. The city is in a battle of determining if the allowance of a private transfer for such a high-dollar amount represents an act of sale of the CPNC. The structure of the debate includes analyzing the city's abilities to regulate or even revoke an operator's license. In essence, taxi operators can trade and leverage their assigned CPNCs (technically city property) for private monetary gain.

New Orleans' Taxicab Bureau enforces and regulates the day-to-day operational aspects of taxi services including the laws that govern the conditions and operation of taxis throughout the city. The bureau also moderates stagnant taxis at Armstrong International Airport, enforces the usage of taxi-dispatch center radio systems, and ensures that operators are geographically familiar with the city. Enforcement of these operational items helps to ensure that taxi operators provide the highest level of service to the citizens of New Orleans.

II. STANDARD RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Researchers have tried to estimate the number of taxis a municipality should allow to operate to insure efficient and effective service and prevent market over- or under-saturation. The range of research encompasses economic impacts of the number of CPNCs on specific markets, the effects of operational fare controls, and the determination of the market size. Research reveals that the primary indicators for market size are municipality population, airport traffic, and vehicle ownership.[2] In *Regression Model of the Number of Taxicabs in U.S. Cities,* Bruce Schaller describes the density of personal vehicles as a key factor for estimating the necessary number of taxis for that area.[3] The availability and reliance of public transportation systems also affect a locality's necessity for taxicabs.

It is often difficult to identify the specific demand for taxi service in cities, because certain variables will often change depending upon the character, and even weather, of the city. Poor weather decreases pedestrian traffic and increases taxi usage. Large events or festivals stress demand for taxi services and residents will utilize taxis more during evenings and weekends for entertainment and recreation purposes.[4]

Based on their demographic similarities to New Orleans, we examined five cities to help reveal a standard methodology for formulating a market size: Kansas City, Missouri; Louisville, Kentucky; Anaheim, California; Orlando, Florida; and Houston, Texas. The factors we evaluated were population, air passenger traffic, and personal vehicle density. We chose these three factors based upon their connected presence in all of our research. "Population" refers to the total number of individuals living within the specific urban area. "Air passenger traffic" refers to the number of passengers who boarded flights bound for destinations outside of the city. "Personal vehicle density" refers to the number of personal vehicles owned by citizens within a municipality.

When we averaged population, air passenger traffic, and personal vehicle density values from comparable cities, we then used those values to assess if another location's level of taxi-service is appropriate for that area's demand for service.

We compiled the data from comparable cities to develop a formula applicable to New Orleans. In our formula, we represented each city's variables in a manner that reflects a traditional academic understanding for the average taxicab usage in respect to those variables: one taxi per 1,000 residents, one taxi per 10,000 air passengers, and one taxi per 100 households without access to vehicles. When we average all of our cities, minus New Orleans, the numerical representation is 0.829 taxis per 1,000 residents, 1.101 taxis per 10,000 enplaned air passengers, and 0.912 taxis per 100 households without personal vehicle access. These new numbers represent a factor of each one of the variables. When we average these three factored-variables, the equation reveals a new representation of the necessary number of taxis for any city.

We created City A to demonstrate our formula. We set City A's population at 100,000, air traffic at 200,000 and households without personal vehicles at 20,000. We transformed these numbers to their "per" factors and then multiplied them by the standardized variables. We then added the products of the multiplied factors by the standardized variables, and then averaged this number by dividing it by the total number of variables (three). We found that the quotient represents the number of taxicabs necessary to handle the city's needs. Based on our inputs, City A requires 96 taxicabs.

Table 2.1: Standardized Variables to Determine the Number of Taxicabs in a City

Taxis per 1,000 Population	Taxis per 10,000 Enplaned Air Passengers	Taxis per 100 Limited Vehicle Households
0.829	1.101	0.912

