King County Taxi, For-Hire, and Transportation Network Company (TNC) History 1976 to 2024

1976: The County, Seattle, and the Port of Seattle embarked on a program to regionalize taxicab regulations and licensing by developing consistent regulations and services across jurisdictions. The intent was to promote public safety and customer service by standardizing fees, regulations, enforcement, and rate review procedures throughout the County (King County Motion 2362).

The County regulated entry into the taxicab market and rates charged to passengers. Entry was restricted by a population ratio formula and the King County Council set rates after reviewing prescribed criteria. This "need and necessity" provision required new applicants to show that there was a bona fide need for taxicab service in that zone.

1976 to 1979: The "need and necessity" provision of the King County Motion limiting entry was deleted, resulting in an increased number of licensed taxicabs. The Port of Seattle terminated its exclusive contract for taxicab services at SeaTac International Airport, and a growing number of independent taxicab operators obtained permits to service SeaTac International Airport.

1979 to 1984: The County and Seattle passed ordinances deregulating entry standards and rates (King County Ordinance 4232). With no restrictions on the numbers of licenses issued, taxi owners set their own rates. The deregulation of taxicab licensing resulted in many problems in each jurisdiction. As deregulation continued, consumer views of taxicabs continued to decline; conditions were viewed as deteriorated and rate differences created the perception of price gouging.

1984: Regulation returned, and a conscious effort was made to address the rate variation problem and to increase safety and improve cab conditions. A moratorium was placed on the issuance of new taxicab licenses and rates were set by ordinance.

1985: The County's entry moratorium on licenses expired in 1985, returning the County to open entry; however, rates continued to be set by County ordinance. Also in 1985, the Port of Seattle placed a moratorium on permits to operate at SeaTac International Airport.

1986: The Ad Hoc Taxi Committee was created to study and recommend a method for determining the optimum number of taxis to operate in the County, the criteria and method for setting and/or changing taxicab rates, and to develop a plan for ensuring reciprocity in enforcement and licensing of taxicab businesses. The work of the committee resulted in Ordinance 7964, which created a process to establish rate and entry recommendations based on objective data rather than industry requests, while also placing a moratorium on the issuance of new taxicab licenses.

Since 1986, open entry existed for three brief periods, once during the verification process of a referendum in 1987, in early 1988, and for approximately one month in 1989.

1988: The County, Seattle, and the Port of Seattle formed the Regional Taxicab Commission to recommend rates, entry restrictions, and other related revisions to King County Code Ordinance 8450.

1990-91: In the fall of 1990, County and Seattle staff drafted an ordinance incorporating many of the 1988 Regional Taxicab Commission entry model recommendations. Recommendations included

increased standards for licensing and operations of taxicab vehicles and for-hire drivers, proposed closed entry, and maintained a single ordained rate at an increase of approximately eight percent from $1.20 drop/$1.40 mile, to $1.30 drop/$1.50 mile. The fixed rate proposed was the same as the highest rate Seattle allowed (ceiling rate). County Proposed Ordinance 90-948 and Seattle Ordinance 108357 were submitted to the County and Seattle councils in November 1990. A joint hearing was held on January 14, 1991, and Seattle adopted the proposed ordinance. Seattle, however, maintained its ceiling rate approach. The King County Council passed Ordinance 9986, permanently closing the issuance of new taxicab licensing.

1992: The County Executive's original rate submission in 1990 of $1.30 drop/$1.50 mile was increased in July 1992 to $1.60 drop/$1.60 mile. The industry lobbied for a higher rate, and the King County Council adopted its request of $1.80 drop/$1.80 mile/$.50 per minute waiting time.

King County Council passed Ordinance 10498 which significantly changed the for-hire vehicle or taxicab, and for-hire driver standards and regulations. Ordinance 10498 implemented many changes, including:

- Continuing the closed entry system
- Increasing taxicab rate fee from 1.60 drop/$1.60 mile to $1.80 drop/$1.80 mile
- Changing the quarterly data collection process to an annual filing
- Eliminating the required use of net profit ratio formula in rate and entry recommendations
- Enhancing the mechanical certification process for vehicles
- Enhancing the safety and cleanliness requirements for vehicles
- Increasing the number of mandatory safety inspections
- Increasing the for-hire driver standards for entry and denial of licenses
- Establishing several provisions to address consumer protection issues

1995: The County and Seattle entered into a Cooperative Agreement. The agreement grants authority for the County to issue Seattle for-hire driver licenses as an agent for Seattle and for Seattle to issue county taxicab vehicle licenses as an agent for the County. This agreement also grants authority for Seattle and County license inspectors to enforce both Seattle and County taxi codes, and both licenses can be obtained at one convenient location.

