

Preface

Taxi! The Analysis of an Important but Neglected Mode of Urban Transport

The taxi plays a significant role in the delivery of transportation in all parts of the world, offering an instantly recognizable consistent service. The mode contributes significantly to the economy of a location providing access to and from social activities, contributing to tourism, and providing socially desirable accessibility to individuals without cars and in use in emergencies. The taxi is often the largest employer in an urban community and will touch the lives of a significant proportion of a city population.

Despite the apparent uniformity of the mode, the taxicab differs from location to location, varying in the types of vehicle used and, most particularly, in the forms of regulation applied to the mode. The former issue, vehicles used as taxis, draws on a fascinating history of taxi development, set out in Chapter 1, and is guided by the technologies available, see Chapter 6; the latter, regulation and its impact on the provision of taxis is considered, historically in Chapter 1, and in detail in Chapter 2. It is also noticeable that the mode differs from other forms of public transportation both in relative control, positioning within authorities, and in relation to its limited analysis in academic literature, this despite the long-standing and consistent nature of the mode. The taxicab is the oldest form of licensed public transportation in the world, with the first licensing of taxis traceable to the seventeenth century.

This book describes the historical development of the taxicab from the earliest regulations some of which, such as the UK 1847 Town Police Clauses Act, remain in force to this day. The book traces the development of controls arising in Europe and the USA, through rapid expansion in taxicabs and taxicab regulation in the USA following the 1920 depression, to current conflict arising between authorities choosing to control taxicabs, and those wishing to deregulate.

Chapter 2 considers the requirements for taxi regulation, and the arguments used both in its defence and in seeking to move toward a form of deregulated or liberalized market form. The chapter draws on experiences in the UK, in the USA and globally to explain why some authorities have chosen one form of control over another, and touches on the very fierce debates that deregulation sometimes create.

Chapters 3 and 4 introduce and detail analytical tools, sometimes called taxi models, used in determining optimal forms of supply including those applied

in the UK arising from current legislative requirements in the determination of regulatory structures, and those applied in US cities in delivering optimal taxi structures.

Chapter 5, technologies, details the development and significance of changing technologies in the delivery of taxi services. The chapter provides an insight into the current roles played by vehicles, location and booking technologies; as well as discussing the role of vehicle type in uses made of taxis and the ability of the taxicab to meet the needs of the communities it serves. Chapter 6 considers the special role of the taxi in urban night-time economies in providing public transportation as a mode of choice for travelling home from entertainment, and the associated issues of significantly increased levels of demand, heightened awareness of security and safety amongst both passengers and drivers, and related issues of safety at stance (US: cabstand).

Chapter 7 continues to look at the specialist roles for taxicabs, considering the role the mode plays in transportation from airports, the issues of supply and controls applied at airports as a part of city controls and separately applied by airport authorities to ensure appropriate supply and, in some instances, as a finance raising measure.

Chapter 8 looks at the developing use of taxis within and parallel to other forms of Demand Responsive Transportation, addressing particular transport needs not well served by more traditional modes or existing operating patterns. Chapter 9 further continues by looking at the significance of taxis in specialist use, including the use of the mode away from major urban centres to serve remote and reduced populations, and variations of use to deliver transport to employment, travel to hospital and community specialist journeys. The chapter considers the taxicab in a developmental role and extends analysis to identify the potential of the mode in developing countries including cross-over roles between developing and developed economies. Chapter 11 identifies specific barriers to achieving a maximum benefit from the mode, how historical barriers have existed and continue to prevent full utilization of the mode.