Table 2.2: Test Formula to Determine the Number of Taxicabs in a City

p = total population   **h** = total households without access to personal vehicles

a = total enplaned air passengers   **T** = prescribed number of taxis

$$T = [0.829 \, (p/1{,}000) + 110.223 \, (a/10{,}000) + 0.0912 \, (h/100)]/3$$

Case: City A
   p = 100,000

$$T = \frac{[0.829 \, (100) + 1.101 \, (20) + 0.912 \, (200)]}{3} \qquad T = \frac{287.32}{3}$$

   a = 200,000

$$T = \frac{82.9 + 22.02 + 182}{3} \qquad \boxed{T = 96}$$

   h = 20,000

III. APPLICATION CITIES

For us to effectively measure the application of the formula, we obtained statistics from the Federal Aviation Administration and the United States Census Bureau and applied them to the formula for Kansas City, Louisville, Anaheim, Orlando, and Houston. All of these cities possess statistical characteristics similar to New Orleans. We evaluated each of the cities in terms of their variables. We then used their allotment of taxicabs to help derive a quotient for each specific variable. For instance, Kansas City has 500 taxi licenses for a population of 432,449. Therefore, in terms of population, Kansas maintains 0.865 taxi licenses per 1,000 residents.

Next, we used math to break down the effective number of taxicabs, in relationship to the variables in effective cities. We averaged and then reapplied those variables to other cities to derive a new number that is more appropriate for the city's demand.

3.1 KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI:

Kansas City, Missouri maintains an effective taxi system with 500 taxicabs. From the data in Table 3.1, we calculated the general expectation of one taxi per 1,000 residents in relationship to Kansas City's 500 taxicabs. The resulting number (0.865) represents a variable that is applicable to other cities. We performed the same division with passenger air traffic and Kansas City's limited vehicle density, resulting in applicable variables of 1.181 and 1.107 respectively.

Table 3.1: Number of Taxicab Licenses in Kansas City, Missouri Based on Standard Formula

Population [5]	Enplaned Air Passengers [6]	Limited Vehicle Density [7]
432,449	5,903,296	55,357

0.865 taxi licenses per 1,000 residents

1.181 licenses per 10,000 enplaned air passengers

1.107 taxi licenses per 100 households without access to personal vehicle

T = 500 taxi licenses

3.2 LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY:

As with Kansas City, we performed the same calculations for Louisville, Kentucky. In Table 3.2, we divided Louisville's 1,974,269-air passenger number by 10,000. We then divided this number by the current number of appropriate taxis in Louisville (357), the resulting number became the variable for air traffic in Louisville (0.553). We performed the same calculations on Louisville's population and personal vehicle density; the results were 0.718 and 1.417, respectively.

Table 3.2: Number of Taxicab Licenses in Louisville, Kentucky Based on Standard Formula

Population [8]	Enplaned Air Passengers [9]	Limited Vehicle Density [10]
256,231	1,974,269	50,590

0.718 taxi licenses per 1,000 residents

0.553 licenses per 10,000 enplaned air passengers

1.417 tax licenses per 100 households without access to personal vehicle

T = 357 taxi licenses

3.3   ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA:

Anaheim, California sustains an efficient taxi system with 255 licenses. From the data in Table 3.3, we analyzed one taxi per 1,000 residents in relationship to Anaheim's 255 taxicabs. We then use resulting number (1.306) in relationship to other cities. We performed the same division with passenger air traffic and Anaheim's limited vehicle density, resulting in applicable variables of 1.535 and 0.827, respectively.

Table 3.3: Number of Taxicab Licenses in Anaheim, California Based on Standard Formula

Population [11]	Enplaned Air Passengers [12]	Limited Vehicle Density [13]
332,984	3,914,051	21,093

1.306 taxi licenses per 1,000 residents

1.535 taxi licenses per 10,000 enplaned air passengers

0.827 taxi licenses per 100 households without access to personal vehicle

T = 255 taxi licenses

3.4   ORLANDO, FLORIDA:

For Orlando, Florida, we performed the same calculations as with the previously mentioned cities. With the data from Table 3.4, we divided Orlando's limited vehicle density (21,669) by the understood standard of 1 per 100; Orlando's efficient number of taxis (548) then divided the result of 216.69. We could then use the results of these calculations (0.395) to establish a set a variable for other cities' formulas. We performed the same calculations on Orlando's population and air-traffic; the results were 0.394 and 2.707, respectively.

Table 3.4: Number of Taxicab Licenses in Orlando, Florida Based on Standard Formula

Population [14]	Enplaned Air Passengers [15]	Limited Vehicle Density [16]
215,687	14,831,648	21,669

0.394 taxi licenses per 1,000 residents

2.707 taxi licenses per 10,000 enplaned air passengers

0.395 taxi licenses per 100 households without access to personal vehicle

T = 548 taxi licenses

3.5 HOUSTON, TEXAS:

We calculated the data for Houston the same way (See Table 3.5): we divided Houston's population by 1,000, air-traffic by 10,000 and limited vehicle density by 100. We calculated the resulting variables in terms of the number of Houston's current taxi fleet size (2,245).