1996: In late 1996, Seattle proposed changes to its taxicab ordinance to streamline its laws with County regulations. However, Seattle went further in several areas. Most significant was the requirement that taxicabs belong to associations. Associations are separately licensed entities that maintain a level of oversight liability for operations by vehicle owners and drivers, thereby placing some of the burden of cost to improve service standards on the industry itself. A monetary penalty schedule was established that set fines for violations by drivers, owners, and taxicab associations. Vehicle age restrictions were also implemented. In 1997, all Seattle drivers were required to retake the written examination. All Seattle drivers (new and renewals alike) were required to take an oral test to demonstrate English language proficiency. These changes affected approximately 80 percent of county licensees since drivers were required to have both Seattle and County licenses.

2000: King County Council passed Ordinance 13984 amending standards for the denial of a for-hire driver license. The ordinance added mandatory denial language for applicants with bail forfeitures or convictions within five years of the date of application for vehicle assault, vehicular homicide, or reckless driving. In addition, the ordinance itemized a number of criminal offenses as set out in state law (RCW

Title 9) as discretionary grounds for the denial of a license.

2001-04: Beginning in the spring of 2001, the County, the Port of Seattle, and Seattle formed a "Regionalization Workgroup" to study the feasibility of opening access at SeaTac International Airport to all licensed taxicabs. The desire was to create efficiencies by further regionalizing County, Seattle, and Port ordinances and reducing "dead-heading" (taxicabs unable to pick-up passengers must travel back empty), reduce excess pollutants, and expand the number of taxicabs operating across the entire region. Port Commissioners declined to open entry to all taxicabs operating within the County at SeaTac International Airport and re-signed an exclusive operating agreement with one taxicab company, STITA.

The County, led by Metro's Accessible Services, joined a task force with representatives from Seattle, the Port of Seattle, and other interested parties to address the issue of taxicab accessibility for citizens with wheelchairs and other mobility devices. In late 2003, Metro Accessible Services secured grant money from the state and began meeting with King County RALS and Seattle representatives to develop implementation plans for licensing and placing into service wheelchair-accessible taxicabs. Ordinances were passed by both the County and Seattle to initiate a demonstration project to study wheelchair accessible taxicab service issues.

In 2004, Ordinance 15059 increased taxicab vehicle and driver fees to help recover licensing and enforcement costs and reflect inflation. Vehicle fees increased from $240 to $300 per year and for-hire driver application fees increased from $60 to $75 per year (plus a $5 photo fee).

A taximeter rate increase was proposed (Proposed Ordinance 2004-0466) to increase rates from $1.80 drop/$1.80 per mile to $2.50 drop/$2.00 per mile. Rates had not been increased in nearly twelve years (since 1992) and the cost of living had increased 36 percent. In addition, operating costs such as fuel had soared by more than 78 percent since 1992. Based on a 15-mile trip, the proposed rate represented only a 13 percent increase. The increase was proposed by Seattle's Taxicab Advisory Group, which included taxicab drivers, owners, and associations; senior and disabled citizens from the community; and Department of Social and Health Services providers.

2005-2006: County Ordinance 15132 increased taximeter rates to $2.50 drop/$2.00 per mile. The rates went into effect on April 1, 2005, for both the County and Seattle. The County and Seattle inspectors worked together to ensure all 842 taxicabs had their meters tested and sealed by early afternoon that day. As an added convenience to the taxicab owners and drivers, the County and Seattle staff arranged the special meter inspections to occur at the taxi company lots.

County Ordinance 15263 established the Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab (WAT) Demonstration project, and included minor changes which affected taxicab insurance, added an additional driver safety training requirement, added a mandatory oral English test, and changed the taxicab licensee year. The ordinance became effective September 18, 2005, and the pilot project was implemented in October 2006.

County Ordinance 15309 approved a methodology for issuing additional taxicab licenses and made taxicab licenses issued after January 1, 2006, nontransferable (effective November 13, 2005). Taxicab licenses issued before January 1, 2006, are transferable meaning that they can be bought and sold on the open market. The non-transferability issue arose from complaints and comments received from taxicab drivers during public hearings on the WAT Demonstration project.

