



I want to start a new taxi service

Do I need a licence to start a taxi service?

Yes. You need a passenger transportation licence to operate a taxi service in British Columbia. The type of licence you need is known as a “**special authorization**” licence. The type of vehicle you need authority to operate is a “**passenger directed vehicle**”.

The Passenger Transportation Board (“Board”) makes decisions on applications for special authorization licences.

What is a taxi?

“Taxis” are not defined in the *Passenger Transportation Act*. Generally, the Board considers a vehicle a taxi if a licence allows the:

- pick up of passengers who hail or flag the vehicle from the street
- use of a top light
- use of a taxi meter
- use of a vehicle that can carry a driver and no more than 7 passengers

How do I put together an Application Package?

Start by collecting information to put in your application package. An application package must be complete. Incomplete application packages delay the processing of your application. Both the Passenger Transportation Branch (“Branch”) and the Board have application requirements.

Send your application to the:

Passenger Transportation Branch
Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
313 – 1500 Woolridge Street, Coquitlam BC V3K 0B8
Phone: 604-527-2198
Fax: 604-527-2205
Toll Free: Call the Enquiry BC number at 1-800-663-7867
Email: passengertransportationbr@gov.bc.ca

The Branch reviews your application to confirm it is complete. If your application is complete, the Branch sends it to the Board. If your application is incomplete, the Branch will ask to you to supply missing documents. Once you have supplied these, the Branch will send your application to the Board. If you do not supply the missing documents in the time set by the Branch, it will send your incomplete application to the Board. The Board may, after giving you notice, dismiss your application if you do not provide the required documents.

What do I need to put in an application package?

Use this checklist to make sure your application package is complete.

1. Required Forms

- Special Authorization Licence Application Package** [Branch SA Forms PTR 5010](#)
- PDV Vehicle Proposal** [PDV Forms](#) (Form 1)
- PDV Proposed Service and Terms & Conditions of Licence** [PDV Forms](#) (Form 2)
- Municipal Notice Form: Taxi Applications** [PDV Forms](#) (Form 4)
- Disclosure of Unlawful Activity & Bankruptcy** [PDV Forms](#) (Form 5)
- Public Explanation of Application** [PDV Forms](#) (Form 6)
- Declaration** [PDV Forms](#) (Form 17)

2. Required Materials

- Business Plan, including** Reference [Sheet 2](#) and [Sheet 3](#)
 - Financial Information** Reference [Sheet 4](#)

- Public Need Indicators** (as outlined in this application guide)
- Proposed Rates and Rules** (see application guide and optional forms)

If you want to use “taxi soft meters” to calculate rates, you **must** submit the following:

- Taxi Soft Meter** [Declaration of Compliance](#) (Form 20)

If you want to use wheelchair accessible taxis, you **must** submit the following:

- Accessible Service Plan** Reference [Sheet 7](#)

3. Optional Forms

- Condensed Operating Plan** [Optional Forms](#) (Form 9)

Note: *You must protect personal information of clients and potential clients. This is the law under the Personal Information and Privacy Act (PIPA). You must have consent to share personal information. For more information, read the Board’s Industry Advisory [Protect Personal Information of Your Customers](#)*

Is my information kept confidential?

Your application is public. The Board is required to publish notice of applications. An exception is if the Board is satisfied that there is an “urgent public need” for the proposed service. Then the application is not published. (See [Reference Sheet 5](#))

The Board publishes application summaries every Wednesday in its “Weekly Bulletin”. The Bulletin is posted on the Board’s website and is available to the public. People may make submissions on your applications. (See [Reference Sheet 8](#))

The Board keeps the following types of information confidential:

- private financial information (e.g. personal net worth statements)
- private business details (e.g. customer account information)

Other information submitted with an application may be made public. Business plans are not confidential. However, the Board does not routinely release them. Board decisions are public. If your application is set down for a public hearing, the hearing is open to the public. Most exhibits entered at a public hearing are public documents.

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* may apply to information in your application package. See [Operational Policy II.7](#) for information on requests made under FIPPA.

What does the Board consider when it reviews my application?

