

BCC Work Session



- 1. History**
- 2. Regional Landscape**
- 3. Pinellas County**
- 4. Local Business**

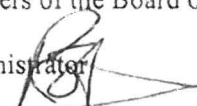



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND CONSUMER SERVICES

Tim Burns
Director

Memorandum

TO: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

THROUGH: Robert S. LaSala, County Administrator 

FROM: Tim Burns, Director 
Justice and Consumer Services

SUBJECT: Review of Vehicle for Hire Regulation

DATE: March 6, 2012

History of Vehicle for Hire Discussion

Historically, vehicle for hire regulation has been a topic of discussion within Pinellas County on several occasions. As early as 1994, the MPO formed an Ad Hoc Committee to explore countywide vehicle for hire needs. During these discussions, the committee discussed the pros and cons of various regulatory elements including driver checks, vehicle safety, rates, limiting permits, setting color schemes, insurance standards, etc. The review considered elements needed for a countywide approach and outlined a specific issue with varying definitions and standards across jurisdictions within the County. This effort did not result in a countywide ordinance.

In October 2004, Pinellas County again discussed vehicle for hire regulation at a BCC Workshop. At the time, the issues brought forth from the industry cited public safety, tourism/economic impacts, service level standards, and redundancy of municipal licensing. During the workshop in 2004, information was provided on Hillsborough regulations, possible Pinellas processes and revenues, and rates and operation. Key issues brought up by the Board included a desire for countywide safety and insurance standards, discussions on rate setting, and concerns with avoiding the limitation of competition. A draft ordinance and initial estimates on implementation were generated.

Since then, Pinellas has received several inquiries on vehicle for hire regulation. These inquiries have typically been received from the industry. In terms of consumers, the County has seen 18 complaints on taxi and limousine services since October 2006 primarily due to quality and terms of service.

Current Review Actions

Based on recent inquiries, Justice and Consumer Services has initiated contact with Hillsborough to discuss short term (RNC-related) vehicle for hire access as well as possible cross-county parity if Pinellas seeks local regulation. Both areas are currently being followed up on.

Additionally, in order to obtain industry input on the current status of vehicle for hire, Justice and Consumer Services has contacted the Chief Investigator of the Hillsborough Public Transportation Commission and has reached out to several local companies. While still soliciting additional feedback, initial discussions have indicated a strong desire for regulation by the industry and willingness to register. Input/issues received include:

- Background of drivers:
 - There was significant concern over backgrounds of drivers. Some instances of Pinellas drivers denied in Hillsborough based on background standards. Transport of vulnerable populations was specifically mentioned as a concern with the backgrounds.
- Registration:
 - Anyone can simply place sign on vehicle and transport.
- Safety and operating standards:
 - Without safety standards, operators can delay needed maintenance, forego important safety measures, etc. This can undercut and lower the overall industry standards to 'keep pace' and compete.
- Insurance standards:
 - Without standards, operators can reduce in order to save money. This impacts the overall industry and consumers.
- Rates
 - Minimum and maximum rate standards were suggested
- Investments in market:
 - Without standards, concerned over investing too much in a market that can easily be undercut.
- Consistent standards:
 - Providing for common countywide standards.
- Limitations in number of operators:
 - This was supported by the initial feedback, *however, it was discussed that sufficient safety and operating standards would likely allow the market to drive this as not everyone will invest in meeting standards.*

Current Regulation Examples

Across the state, there are several examples of current vehicle for hire regulation. At this time, the State of Florida only certifies the calibration of taxi meters at a fee of \$35 per year. They inspect the taxi once every 2 years to ensure the meter is calibrated and that fees are properly posted. They do not regulate or perform safety inspections and they do not currently set rates for service.

Hillsborough County

In Hillsborough, vehicles for hire are regulated by the Public Transportation Commission (PTC) by special act including taxicabs, limousines, vans, basic life support ambulances, and wrecker services supporting government agencies. The act was created in 1976, and has an established board consisting of three county commissioners, two Tampa City Council members, one representative

from Plant City, and one representative from Temple Terrace. The PTC establishes annual inspection schedules and sets rates, fees, and rules of operation. (including safety and insurance standards).

Miami Dade County

In Miami Dade, vehicles for hire are regulated by Consumer Services including taxicabs, limousines, special transportation service vehicles, etc. Miami Dade permits taxicabs, sets rates, fees, and operation/vehicle standards, establishes a passenger "bill of rights", and facilitates an incentive program for outstanding service to tourists, visitors, and residents.

As part of the regulatory process, Consumer Services established a Taxicab Advisory Group (TAG) comprised of consumer and industry representatives, transportation interests, municipalities, and public interest organizations. The group is charged with helping to develop, implement, and evaluate new innovative taxicab services, service expansion, and improvements.

Palm Beach County

In Palm Beach, Consumer Affairs regulates vehicles for hire including taxicabs, limousines, shuttle and non-medical companies. Drivers must wear Palm Beach driver ID badge. Vehicles must meet standard operating, insurance, and safety standards. Consumer Affairs established a vehicle for hire committee consisting of industry operators meeting monthly to discuss issues within the industry.