County Ordinance 15282 established the Accessible Taxi Advisory Committee to be selected in the

spring of 2006. The committee consists of nine members recruited by the County Executive in consultation with the King County Council. Membership of the committee reflects the diversity and geographic distribution of County residents. Seven of the members were appointed before start-up of the WAT Demonstration project and the remaining two positions were filled later by WAT users having experience with the service. This committee helped ensure that the pilot project was implemented in a way that accurately gauged the demand for and viability of accessible taxi service in the Seattle and County markets. The committee monitored the preparation for and implementation of the pilot project and advised the King County Licensing and Metro Accessible Service sections.

2007: Public Rule LIC 8-3 was adopted, as allowed under the 2005 Ordinance 15309, to test alternative ways of structuring taxi associations and the terms of taxicab license leases, while improving taxi driver/lessee economic viability and achieving environmental benefits by requiring hybrid vehicles.

2008: Ordinance 15951 increased and changed meter rates as follows: fee per mile changed to $0.25 per 1/10 mile from $0.20 per 1/10 mile; and fee per wait minute changed to $0.50 per minute (charged at $0.25 per 30 seconds) when the vehicle slows below 12 miles per hour from $0.20 per minute when the vehicle slows below 17 miles per hour. There was no change in the drop rate.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) process established five new County-only Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Licenses in 2008 as an outcome of a Request for Proposal related to the 2005 “Alternative Ways to Structure a Taxicab Association Project.”

2009: Ordinance 16695 increased fees for the for-hire driver licenses, added a new fee for rescheduling, and corrected change of owner dates, which took effect January 1, 2010. The Seattle/King County Taxicab Advisory Commission was established to study regulations, rules, policies, and issues relevant to the provision of high-quality taxicab service in Seattle (SMC 3.73.030) and the County (KCC 2.200.010) while ensuring the economic viability of owning and driving taxicabs, and to make recommendations to Seattle and the County on these matters.

2010: Ordinance 16824 established forty-five permanent Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab licenses to be issued as Dual Seattle-County licenses and regulating wheelchair accessible taxicab licenses; making technical corrections; and amending Ordinance 10498.

2011: King County Council and the Seattle City Council appointed 10 members to the joint Seattle/County Taxicab Advisory Commission, which was established by Ordinance in 2009. The commission had its first meeting in July. The purpose of the Taxicab Advisory Commission was to study regulations, rules, policies, and issues relevant to the provision of high-quality taxicab service in Seattle and the County while ensuring the economic viability owning and driving taxicabs, and to make recommendations to Seattle and the County on these matters.

2012: Ordinance 17404 increased and changed taxicab meter rates in September as follows: increasing the fee per mile changed to $0.30 per 1/9 mile from $0.25 per 1/10 mile, and the fee for wait time of $0.50 per minute changed to charge at .$0.30 per 36 seconds from $0.25 per 30 seconds. There was no change in the drop rate.

2013: Ordinance 17665 modifications addressed industry concerns for public safety and taxicab standards, along with changes identified in the Lean value stream mapping event conducted by Records and Licensing Services (RALS). The Lean effort in RALS identified process improvements to the for-hire

driver application process that are incorporated in the code revisions.

2014: On September 15, 2014, Ordinance 17892 was passed and brought numerous changes to the for-hire industry regulations including those related to taxicabs. Consistent with new legislation passed by Seattle, the County ordinance brought new regulations for a new business model operating as Transportation Network Companies (TNC). Ordinance 17892 also streamlined regulatory requirements across the for-hire industry and new per-trip fees were implemented, including the Wheelchair Accessibility Surcharge (WAS) of $0.10 per trip and the TNC Licensing fee of $0.35 per trip. A new cap was established on for-hire vehicles.

2015: King County Licensing began issuing for-hire driver permits and vehicle endorsements to TNC drivers and partnered with Seattle to convert existing taxi and for-hire vehicle licenses into medallions. Seattle provides the authority for for-hire transportation drivers to organize (Ord. 124968 – adopted December 14, 2015).

The Seattle/King County Taxicab Advisory Commission was placed on inactive status in November of 2015 based on the request of Commission members and has remained inactive every year since.

2016: Public Rule FIN-10-3-PR, Wheelchair Accessible Services Fund - Disbursement was implemented effective August 1, 2016. The rule outlines the methodology for distributing the collected surcharge.