The Board will review your application and consider the following three questions:

1. Is there a public need for a new taxi service?
2. Are you a fit and proper person and capable of providing a taxi service?
3. Would approving the application promote sound economic conditions in the transportation industry?

If the Board answers “yes” to all three questions, your application will be approved. It is up to you to give the Board the information it needs to answer these questions. You should consider the type, location and scope of the service you wish to provide. This Application Guide outlines the type of information the Board is looking for. If you submit too little information or information that is too general, your application may be refused.

In this guide, each of the questions above is considered separately. However, you should remember that the Board member will review your whole application. The information in your package should be consistent. You should not say one thing in one section that is contradicted by something in another section. If information in your package seems contradictory, you should explain the reason for this.

Is there a public need for a new taxi service?

The Board expects you to show that there is a public need for a new taxi service in the **whole area** that you want to serve. If your application is approved, the Board may limit your operating areas to those where you have shown need. The Board also expects you to show why you need the number of vehicles that you are asking for. The Board wants to be

satisfied that there is a reasonable connection between the number and type of vehicles and public need.

You should give the Board information that is factual and objective. This information should show that there are people who would **use** your taxi service. You should not rely on your opinion or general statements of others to show public need. Your information or evidence must be reliable, relevant and probative, i.e. capable of proving a fact.

Excerpt from a Board decision to refuse a new taxi application.

The applicants' state: "The majority of the public in the region feel that there are not many cabs to serve the needs of every customer. Most of the time customers are left waiting for hours during the weekends specially when there's bar rush."

*However, the applicants have not supplied any documentation to support this declaration of taxi shortages
....*

The Board finds statements written by potential passengers more useful than form letters, petitions or strings of social media posts. User support statements that are written by people who would use a new taxi service show the Board that the writer has thought about the matter and is interested enough to take the time to tell you why he or she supports your application. Petitions and form letters do not give the Board specific information about when and how often the people who signed the petition would use a new taxi service or information about current services.

What are "Public Need Indicators"?

A "public need indicator" is factual information that shows there is a public need for more taxis in the area you want to serve. The Board wants you to analyze the information you put in your application to show public need. How does this information show public need for:

- (a) more taxi service and
- (b) the number of vehicles you are asking for?

The following list describes some types of "public need indicators" that you could include in your application package:

➤ **User Support Statements** These are documents such as letters or e-mails written by people who would either use the new taxi service themselves or who would refer the service to others or book the service for passengers. User support statements should have the following:

- why, when and how often the writer needs the new taxi service in the area or areas you want to serve
- whether the writer uses any other taxis now and, if so, how often and how long do they wait for a taxi
- why the writer would use a new taxi company instead of taxi companies that are available
- the writer's name, signature and contact information

Note You must tell people that their letter or e-mail may be treated as a public document as part of the Passenger Transportation Board's licence application process.

➤ **Signed Contracts** or agreements to enter into a contract to provide taxi service

➤ **Information about other taxi services** may be relevant to public need. The Board will want factual evidence about other taxi services, especially if you claim that they are not meeting the public's need.

➤ **Information on Population Trends, Community Plans and the Economy** You should explain how this information shows a need for more taxi service. The Board may consider population statistics when reviewing public need. However, the Board does not usually rely on "taxi to population" ratios to determine need as other factors may affect need for a new service. Such factors include the size of an area, public transportation options, existence of transportation hubs and vehicle usage. You should include the source and date of any references or statistics you put in your application.

Excerpt from a decision

We assigned considerable weight to the letters of support for the applicant. Many individuals, businesses and community organizations reported unsatisfactory and inadequate taxi service. All claimed a public need exists for a new, additional taxi service. We concur that there are service issues and a public need exists for an additional taxi service. There are customers who would use and refer this new taxi service.

- **Surveys** The focus of the survey should be on public need (as opposed to preference) for your services. The Board is also interested in why, when and how often respondents use the type of service for which you are applying.

The Board will want to know that the survey is reliable. You should tell the Board

- how the survey was developed
- who conducted the survey and
- when, where and how the survey was conducted.

You should also provide a summary of the survey results.

- **Social Media** This evidence must be meaningful and capable of being tested and verified. Quantity does not necessarily equate to relevancy or reliability.

