

Essay

Taken for a Ride: Breaking Down the Cab Fare

The D.C. Taxicab Commission recently added a \$1-per-ride surcharge to offset the rising price of gasoline. So the taxi fare from Dupont Circle to Capitol Hill, for example, now runs \$9 with tip, a fact that has left many aghast.

This new charge comes on top of a bevy of nontransparent surcharges that have turned the supposed simplicity of the zone system into a confusing matrix of charges and surcharges, the ultimate result of which is that fares for rides between the same two locations can vary widely.

As a public service, we have put together an itemized receipt that will allow the rider to calculate what your trip should cost, and what you should tip:

—Jano Cabera, Jeff Nussbaum and Philippe Reines



Expense	Amount	Subtotal
Base Fare	\$5.50	\$5.50
Gas Surcharge	1.00	6.50
Rush-Hour Surcharge	1.00	7.50
Extra-Zone Surcharge	1.00	8.50
Credit (when passenger demonstrates ability to read zone map)	(1.00)	7.50
Charge for Extra Passenger	1.50	9.00
Credit (when passenger points out that he is alone)	(1.50)	7.50
Fare Subtotal	\$7.50	
Doubling of fare for snow emergency	7.50	15.00
Reversal of emergency charge when passenger points out that it is May and 80 degrees out	(7.50)	7.50

Breakdown of Intended Tip:

Tip for not picking up another fare going opposite way	.50
Tip for allowing passenger control of rear window	.24
Tip for listening to NPR rather than evangelical radio	.16
Tip for having change for a \$10 bill	.10
Penalty for shouting into cell phone for entire ride	(.50)
Tip restored for using hands-free headset	.50
Unintended tip (since nobody asks for 50 cents back)	.50
TOTAL	\$9.00