Additional 2016 highlights include:

- The Port of Seattle awarded Eastside For-Hire Inc. the airport service contract.
- Passage of King County Ordinance 18338 updated insurance requirements for taxicabs, for-hire vehicles, and TNC-endorsed vehicles.
- Passage of King County Ordinance 18230 amended the appeal process for license denials, suspensions, revocations, and civil penalties from the Board of Appeals to the Hearing Examiner's Office.
- Seattle began implementing Ordinance 124968, regarding collective bargaining rights for for-hire drivers, by establishing Director's Rules to guide the process.
- The Port of Seattle established a one-year pilot contract with three TNC's, adding designated waiting areas, and customer pick up areas at SeaTac International Airport.
- KC Licensing office began accepting credit cards.
- Seattle increased the TNC per ride fee from $0.10 to $0.14.
- Seattle awarded city medallions to the five County-Only WAT owners, resulting in a total of 50 Dual WAT medallions.

2017: Seattle and the County launched the Transportation Regulation Improvement Project (TRIP) to develop a single Seattle/County, consolidated system for handling for-hire licensing and regulations using an electronic, online system.

55 new Seattle-only taxicab medallions were awarded by lottery to existing/qualified drivers and 13 voluntary conversions of regular for-hire vehicles to wheelchair accessible vehicles were approved. Significant work went into reducing the TNC application permit processing backlog from more than 90 days to within seven days.

King County Council proposed a motion (No. 2017-0302.1) requesting the King County Executive to enter

into negotiations with Seattle to allow taxi license holders reciprocal operating rights between Seattle and the County, requiring County Executive to develop an ordinance to conform to adopted Seattle legislation, and later the motion was amended to include consolidating the appeal process for appellants who appeal RALS license actions.

Launched a "Listening and Engagement Tour," reaching out to and meeting with local dispatch companies, medallion owners, drivers, special interest groups and other interested industry parties, to better understand the state of the for-hire industry, discuss desired changes from the industry/customer perspective, share ideas and concepts from the regulatory perspective, discuss opportunities to further leverage the wheelchair accessible surcharge funds, and to increase direct communication and accessibility between the industry and County/Seattle regulators.

2018: For-hire driver permit processing maintained a seven-day processing time after reaching historic peaks of more than 90 days. Port of Seattle-SeaTac International Airport Ground Transportation management announced a requirement for TNC for-hire driver permits and TNC vehicle endorsement decals on all vehicles operating at the airport. King County Inspectors partnered with SeaTac Ground Transportation enforcement staff to provide instructions for how to be compliant with the requirements by March 1, 2018.

King County Ordinance (18665) was adopted, leading to the removal of citizenship status, immigration status and place of birth from for-hire licensing applications.

The 2018 Washington State Legislature appropriated funding and directed the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) to conduct two studies, one focused on taxi and for-hire vehicle regulations and the other focused on transportation network company regulations. The studies were transmitted to the JTC in January 2019 and can be found here: http://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Pages/CurrentStudies.aspx.

For-hire code revisions to chapter 6.64 were discussed with interested industry parties (associations and for-hire companies, Port of Seattle) to identify changes and improvements of existing language. Specifically, identifying barriers to competition that may exist in County regulations preventing the taxicab and for-hire segment of the for-hire industry from the ability to compete and innovate.

A request for proposal (RFP) was advertised to award 25 new wheelchair accessible taxicab medallions in response to requests from consumers and industry to better meet demand for accessible services. The process was planned to award medallions in the first half of the year 2019, though it later closed without award.

King County reduced fees for taxicab and for-hire vehicle licenses, for-hire driver licenses, taxicab association licenses and for-hire company registrations, and transportation network company per-ride fees under the required considerations set forth in King County Code 4A.750.100 (B).

2019: The request for proposals, announced in December 2018, to award 25 new Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab Medallions closed in February of 2019. The selection process met with several broad requests for public information and protests that delayed awarding the medallions. As of the end of 2019, the 25 new medallions had not been awarded.

The County Council adopted Ordinance 18874, removing the requirement for TNC drivers to be the registered owner of the endorsed vehicle they drive and added a 10-year age limit for TNC vehicles.

Taxicab Association Yellow Cab, in cooperation with Records and Licensing Services (RALS) and City of Seattle Finance and Administrative Services (FAS), replaced the traditional taximeters that measure time and distance through a mechanical connection to the vehicle with a new type of taximeter called a 'smart meter'. The two most notable differences include the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to measure distance and time and the use of real time traffic data that, if authorized by regulation, supports dynamic pricing and other fare pricing strategies that modernize taxi service.