When social media posts are submitted, you are expected to provide information that enables the Board to authenticate the information. You should provide:

- a complete copy of the original post (in writing or electronically)
- date material was retrieved
- URL for the material
- Identity and contact information for authors of the text, tweet, post or other social media comment
- A copy of notice you provided to authors that their social media comments will be disclosed to the Board as part of its consideration of a specific application and may be treated as public information.

You need to consider how best to present the evidence. Reams of raw data, such as strings of posts, may not be meaningful to the Board. The Board expects applicants to analyze information and demonstrate what it shows or proves. For example, putting raw data into a table or chart may show trends or common responses. A sample of the raw data should also be provided for reference.

For more information, read the Board's [Operational Policy II.5](#), "Submitting Social Media Information".

- **Other Material** You may have other information that indicates public need for more taxis. You may include petitions or form letters. However, the Board may not give as much weight to them as it does to information from individuals who give specific information about their use of taxis.
- **Information from Municipal Councils or Community Organizations** The Board requires you to notify municipalities of your application. The Board may receive information on transportation services from a town council, tourist board or other community organization. The Board may consider it as part of the application materials, especially if it is detailed information. The Board would share any negative information with you and give you a chance to respond.

Notes

1. *The above list is not a comprehensive list.*
2. *If you talk about a website, make sure you include a link to the specific site or webpage. You should also tell the Board what is on the site and why it is useful. If the link is to a document, tell the Board what pages of the document you want the Board to refer to.*
3. *Applicants should not ask people to contact the Board directly. Generally, the Board does not accept letters, e-mails of support or tweets or social media posts sent directly to the Board. Applicants are responsible for collecting this information and putting it in their application package.*

Are you a fit and proper person? Are you capable of providing a taxi service?

The Board reviews fitness in two parts:

- (i) Are you a “fit and proper person” to provide the proposed service?
- (ii) Are you capable of providing that service?

What is a fit and proper person?

The term “fit and proper” reflects the idea that a licensee has a responsibility to exercise the powers conferred by the granting of a licence with regard to proper standards of conduct. Fit and proper persons conduct themselves and their business lawfully. They uphold the integrity of the industry and promote public confidence in the industry.

The Board considers fitness in the context and circumstances of an application. The Board may look at such things as your conduct and its potential of harm to the public or to the integrity of the industry.

The Board will look at how you say you will run your business. Do you seem to understand passenger transportation laws and policies? Is your business set up to follow these laws? Do you have procedures in place for drivers or employees who are not compliant with the *Passenger Transportation Act*, regulations or company policies?

Excerpt from a Board decision to refuse an application on fitness grounds.

...The company's General Manager has extensive experience in the taxi industry with multiple companies in a variety of roles including one responsible for driver training and discipline and customer complaints. A Head Dispatcher will be employed with 15 years' experience in the taxi industry, 12 years of which included work as a dispatcher with a large company of 75 cars.

The company will operate the service with an in-house dispatch service 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. The company is knowledgeable of the requirements concerning eco-friendly taxis and will use industry guidelines to direct the vehicles it purchases.

The Business Plan provided budget and cash flow forecasts, hiring and training policies. Drivers in particular will be trained on how to deal with persons with disabilities. ...The 3 year financial forecasts were well prepared and realistic considering the applicant's proposed plan. At the request of the Board, the company has shown it has the financial capacity to undergo a reasonable start-up period. ...

I find the applicant to be fit and proper and capable of providing the service

If you are a company, the Board may consider the conduct and character of directors and key management staff.

You must complete a [Disclosure of Unlawful Activity and Bankruptcy](#) form as part of the application process. This information will be used by the Board as part of its assessment of your fitness. In reviewing your answers, the Board may consider such things as:

- The circumstances around any criminal charges, convictions or findings of guilt
- Bankruptcy and insolvency history
- Past behaviour and whether it

indicates a pattern of poor conduct and character, lack of financial integrity or a threat to the public

The Board inputs the names people who sign the [Disclosure of Unlawful Activity and Bankruptcy](#) into [Court Services Online](#), a provincial court registry that provides the public with 24/7 access to information from Provincial traffic and criminal court files in British Columbia.