Table 3.5: Number of Taxicab Licenses in Houston, Texas Based on Standard Formula

Population [17]	Enplaned Air Passengers [18]	Limited Vehicle Density [19]
1,998,691	16,358,035	207,296

0.890 taxi licenses per 1,000 residents

0.729 taxi licenses per 10,000 enplaned air passengers

0.923 taxi licenses per 100 households without access to personal vehicle

T = 2,245 taxi licenses

IV. NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA (ACTUAL):

When we used the formula to standardize New Orleans' allotment of taxis, we found an enormous difference from what New Orleans currently maintains. The factors of the variables themselves show huge swings between New Orleans and the averages of the comparable cities. The data from the comparable cities shows that the one-taxi-per-1,000-residents factors range from 0.394 to 1.306. New Orleans maintains a taxi ratio of 5.503 licenses per 1,000 residents. This demonstrates that, in terms of just population, New Orleans' taxi license allotment is more than four times as dense as the most closely comparable city, Anaheim. Overall, New Orleans maintains taxi densities of 663.81% over the per-population average, 294.37% over the air-traffic average, and 199.12% over the limited vehicle average.

When we averaged the variables from each of the factors from the other cities, the resulting variables were 0.829 taxis per 1,000 residents, 1.101 taxis per 10,000 air passengers and 0.912 taxis per 100 households without a personal vehicle. We represented this in terms of New Orleans' current numbers. After we calculated these numbers and set them to New Orleans, we discovered that the number of taxis that the city should maintain is only 529 and not its current 1,600.

Table 4.1: Actual Number of Taxicab Licenses in New Orleans, Louisiana

Population [20]	Enplaned Air Passengers [21]	Limited Vehicle Density [22]
290,739	4,936,271	88,123

5.503 licenses per 1,000 residents

3.241 licenses per 10,000 enplaned air passengers

1.816 licenses per 100 households without access to personal vehicle

T= 1,600 taxi licenses

V. NEW ORLEANS, LA (FORMULA APPLIED):

Table 5.1: Recommended Number of Taxicab Licenses in New Orleans, Louisiana

Population [23]	Enplaned Air Passengers [24]	Limited Vehicle Density [25]
290,739	4,936,271	88,123

0.829 taxi licenses per 1,000 residents

1.101 taxi licenses per 10,000 enplaned air passengers

0.912 taxi licenses per 100 households without access to personal vehicle

T = 529 taxi licenses

The comparable difference between the current 1,600 CPNCs allotment and our formulated number of 529 CPNCs shows the dramatic nature in which the New Orleans taxi system is oversaturated, in relationship to cities of comparable statistics (See Appendices 7.1 and 7.2).

While the formulated number (529) seems drastically low in comparison to the current number (1,600), special considerations must be made in the case of New Orleans: large events such as Mardi Gras, New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, as well as 10,000 plus-attendee conferences and conventions result in influxes of visitors into the city throughout the year. These fluctuations drive temporary demand and necessity upward.

VI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Taxicab Bureau ensures that effective and high-quality transportation services are present in New Orleans. The New Orleans City Council must make sure that fair and balanced ordinances exist to allow the bureau to manage the system effectively. Any actions the city takes should ultimately reflect the highest level of thought and patience in relationship to understanding the fluctuations of events and population in the city. New Orleans needs to guarantee the highest level of safety and satisfaction not just for visitors, but for citizens as well. The following recommendations stem from the practices of cities similar to New Orleans as well as the evaluation of New Orleans' current system and ordinances.

6.1 IMMEDIATE CPNC REDUCTION

To effectively reduce the over saturation of taxis in New Orleans, the city should decrease the number of operational CPNCs from 1,600 to 529. Among other things, the city should place an immediate and long-lasting moratorium on the transferability of such licenses. The moratorium will decrease the lengthy life of a single CPNC on the street, as it will not continue its life in a "pass-along" process. Next, the current standards contained within the New Orleans Code of Taxi Ordinances should be strictly enforced, specifically enforcement of revocation procedures protected under the law. When the city revokes CPNCs from operators for failure to adhere to regulations, it will ultimately reduce the number of CPNCs on the street. Subsequently, the city should not reissue the CPNCs. The withdrawal of the certificates will allow the city to ultimately regain the control of the process and prevent a future market over-saturation.