King County Council passed motion 15512 requesting the Executive to develop a recommendation report for adding requirements related to human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation awareness training and testing for for-hire drivers.

The Port of Seattle's contract with a single vendor affiliated with a fleet of taxicab and for-hire vehicles for for-hire ground transportation at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport expired in October 2019. The expired contract was replaced by contracts with over 400 individual medallion owners, all of whom operated their vehicles under the previous vendor contract.

King County Council passed ordinance 18989 directing the executive to establish an electric scooter share pilot in the North Highline urban unincorporated area of King County.

Work continued on the Transportation Regulation Improvement Project (TRIP)**,** a project to implement a new for-hire licensing platform as a shared system between the Seattle and King County.

Seattle adopted ordinances related to TNC drivers: a Minimum Compensation Study, Deactivation Rights, and imposing a $0.57 tax on TNC rides to take effect July 1, 2020. The Minimum Compensation ordinance authorizes a study to set a minimum compensation rate of at least the independent contractor equivalent of Seattle's large employer minimum wage ($16.39 in 2020) plus reasonable expenses. The deactivation rights ordinance establishes a right to be free from unwarranted deactivation, creates an arbitration process for drivers to challenge such deactivations, and funds a Driver Resolution Center to represent drivers at arbitration hearings.

2020: In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, RALS closed offices to customer-facing services. RALS adjusted TNC work to authorize and enable employees to process application materials remotely, including emailing images of the TNC Driver permits to drivers. RALS issued license extensions to all for-hire driver licensees with a valid driver license to avoid disruption to their business.

RALS and the City of Seattle began drafting revisions to County and Seattle for-hire regulations with the goals to simplify and align licensing models, remove barriers that limit competition, transition to technology that enables dynamic fares and alternative pricing strategies, and improve customer service.

Seattle imposed additional operating requirements for certain qualifying TNCs, including a $0.57 tax on TNC trips that originate inside the Seattle city limits beginning July 1, 2020. In October, Seattle approved a new law set to take effect January 1, 2021 that establishes minimum driver compensation standards for TNCs that perform 200K trips or more per quarter.

King County Public Rule FIN-10-3-1 went into effect in January 2020 increasing reimbursement rates and establishing new reimbursement categories paid from the Wheelchair Accessible Services fund. An emergency rule was implemented in March 2020, amending FIN-10-3-1, to help preserve continuity of

wheelchair services during the COVID-19 pandemic by suspending the minimum trip requirements through 2020 and providing for quarterly reimbursements for maintenance and equipment expenses, which are typically paid annually after the end of the year. In June 2020 the emergency rules were finalized into a formal rule (FIN-10-3-2) authorizing the emergency allowances through the end of 2020.

The December 2018 request for proposals to award 25 new Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab Medallions closed in February of 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic struck while the RFP process was ongoing and significantly reduced the demand for for-hire transportation leading to a decision to cancel the RFP.

RALS submitted a report in June 2020 in response to King County Council Motion 15512 recommending the County develop an anti-human trafficking awareness training video customized to the for-hire transportation industry.

King County Council Ordinance 18989 required RALS to establish and manage an electric scooter share pilot program in the North Highline Urban Unincorporated Area. The pilot period began when shared scooters first became available to the public for use, August 17, 2020.

Work continued on the Transportation Regulation Improvement Project (TRIP)**,** a project to implement a new for-hire licensing platform as a shared system between the City of Seattle and King County. Implementation of the system occurred in stages with much of the 2020 work focused on online medallion renewal processing and configuration of the for-hire driver licensing module.

2021: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, RALS offices remained closed to customer-facing services and served customer remotely. In response to the pandemic's effect on the for-hire transportation industry, the County took action to provide relief for licensees and to reduce barriers to resuming for-hire transportation service. The County reduced fees assessed to licensees under King County Code (KCC) 6.64.026 and KCC 4A.750.100(B) beginning May 10, 2021. The ten-year vehicle age limit for taxicabs, for-hire vehicles, and TNC vehicles was suspended through June 30, 2022.