If you have another passenger transportation licence, the Registrar will include information on any administrative penalties that have been imposed against you.

The Board may also consider other information that it learns about you when reviewing an application file. This could be information in your National Safety Code profile, allegations of illegal operations or information from submitters. The Board will review these in the context of the application, your explanation of the penalties and whether you are demonstrating care and control over your operations.

You will have an opportunity to comment on any information that may have a harmful effect on your application.

What is meant by “capable” of providing a service?

You should include information that shows you have the knowledge, skills and abilities to operate a taxi service. Résumés outline:

- your work experience and skills, and
- the work experience and skills of people who will be managing the business.

You should also include information that shows that you have the financing to operate the service. A personal net worth statement or proof of financing may be required for the Board to assess whether you are capable of providing the service.

You do not need to have run a taxi service before. The Board wants to know that you have skills that you can apply to running a taxi service. You may have gained these skills through your education, experience or work history.

The Board looks at such things:

- Your background Do you have the background, experience and skills to manage the proposed service?
- Your proposal Does your business plan and financial statements show that you understand what is needed to manage a taxi service? For example, how will your operations be set up? Are your operating costs realistic? Have you separated start-up costs from ongoing costs? Have you indicated how you will receive income? Have you considered factors that may hold up your success? Does your financial plan include appropriate costs?
- Your ability to provide the service Do you have plans to overcome obstacles? Do you have resources to see you through slow times?

The Board gets much of this information from the business plans and financial information that you submit with your application.

If your application is approved and you start a taxi business, you must continue to be a fit and proper person and capable of providing the service. The Board may, at any time after a licence is issued, conduct a fitness review of a licensee. For information on fitness reviews, see [Reference Sheet 15](#).

Would approving the application promote sound economic conditions in the transportation industry?

The Board looks at the state of taxi services in the area where you are applying to operate. The Board considers how more taxis could affect overall taxi service. The Board may consider whether there are other operators in the area you want to serve. The presence of other operators is not a bar to approving a new taxi company. The Board looks at the overall health and quality of taxi services.

Your application should show that you understand the existing local taxi service. You need to show the Board that the local taxi service is not meeting the needs of the community. This must be done with factual information. Some of the information you collected for public need may be relevant. Information on competing services is available on the Board's website at: www.ptboard.bc.ca/operators.htm. The Board may refer to this information when reviewing your application.

Local taxi operators may make a submission on your application. They may try to show that there is not enough business for a new taxi service. They may also say that if a new service starts they would lose business. The Board expects submitters to use factual information to support their claims.

Some things that the Board may look at in deciding if your service would promote sound economic conditions in the local taxi industry are:

- Decreases in local taxi service (e.g. a taxi company has gone out of business or is not using all of its vehicles)
- Your service would benefit the public (e.g. improved convenience, newer vehicles, accessible taxis, etc.)

- The market is able to absorb or adjust to a new taxi service

Excerpt from Board decision regarding “sound economic conditions”

On balance, the panel finds that the benefits that will accrue to the public by having a viable competitor to the other two companies in the City will outweigh any disruptions to the affairs of these companies. The taxi market in the City is sufficiently robust at this time to absorb the addition of 30 more vehicles. It is important to reiterate that the Board considers the “sound economic conditions of the passenger transportation business in British Columbia” ahead of those of any particular applicant or operator. This broad perspective is important in encouraging a robust and competitive industry and in assessing and responding to the passenger transportation needs of the public in the subject area.

Do I need to have my rates and rules approved?

Yes. You may only charge passengers the rates that have been approved by the Board. All rules relating to rates must be approved by the Board.



Rates are what you may charge passengers for a trip. In British Columbia most taxi rates are calculated on a meter that may be calibrated and tested. Taximeter rates are based on the flag drop rate, the distance rate and the time rate. The flag rate is the rate at the start of the trip – it appears when the meter is turned on. The distance rate is a per kilometer rate. The time rate is estimated in seconds or minutes. If a taxi speed falls below a “crossover” rate, then the meter applies the time rate rather than the distance rate.