6.2 BIENNIAL CPNC NECESSITY EVALUATION

New Orleans should evaluate the number of CPNCs on a biennial (or similar) basis. The city should choose factors such as population, passenger air traffic, personal-vehicle density and other factors the city may deem impactful for determining the appropriate number of CPNCs. New Orleans should adopt a specific formula that helps determine the appropriate number of taxis for the city's current market. Further, the City Council should write and pass this formula into its Code of Ordinances. As an example, Orlando, Florida maintains a specific formula in its Code of Ordinance and clearly identifies the factors and variable relationships that effect their allotment of taxicabs. Additionally, Orlando defines the time-period necessary for the official re-evaluation of those factors in order to help the city maintain an efficient system (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: City of Orlando's Code, Chapter 55, Part IV, Section 55.24

> (1)   Determination of Necessity. The minimum number of any new Taxicab Vehicle Permits to provide adequate service for the public necessity and convenience shall be determined by the Vehicle-for-Hire Administrator, at least once a year at a public hearing, after applying the formula in (2) below, using the criteria listed in (2) below.
>
> (2)   Informational Inputs for the Formula. The City's determination made pursuant to this section shall be based upon the following information as of December 31 of the most recently completed calendar year:
>
> (a) **One Taxicab Vehicle Permit shall be authorized for each 1000 residents of the City of Orlando.** The City resident population figure shall be based on the annual census update performed by the City's Director of Planning and Development…

6.3 OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

New Orleans should strongly consider evaluating and adopting the best practices, beyond CPNC allotment, from other cities. New Orleans could benefit tremendously from adopting other practices such as hybrid fleets and a larger disabled-friendly fleet. New Orleans should not simply accept recommendations to fix problems in current systems. The adoption of practices that other cities consider "cutting edge" would significantly improve the services offered to New Orleans taxi patrons while simultaneously positioning the city as an industry leader and not simply a follower. Hybrid technology standards represent a better, cleaner, and more efficient transportation system. Additionally, the city should enforce a stronger presence of disabled friendly taxis (DFTs). The larger presence of DFTs throughout the area can only improve the services to all customers of the taxi services in New Orleans. Additionally, New Orleans should continue to enforce the current legislation that is effective in maintaining passenger safety and satisfaction; and continually strive to build upon the foundations that currently support the system.

VII. APPENDIX

This table represents data from each comparable city, the averages of all of the cities, and New Orleans.

Appendix 7.1: Comparable City Data Sets

City	Population	Air Passengers	No Vehicle	Taxi Permits
Kansas City, MO	432,449	5,903,296	55,357	500
Louisville, KY	256,231	1,974,269	50,590	357
Anaheim, CA	332,984	3,914,051	21,093	255
Orlando, FL	215,687	14,831,648	21,669	548
Houston, TX	1,998,691	16,358,035	207,296	2,245
Average	*647,208*	*8,596,260*	*71,201*	*781*
New Orleans, LA	**290,739**	**4,936,271**	**88,123**	**1,600**

This next table breaks down the data from each city in relationship to each variable's "per" number. In addition, the quotient for each variable's "per" is represented in relationship to a city's number of taxicabs. X represents the quotient of each population divided by 1,000, Y represents the quotient of each city's air-traffic divided by 10,000, and Z represents each city's limited vehicle density divided by 100.

Appendix 7.2: Comparable City Variables and Factor Set

City	Population / 1,000	X/ Taxi Permits	Air Traffic / 10,000	Y/ Taxi Permits	No Vehicle / 100	Z/ Taxi Permits
Kansas City, MO	432.449	0.865	590.330	1.181	553.570	1.107
Louisville, KY	256.231	0.718	197.427	0.553	505.900	1.417
Anaheim, CA	332.984	1.306	391.405	1.535	210.930	0.827
Orlando, FL	215.687	0.394	1483.165	2.707	216.690	0.395
Houston, TX	1998.691	0.890	1635.804	0.729	2072.960	0.923
Average	**647.208**	**0.829**	**859.626**	**1.101**	**712.010**	**0.912**
New Orleans, LA	**290.739**	**5.503**	**493.627**	**3.241**	**881.230**	**1.816**

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