As a result of industry outreach, the County and Seattle enacted three new rules in support of taxicab and for-hire operators:

I. Taximeters (LIC-8-4-PR): Provides guidance for testing and approving taximeters, including smart taximeters, and clarifies rules about taxis varying fares from those established in Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 6.310.530 and KCC 6.64.760 when using the application dispatch system (ADS) function of a smart taximeter system.
II. Application Dispatch Systems (LIC-8-5-PR): Provides updated requirements for using an ADS and recognition of the ADS within a smart taximeter system.
III. Temporary Changes to Insurance Requirements for Taxicabs and For-Hire Vehicles (LIC-8-6-PR): With a goal of increasing cost-effective insurance options for taxicab and flat-rate/for-hire vehicle owners, this rule implemented temporary changes to cancellation notification requirements, removed a prohibition on “named driver exclusions”, and amended the A.M. Best Rating requirement from B to B-. It also allowed surplus lines from an insurer with an A.M. Best Rating of not less than B (A.M. Best Financial Size Category VII).

In November 2021, joint King County-Seattle rule FIN-10-3-4PR was published for public comment and adopted in January of 2022 to help ensure the continued viability of wheelchair transportation service in the County and Seattle by reestablishing minimum trip requirements and updating reimbursements for vehicle maintenance, equipment, and acquisition.

Seattle implemented a new law effective January 1, 2021, establishing minimum driver compensation standards for TNCs. Seattle's Fare Share Plan includes a TNC Driver Deactivation ordinance that was implemented in 2020 and the TNC Minimum Compensation ordinance.

The Governor signed Washington SHB 2076 establishing statewide TNC regulations, which went into effect July 2022. The bill preserves King County's existing local regulatory model, but preempted changes unless the changes align with the new statewide TNC regulations.

Work continued on the Transportation Regulation Improvement Project (TRIP)**,** a project to implement a new for-hire licensing platform as a shared system between the City of Seattle and King County. Implementation occurred in stages with medallion activities launching in 2019; the customer portal for submitting medallion transactions online in 2020; and for-hire driver license processing, including online applications, launched in spring 2021.

Work also continued on drafting revisions to County and Seattle for-hire regulations.

2022: RALS offices remained closed to in-person customer service following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, with service being provided through remote access.

Starting in 2020 and through 2022, RALS worked closely with Seattle's Finance and Administrative Services Department to draft proposed revisions to County and Seattle for-hire regulations focused primarily on taxicab and for-hire vehicle operations intended to simplify and align licensing models, remove barriers that limit competition, support transitioning to technology that enables dynamic pricing strategies and improve customer service.

Washington SHB 2076, effective July 9, 2022, established new statewide TNC regulations. The Bill's statewide regulatory requirements (46.72B RCW) went into effect January 1, 2023. SHB 2076 preserved King County's existing local regulatory model and authority but preempted changes to County regulations after March 10, 2022, unless the changes align with the statewide TNC regulations.

In response to steep increases in the price of fuel, the City of Seattle implemented Director's Rule R-6.310.530. F., which allows a $1.00 per trip surcharge at regular intervals when gas prices exceed $5.00 per gallon. RALS established a public rule to coincide with the County Public Rule LIC-8-7-PR Temporary Fuel Surcharges Authorized for Taxicabs that was implemented in July. Following this implementation, fuel prices increased above the $5.00 threshold in October and the surcharges remained in effect through early December, when prices decreased below the threshold.

RALS offices moved from the King County Administration Building to the King Street Center in November 2022 and reopened to the public in April 2023.

The Transportation Regulation Improvement Project (TRIP) was initiated by Seattle's Consumer Protection Division and King County's For-Hire Licensing team in June 2016 to implement a shared licensing platform, Accela. Implementation of the system occurred in stages over several years with the final stage, TNC driver application processing, deployed in December 2022.

2023: In-person service resumed in March 2023 at a new location, King Street Center, in Pioneer Square after closing in-person services in March 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

For the second consecutive year, in response to steep increases in the price of fuel, the County and Seattle implemented respective rules (King County Public Rule LIC-8-7-PR/City of Seattle Director's Rule R-6.310.530.I) which allow a $1.00 per trip surcharge at regular intervals when gas prices exceed $5.00 per gallon. On July 4, 2023, fuel prices increased above the $5.00 threshold and remained above $5.00 per gallon until late October when prices decreased below the threshold.

The County launched a new website in December aiming to bring transparency to the medallion marketplace by providing a place where medallion owners can list their medallions for sale or lease with the goal of leading to more active medallions in service.