Smartphones and tablets may now be used as “taxi soft meters” to calculate rates—instead of using traditional taximeters, as shown above. However, taxi companies must first meet requirements that are set out in the Board’s [BC Taxi Soft Meter Rule](#). The taxi company must send the Board a signed [Declaration of Compliance](#) that it will comply with the requirements of the Board’s rule. Local governments may also have bylaws respecting taxi meters with which taxi companies must also comply.

More information related to taxi soft meters and apps are posted on the Board’s [mobile apps webpage](#).

Some taxi companies have point-to-point rates. Some companies have both meter rates and point-to-point rates. A few companies have per person rates. These taxi companies usually operate in smaller communities.

In some areas, taxi companies have common rates (e.g. Lower Mainland). If you are applying to operate a taxi in an area with common rates, then your rates would be the same as the common rates.

The Board's website has a list of all taxicab rates approved in the Province. It also has a table of metered rate norms in BC. The web link is: www.ptboard.bc.ca/taxi-rates.htm. The Board may use the table and current taxi rates as a guide when it considers the rates you submit with your application.

Rules govern how rates are applied. The Board has set [Standard Rules for Taxicab Rates](#). These Standard Rules apply to all taxi companies in British Columbia. You can apply for additional, company-specific rules. You should explain why each company-specific rule is needed.

You should submit a separate rates page in your application. Rates and rules must be clear and easily understood. If you want to apply for a rule that is not in the Standard Rules for Taxicab Rates, you must include this rule in your application.

The Board has sample forms that you can use to submit your rates. See the Board's ["Optional Forms Package"](#).

The Board considers the following questions when deciding whether to approve rates and company-specific rules:

- Are the rates and rules clear and complete?
- Are the rates easy to understand?
- Are the rates simple to measure?
- Are the rates within industry norms for taxis in the area or in a comparable area?

If you propose rates or types of rates that are not common for taxi companies, explain why.

Contract Rates

I. Crew Transportation Services

The Board does not require you to submit contract rates if:

- (a) You have a contract or agreement in principle to provide crew transportation services to a company or its agent; and
- (b) You are applying to have a crew transportation service limitation on your licence.

This applies to contracts with Canada Post, school boards, railway companies, etc.

For information about terms and conditions of licence (including service limitations), see [Reference Sheet 10](#).

II. Other Contracts

You must submit other contract rates that you have negotiated with companies. You must also provide proof that the company you are contracting with agrees to these rates.

Note *The Board considers contracts, including contract rates, as “confidential information”. The Board will not publish or disclose them unless the Board is required to do by legislation.*

How does the Board make decisions on applications?

Board members make decisions on applications. Staff do not make decisions. Members make their decisions based on the information that the Board received during the application process. This information may include:

- information you submit with your application
- written submissions from other people
- your replies to the submissions
- follow-up information that the Board gets from you, submitters or another person.

(You will be able to see information from submitters or another person, unless it is confidential business information. If it is confidential business information, you will receive a summary of the information)

- information already available to the public (e.g. information on your website, information on the Board website, etc.)
- information the Board receives from a town council, tourist board or other community organization
- compliance information received from the Registrar of Passenger Transportation
- investigation reports from the Registrar of Passenger Transportation and any comments received from you
- information from a public hearing

Other Information Available to the Board

The Board also has “[Operational Policies](#) and “[Rules of Practice and Procedure](#)”. These are posted on the Board’s website. A policy or rule may apply to your application.

Board decisions are posted on its website. The Board decides each case on its own merits. It is not required to follow its previous decisions. However, the Board seeks to have consistency in its decisions.

How are the Board’s decisions issued?

The Board issues written decisions. The decisions include the reasons why the Board reached its decision. If an application is approved, the decision will set terms and conditions of licence. Decisions are sent to the applicant and the Registrar of Passenger Transportation. Decisions are published in the [Weekly Bulletin](#) and posted on the Board [website](#). The Board process usually ends when the decision is made and published.

Can my decision be appealed?

There is no right of appeal of Board decisions. The Board may reconsider, vary or rescind a decision in two cases:

- (a) information has become available that was not available at the time the decision was made, or
- (b) there has been an error in procedure.

There must be a legal basis for reconsideration. Your decision cannot be reconsidered just because you disagree with it. For more information, see [Reference Sheet 14](#).