

Sharjah taxi drivers get a salary boost

Higher commissions aimed to motivate them at work.

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Sharjah: Taxi drivers have received higher salaries as of February 1 due to the fall in passenger traffic, *Gulf News* has learnt.

"There has been a decline in passengers in the last year so we have decided to increase the taxi drivers' rate of commission and give them better insurance policies to encourage them to work," Jasem Al Beloushi, director of Sharjah Taxi, said recently.

He attributed the decline in passengers to the Dh20 tariff implemented in December 2008 and the cheaper public buses.

"Last year, taxis did not stop for passengers going to Dubai because of the traffic as it would take them up to three hours, so there was a high demand from passengers. But since bus services have improved, the demand has fallen."

The Dh20 tariff was introduced as an incentive for taxi drivers to pick up passengers who wanted to go to Dubai.

A report compiled by the Quality Control Department at Sharjah Transport in early 2008 revealed that taxi drivers turned away passengers mainly because of traffic congestion.

However, commuters now choose to use taxis less frequently when commuting from Sharjah to Dubai since an average trip now costs Dh80. This fare includes Salik tolls.

In order to cut costs, commuters now prefer to take a bus to Al Qusais, which costs Dh5, and then use a Dubai-based taxi onward.

"As of next month all taxi drivers will get a new rate of commission they can receive, although the actual percentage cannot be revealed yet," Al Beloushi said.

He said the commission ranges from five to 35 per cent of total revenue.

The rate of commission is determined by the drivers' performance — including how well they drive, how clean their cars are and how many complaints are lodged against them.

"Even if drivers are not receiving as many passengers as before, we are implementing new measures in order to encourage them to work."

He said the Dh20 tariff was unlikely to be dropped.

"Our main goal was for passengers to use buses instead of taxis so that traffic congestion would be reduced, which in turn would also reduce pollution," he said.

"Each bus going to Dubai has a capacity of up to 80 passengers, so by keeping the Dh20 tariff we reduce the number of cars on the road and also reduce the rate of traffic accidents."

Do you use taxis on a regular basis? Would you consider using the bus to avoid the Dh20 fare? What, according to you, is required to improve taxi services?

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