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A “New World Order” for Ground Transportation Regulation
IATR 2014 New Orleans Conference Preview

The times “are a changing” in our regulatory universe. Several worlds are colliding: technology disruption; sustainability, disability rights and “Vision Zero” movements; and decreased public tolerance for poor taxicab service. These political and technology catalysts have led transportation regulators around the world to rethink the regulatory chemistry and institute bold reforms and adaptations. Rapid change is underway, instigated by private equity backed disruptive technology transportation companies, as well as by newly elected reform minded officials who have provided support and encouragement for their regulators. While reform does not come easy, the recent success of many of our members in marshaling through major customer service changes, challenges that assumption. So, there is no better place than the “**Big Easy**” to hold the **IATR’s 27th Annual Conference**, as the City of **New Orleans** is a recent example of successful reform efforts and true regulatory grit. This year’s annual conference will be held at the **Hyatt Regency** from **September 21st through the 24th**, and further conference details, including sponsorship opportunities, registration and the program agenda will be posted and activated in the near future on our website www.iatr.org We will focus on the latest regulatory trends and best practices in technology, accessibility, safety and regulatory management. Also, the IATR will be unveiling its first draft of proposed model regulations for accessibility, and will hold an international public hearing to solicit comments from regulators and stakeholders alike. With the tremendous

change enveloping regulators from every angle, the “New World Order” theme is very fitting, and below is a description of our conference program.

Accessibility – Model IATR Regulations

There have been many recent developments in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and beyond that have cast a spotlight on accessibility issues that have been growing in importance for decades. These developments include conversion of high percentages of taxicab fleets to wheelchair accessible vehicles; tax incentives for vehicle owners who purchase or retrofit an accessible taxicab; accessible dispatch programs; the distinction between purpose-built and after-market retrofitted wheelchair accessible vehicles; whether accessible vehicles qualify as sedans or vans under disability laws; and the use of smartphone apps for disabled passengers to access such services.

The IATR’s Model Accessible Regulations Project will analyze regulatory best practices worldwide, and will include not just the type of preferred or legally compliant vehicles, but also the broader role of other related transportation modes and how mass transit and private paratransit companies can integrate and work more closely with taxicab, sedan and limousine services. The emergence of brokerage models by human resource agencies in the paratransit world, as well as mass transit agencies deploying and utilizing sedans and taxicabs as a cheaper, more efficient and environmentally conscious substitute for multi-passenger vans dispatched along irregular routes, is one such future approach that will be considered and discussed. The draft model regulations of the IATR’s Accessibility Working Group will be released at the New Orleans conference and an international public hearing will be held at the conference to solicit comments about the proposed draft regulations from the broader regulatory community.

Some of the issues and questions that will be posed from the model regulation exercise will be: (1) the meaning of the term “accessible” itself as it pertains to vehicle design, dimensions and specifications; (2) concerns facing passengers, industry owners, drivers and regulators alike include safety standards associated with retrofitting vehicles to include wheelchair ramps, as well as the higher operational and insurance costs associated therewith; (3) how far regulations should go in terms of dictating requirements from a licensing point of view, as opposed to simply relying on, or seeking to change, national anti-discrimination laws or laws relating to the safety and manufacturing standards imposed on manufacturers directly; (4) whether transportation regulators should be in the business of using government-run or contracted central dispatch systems to deploy a limited or proportional number of accessible taxis and for-hire vehicles; and (5) whether regulators should be embarking on a path towards 100% accessibility for all vehicles.

Smartphone Technology – Disruption, Ridesharing and Deregulation

The smartphone app movement is spiraling out of control as expected over the past year, and the IATR's model regulations have been put to use by regulators around the world to permit smart and fair regulation of technology to both protect the public and enhance services. We are at a crossroads now, where the ridesharing companies and other rogue apps are making a full court press to deregulate and enter the markets of as many cities and countries possible, with the intent of either increasing their mesh or web of data accumulation, and/or gearing up for Initial Public Offerings (IPOs). This session will provide an overview of apps around the world, with an international perspective that includes market trends and regulation, as well as the response of regulators on all continents. The latest developments in model regulations, as well as the Transportation Network Company licensing approach trend, will be discussed. We will hear from regulators who have implemented the IATR model regulations, as well as from technology and industry stakeholders affected by such changes. The ramifications of blatant attempts to deregulate the industry via the abolishment of minimum fares and waiting times, as well as complete open entry and cross-pollination between limousines and taxicabs, will be explored via a debate on such issues. A special session on the impact of smartphone app technology business models on driver worker classification and independent contractor issues will be held. Also, a primer session for regulators to fully understand the complex world of insurance coverage will be held, given the recent controversy surrounding Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) and the regulator's role in this issue.

Regulatory Reform & Management

The regulatory reform movement is well underway in several major cities, involving inquiries, regulatory overhauls and general improvements to taxicab service. A primary example of such reforms will be the site of our conference – New Orleans – where various service improvements were put into place, as well as: Victoria, Australia; Toronto, Ontario; Chicago, Illinois; San Francisco, California; and Houston, Texas. Regulators from various jurisdictions will outline the reforms undertaken, the process by which the reforms were passed, as well as an update and their experience with implementation. With elected officials finally realizing that the affordability and quality of taxicab service has an important impact on the local economy, traffic congestion, tourism and the overall reputation of cities, the political will of Mayors to seek improvements is increasing. Such reforms include improvements in: driver training; vehicle conditions, safety and clean fuel technology; reduced dispatch response times; credit card mandates and payment processing surcharge reductions; and increased accessibility. Regulators who have lived through these reforms will tell their stories and develop a template or general principles for other regulators to follow in terms of the policy-making, political and implementation processes. Regulatory management best practices and principles will be explored and discussed.

Traffic Safety – “Vision Zero”

The latest trend in transportation safety policy is a policy movement known as “Vision Zero”, which started in Sweden and has taken on various forms and designations in several other cities and countries, including Chicago, San Francisco and New York. The concept is to develop a comprehensive transportation policy plan to reduce traffic fatalities to zero by a certain year in the future. The policy plans vary, and some include technology solutions and for-hire ground transportation policies promoting reduced speeds and other safety measures. For instance, New York City’s current proposals include the use of black box technology, in-vehicle cameras, speed and red light cameras, and the ability to use such data to track and prosecute drivers, as well as to shut the meter off when speeding. Regulators and technology stakeholders will present their jurisdictions’ ideas and initiatives, capabilities of existing technology, and their impact on the industry and passengers.

Working Groups and Break-Out Sessions

This IATR conference will not only feature vendor breakout sessions as in past conferences for regulators to view the latest the latest products, devices and services available in terms of technology, vehicles, training and consulting, but the IATR’s active working groups will also be holding their own sessions and meetings for the first time to advance their agendas. The following working groups and topical break-out sessions will be held: (1) IATR Academic Research Committee – Development of IATR Fact Book; (2) Pedicab Working Group; (3) IATR Legislative Committee - Criminal Background Check Clearinghouse & Passenger Safety and Security (PASS) Act update; (4) Partition and Security Cameras & Specifications; and (5) IATR Smartphone App Committee - Insurance Primer.