

## Vehicles for Airport Ground Transportation Service

Typically in an airport Request for Proposal (RFP) for ground transportation services, airport consultants often specify vehicle make, model, and size for the project. While this probably makes comparisons among proposers somewhat easier, the mandated vehicle might not be the best choice for the service being requested.

Choosing the right vehicle to meet passenger demand, while also providing outstanding service, can be a challenging task. Often the proposer may have greater operating experience at various airports and be able to propose more suitable vehicles over the life of the concession. Following are some factors that should be taken into consideration:

### Fleet capacity

While having the correct fleet capacity to accommodate anticipated shared ride service demand is important, it would be unwise to develop a mandated fleet capacity for extraordinary peak travel events. Mandating the operation of additional fleet capacity to service unusual spikes in demand is not practical, as it does not provide an adequate return for the involved expense. Rather, the proposer may be asked how he plans to service seasonal and specific peak periods. On the other hand, strong consideration should be given to the establishment of a fleet minimum size. This minimum should be determined by potential passenger demand factors and the geographical size of the service area.

### Age and type of vehicle

Which vehicle is best? Following is a list of vehicles that may serve the airport and the potential market they would serve.

**Taxi**      *Single ride vehicle with nonstop service, providing immediate accommodation.*  
Typically these are used government and/or private four-door sedan vehicles with additional life in a commercial environment. The maximum allowable age of these vehicles in airport service should be 7 model years, which in most cases would be approximately 350,000 miles. However, as the cost of traditional gasoline fuel rises, more and more hybrid and alternative fueled vehicles are being used as taxis. The most prominent vehicle being used as a taxi today is the Toyota Prius.

**Van**      *High occupancy vehicle making a limited number of stops.* These vehicles, which are often introduced as new, would be for shared ride applications with a seating capacity of 8 to 12, including the driver. Shared ride works well with medium and large airports, where the companies can take advantage of moderate to high passenger traffic demand. Well maintained, these vehicles can safely operate 80,000 miles or more per year and have a useful life of 6 model years and should be replaced within that time frame.

- Bus** *High occupancy vehicle used in **high-density** areas in a large or medium market. This works well in an environment with **high-density** populations traveling to and from an airport, such as a central business district or business corridor. Typically, this type of vehicle runs a fixed route scheduled service. The useful life of a standard transit bus is generally 10 model years and should be retired thereafter.*
- Mini bus** *High occupancy vehicle used in **high-density** areas in a small or medium market. As with the bus above, the mini bus can serve **high-density** areas effectively. The difference is in the useful life of the equipment. A mini bus, or cutaway built on a traditional truck chassis, should be retired from service after 6 model years.*
- Sedan** *Single occupancy vehicle providing exceptional service at a premium price. Very similar to taxis but typically travelling **fewer** miles per year, these vehicles should be retired after 7 model years. Many airports have begun to offer this service type as an option for business travelers.*

Airports generally issue RFPs by vehicle class—such as taxi or sedan or shared ride van service. However, the choice of specific vehicles or models to be utilized should be a decision made by the operator, as many economic factors are involved in making this decision. Vehicles that are operated past their useful life pose a risk to the travelling public and should be replaced on a set schedule. Safety, service and passenger comfort will be best served by considering above recommendations.