

business. In August, a meeting was convened among the pedicab owners and APD, the transportation section of the Public Works Department, and Emergency Medical Services. "The recent meetings between the pedicab owners and APD were an opportunity for each side to hear the interests of the other and then collaborate on a plan that would work to achieve those interests in a more formal manner," Jung said. "Essentially, for the pedicab owners, that meant accessibility to and for their customers; for APD, the primary concern was providing a safe environment for a dense pedestrian crowd and accessibility for emergency responders." APD agreed to work with the pedicab businesses and to start reopening intersections, in a limited way.

"Most of the drivers are avid cyclists and comply with traffic regulations, though there are occasional violations," Jung said. "The meetings we had allowed us to clearly define where the pedicabs can be and how they can operate. ... Since that time, the cooperation we have received has been commendable." John Fisher, owner of Roadkill Pedicab, said that the meetings have resulted in a welcome opportunity for the pedicab community to open the doors of communication with APD, as well as an opportunity to improve relationships within the pedicab community. "You've got all the pedicab companies together. ... They're all attending the meetings and outside of meetings discussing things in a real cordial matter, so we can do things right for the greater good for the industry here in

town," Fisher said. "We're all getting along real well ... there are little squabbles that come up now and again, but in general we're doing a pretty good job of policing ourselves and being cohesive, so we can continue to function and get business done."

## AUSTIN'S PEDICAB COMPANIES

- ATX Pedicab** - three cabs  
Dana Schoebert, [atxpedicab@yahoo.com](mailto:atxpedicab@yahoo.com)
- Capital Pedicab** - 45 cabs  
Greg Foulkes, [greg@capitalpedicab.com](mailto:greg@capitalpedicab.com)
- Dikes on Bikes** - four cabs  
Seth Bounds, [luminouspro2@yahoo.com](mailto:luminouspro2@yahoo.com)
- Heart of Texas Pedicab** - 20 cabs  
Steve Smajstrla, [stralla03@hotmail.com](mailto:stralla03@hotmail.com)
- Lone Star Cyclery** - three cabs  
Bruce Swan, [elijah\\_kane@hotmail.com](mailto:elijah_kane@hotmail.com)
- Metrocycle** - 10 cabs  
Nathan Lipson, [nathanlipson@yahoo.com](mailto:nathanlipson@yahoo.com)
- Portland Pedicabs** - one cab  
Brandon Smith & Alexander Zeisberg, [portlandpedicabs@yahoo.com](mailto:portlandpedicabs@yahoo.com)
- Power Bike Tours** - seven cabs  
Amy Kelley & Rafael Viancos, [rviancos@yahoo.com](mailto:rviancos@yahoo.com)
- Roadkill Pedicab** - three cabs  
John Fisher, [john@roadkillpedicab.com](mailto:john@roadkillpedicab.com)
- Triciclo Pedicabs** - two cabs  
Shannon Montgomery, [mshannon150@hotmail.com](mailto:mshannon150@hotmail.com)

## How Much Is Enough?

Yet limited access for numerous pedicabs can create new problems. According to Marcy Cardona, administrative specialist of the Transportation Division in Public Works, nine Austin companies are authorized to operate 99 pedicabs. There are currently 10 pedicab com-

panies in Austin, most operating fewer than five cabs. Metrocycle owns 10, Heart of Texas generally fluctuates between 20 and 22, and the recently expanded Capital Pedicab, with 45, is by far the largest. "The policy allows open entry into the market for applicants that meet the minimum standards, allowing service demand to regulate the number of pedicabs," Cardona said. "Evidence of declining service quality, equipment condition, and/or unsafe activities related to competition could result in limiting the number of pedicabs."

Most pedicab owners and riders say the competition is friendly and welcome, but, as has been true of motorized taxicabs, more pedicabs on the street means it's harder for owners or drivers to make money. Capital Pedicab's Foulkes admits to being unpopular among other owners. "Pedicab operators never want to see more pedicabs," Foulkes said. Some owners have tried to convince the city to put a cap on the number of cabs a company can own (as is already true of taxis). "The Transportation [Division] rejected [the proposal]," said Smajstrla, "saying that basically the market will sort itself out, and [they] don't want to interfere." Cardona says that while the pedicab industry is the largest it's been since she started at the city in 1999, she doesn't view the growth as a problem. "The department has received no customer complaints about pedicab service," she says, and as yet she sees no evidence of declining quality or other negative consequences of too much competition.



JANA BIRCHUM

## SO YOU WANT TO DRIVE A PEDICAB

To legally operate a pedicab in the city of Austin, you must be at least 18 years old and licensed as a chauffeur. Then you may apply to one of the various pedicab companies in Austin (for a list of companies and their contact information, visit [www.ci.austin.tx.us/publicworks/downloads/limoadd.pdf](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/publicworks/downloads/limoadd.pdf)), or you can buy your own pedicab and ride independently.

Go to the Texas Department of Public Safety documentation office at 108 Denson, and get your driving record and criminal history. Be sure to check box 3A on the driving-record request form, and ask for a certified criminal history. Once you've found out which pedicab companies are hiring, bring your certified documents to the interview, and fill out an application. The city's chauffeur's permit application can be found at [www.ci.austin.tx.us/publicworks/downloads/chauffeur-rev.pdf](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/publicworks/downloads/chauffeur-rev.pdf).

The pedicab owner likes you and thinks you have the body and mindset to physically transport humans for a living? Go to the Ground Transportation Office at 1111 Rio Grande with your documents and the signed application, and take the city of Austin pedicab chauffeur license test. Provided you pass the test and all your documents are in order, you'll receive your license that day.

## PEDICAB PROTOCOL

Where can you find a pedicab Downtown? Follow the foot traffic. Pedicabbers tend to wait (in line) in alleys or street intersections, next to hotels, around parking lots, in front of clubs. If they're not waiting, they're riding around, scouting customers. Hail a pedicab through simple eye contact, or you might need to call out or wave. There are no set rates; the cost of a ride is a voluntary tip at your discretion, but there's no need to be stingy - especially considering the amount of money you could be spending on a taxicab.

It's not easy work, and you should always factor in the length of the ride, steep hills, number of people sitting in the carriage, and weather conditions to your tip. Speaking of consideration, pedicab drivers do not appreciate belligerently out-of-control or drunk passengers. Do not harass the driver, try to touch him or her, tell him or her to go faster or race with other pedicabs (or cars or horse-drawn carriages). And if you feel your body rejecting one too many overpriced cocktails, don't climb into someone's pedicab; just walk it off, tiger.

## PEDICAB REGULATIONS

Austin pedicab operators are required to follow the guidelines in Austin City Code, Chapter 13: "Transportation Services." The code that specifically applies to pedicabs is found in 13-2-272 through 13-2-275. Among other regulations, operators must follow traffic laws - riding on the correct side of the street, stopping fully and completely at stop signs and red lights, using turn signals, etc. All pedicabs must pass the city's inspection, and any parts of the pedicab that are damaged - lights, brakes, chains, etc. - must be repaired before riders may transport passengers. Pedicab companies determine their own hours of operation but are restricted from operating during rush hour, Monday through Friday, 7-9am, 11am-1pm, and 4-6pm. Existing City Code prohibits pedicab drivers from operating on closed streets, such as those closed by APD on weekend nights, without permission from APD or whatever city authority is enforcing barricades on a particular area. The pedicab businesses have asked City Council to amend City Code so that it expands their operating locations and times, and the city and APD are working with the companies to find solutions to increase business while maintaining safety. APD has agreed to include pedicab owners in the planning process for large events Downtown, such as South by Southwest in March.

- S.R.

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