Broward County

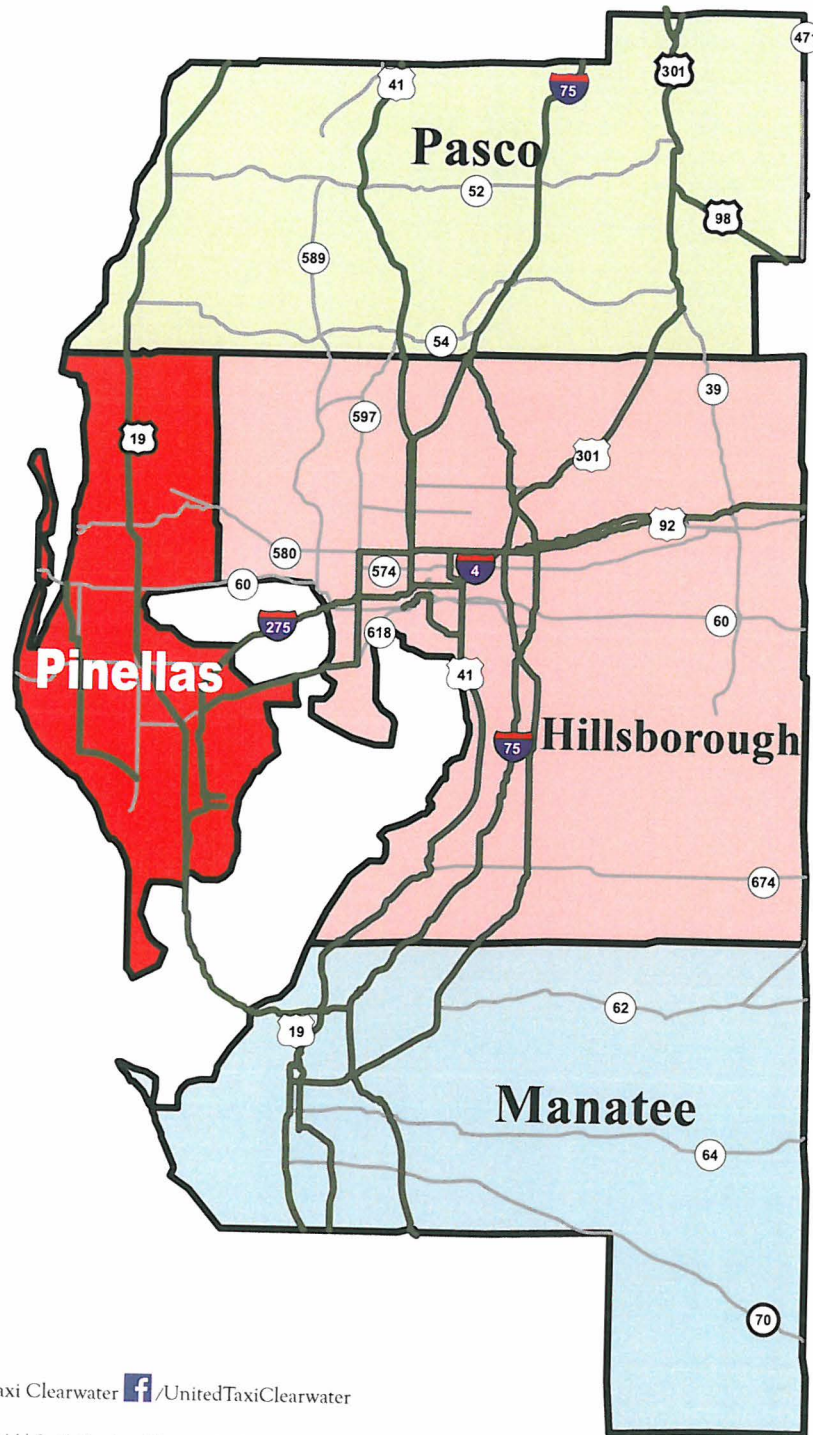
In Broward, Licensing and Consumer Protection regulates vehicles for hire including taxicabs, luxury limousines, and transport vans holding up to 19 passengers. Broward sets operating, insurance and safety standards for vehicles. Drivers must possess a Chauffeur registration to drive vehicles for hire.