The County and Seattle adopted legislation in late December 2023 bringing major change to the for-hire industry. The legislation was intended to simplify and align licensing models, remove barriers that limit competition, support transitioning to new technology that enables greater fare flexibility and pave the way for future integration with local trip planning tools, and improve customer service.

- King County Ordinance 19692: This ordinance authorized the King County Executive to execute interlocal agreements with public agencies to regulate for-hire transportation effectively renewing existing interlocal agreements pursuant to the newly adopted ordinances.
- King County Ordinance 19693/Seattle Ordinance 126978: These ordinances authorized an updated interlocal agreement between the County and Seattle for the regulation of for-hire transportation. The agreement now incorporates a new chapter 6.65 in the King County Code and chapter 6.311 in Seattle Municipal Code.
- King County Ordinance 19699/Seattle Ordinance 126976: These ordinances separated taxicab and for-hire vehicle code requirements from TNC code requirements, and made other changes intended to improve alignment with State law for TNC drivers and vehicles.
- King County Ordinance 19700/Seattle Ordinance 126977: These ordinances created new chapters in County and Seattle codes to regulate taxicabs and flat-rate for-hire vehicles.

A summary of major legislative changes:

For-hire Drivers

- Reduced minimum driver age to apply for a for-hire driver license from 21 to 20 years old.
- Established a regional for-hire driver license (no longer using City only, County only, and City/County dual license designations).
- Established an enhanced regional for-hire driver's license as a new, optional license type that requires an annual fingerprint-based criminal background check, in addition to the third-party based criminal background check and driving history report required for all license types.
- TNC driver permits will no longer allow a driver to operate a taxicab or for-hire vehicle.

Medallions

- Medallion renewal dates will be based on a rolling 12-month period from the date of issuance rather than a fixed, annual date.
- New reciprocity endorsements allow City-only and County-only medallions to pick up passengers in both jurisdictions.
- "Dual" medallion owners may split their medallion so the City medallion and the County medallion may be used separately, each with jurisdictional reciprocity endorsements.
- All for-hire vehicle medallions convert to taxicab medallions by March 31, 2026.
- If a medallion will not operate for 60 or more days, the owner must file temporary deactivation.

- Medallions relinquished to the County or Seattle between January 31, 2015, and September 1, 2024, will have one year to renew or transfer the medallion before it is permanently retired.

General

- SEA Airport minimum fare of $20 for trips originating from SEA beginning December 18, 2023.
- The maximum vehicle age based on model year increased to 15 years old (up from 10 years).
- All taxis must operate using a smart taximeter system by March 31, 2026.

Associations and Companies

- To operate after March 31, 2024, a taxicab association or for-hire vehicle company that was licensed or registered in 2023 must obtain a transitional regional dispatch agency license.
- A transitional regional dispatch agency must adopt a smart taximeter system by March 31, 2026.

2024: The County and Seattle issued 19 rules (called public rules by the County and director's rules by Seattle) to implement the 2023 ordinances. Of the 19 rules, the County and Seattle jointly issued 16 of them and Seattle issued three of them. Three rules addressed new topics – splitting a "dual" taxicab or for-hire vehicle medallion, temporarily deactivating a taxicab or for-hire vehicle medallion, and training requirements for a regional for-hire driver's license. However, most rules updated vehicle-related topics like exterior and interior markings, leasing, and safety inspections.

Former taxicab associations and for-hire vehicle companies began to be licensed as transitional regional dispatch agencies (still using traditional meters) and regional dispatch agencies (using a smart taximeter system). By March 31, 2026, dispatch agencies will be required to be licensed as an RDA and to use a smart taximeter system for affiliated vehicles.

Began updating the Accela licensing and permitting platform for new processes, including converting a for-hire vehicle medallion to a taxicab medallion, temporarily deactivating a taxicab or for-hire vehicle medallion, the ability to split a dual medallion into a County medallion and a Seattle medallion, and the option for an enhanced regional for-hire driver's license. Accela updates will continue in 2025 to fully implement the changes affecting driver licensing.

Applicants for a new regional for-hire driver's license are required to complete human trafficking awareness and prevention training beginning November 1, 2024, as well as renewing applicants upon their first renewal on or after November 1, 2024.

Redesigned the regional for-hire driver's license card, TNC for-hire driver permit card, and the medallion license that is attached to the vehicles, including switching the medallion from a metal plate to a decal. The County began issuing the new card designs to drivers in 2024 and the City of Seattle began issuing the new vehicle medallions in 2025.