Pinellas County

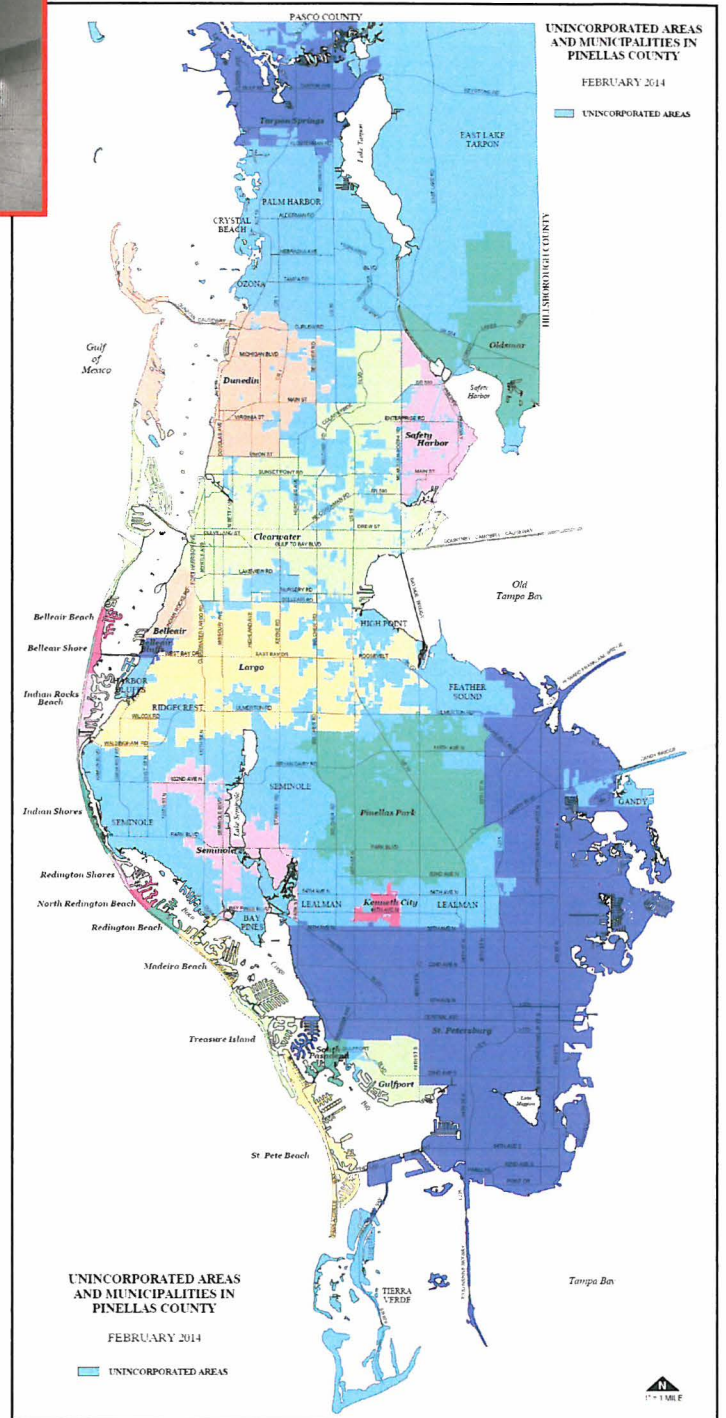
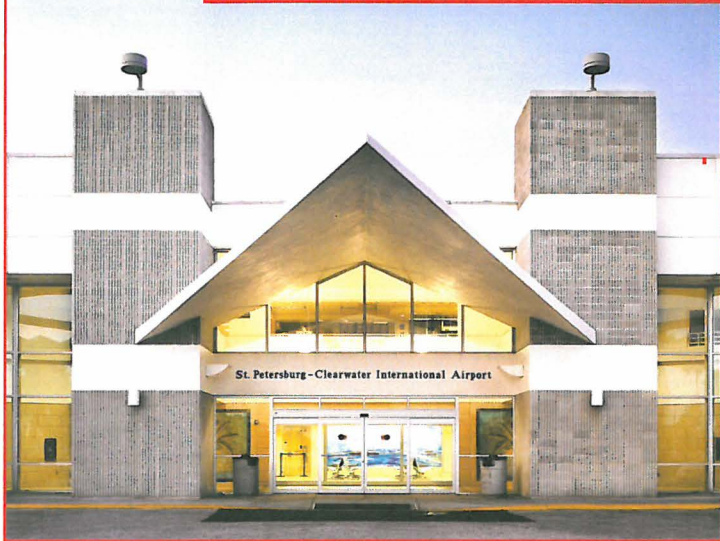
In Pinellas, there are pockets of regulation for vehicles for hire within half of the municipalities each with varying processes and requirements. A chart of the existing regulations is currently being updated. Typically, liability insurance coverage is included when regulation is present in a municipality, and businesses must file their rates; however, there are no specific standards. In St Petersburg's case, some additional safety and operational standards are set with their registration. In addition, St Pete/Clearwater Airport registers a shuttle provider and two (2) quasi-exclusive taxicab providers for service at their location. The airport sets standards for the service and allows a certain number of vehicles in queue per provider.

If a countywide approach is considered to establish standards for operation, initial implementation of a vehicle-for-hire program in Pinellas is estimated to cost between \$450,000 and \$600,000 depending on enforcement and inspection levels. It is believed that the costs of the program could be fully offset through registration fees assessed for permitting an estimated 430 taxicabs, 400 limos/vans, and 1,720 drivers (estimated at 860 vehicles x2 drivers per vehicle).

Regional Landscape



Pinellas County



Local Business

1. Full Service Taxi Fleets

- a. +98% of trips are pre-arranged through our call center, web booker, or app.**
- b. Less than 2% of trips are “flagged” on street.**

2. Non-Affiliated Solo Driver

- a. +98% of trips are “flagged” on street**
- b. Less than 2% of trips are pre-arranged**

3. Transportation Network Companies

- a. Electronic app pre-arranged trips**