

Auto Body Labor Rate Advisory Board
Meeting held on July 29, 2025 at 1 p.m.

MINUTES

Members Present

Michael Powers, Co-Chair
Stacey Gotham, Co-Chair
Mark Merante
Rick Starbard
Brian Bernard
Matthew Ciaschini
Christopher Stark
Peter Smith
Samantha Tracy
Paul Burke
Sean Kane
John Kwoka
David Brown

Call to Order:

Co-Chair Powers called a meeting of the Auto Body Labor Rate Advisory Board, hereby known as the Board, to order with a roll-call vote. All Board members responded present besides JC Burton.

Introduction and Approval of Minutes:

Co-Chair Powers began the meeting by explaining the Board's statutory task. Board Member Stark motioned to approve the minutes from the Board's last meeting, June 12, 2025, and Board Member Starbard seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Auto Body Shop Survey Discussion:

Co-Chair Gotham shared that slightly over half of the auto body shops responded to the survey. She stated that the board should try to confirm that the shops that responded are representative of the population in general to determine if the data is biased.

- Question: How could the Board determine if the data is or is not biased?
 - Co-Chair Gotham suggested that Board could determine this while doing verification, asking shops questions about size and other factors.
- Statement: The Board could reference data from the National AutoBody Research Survey
- Question: Where did the 1,019 number come from for number of autobody shops?
 - Board Member Merante clarifies the survey was sent to the around 1,500 registered collision repair auto body shops. He is unclear where the 1,019 number is from.
 - Board Member Bernard clarifies the 1,019 figure eliminates dealerships and sole proprietors.
- Question: If we have 500 responses out of about 1,500 surveys that went out, why do we need to do a sampling of the 500? Why is there potential for bias?

- Board Member Gotham responded that the sampling is for verification purposes as the Board agreed to earlier.
 - Board Member Kwoka added that the information the Board can collect about non-respondent auto body shops is what helps determine if the data is biased. This is different from the verification process, he said.
- Statement: The auto body shop industry has a lot of immigrant owners, who don't necessarily want to respond to a government-run survey. Not a lot of these shops responded. Considering this, the response rate is good.
- Statement: The response rate is good. Asking for more data or information beyond what is required for verification might be too much.
- Question: What are the characteristics of shops that would help determine if the data is biased?
 - Response: location, size, other factors people suggest.
 - Board Member Stark suggests certification levels.
- Statement: Board Member Kwoka said that when the Board should only consider what shop characteristics might influence the posted labor rate. The Board can see what it can adjust for and acknowledge what it can't know, he said.
- Opinion: Having one rate as the Board's recommendation is dangerous. Fair competition is important.
- Suggestion: Co-Chair Gotham suggests a 10% sample for verification of about 50 shops, stratified by area.
 - The Board agrees that Board Member Kwoka and Co-Chair Gotham can determine the exact details.
- Statement: There are about 72 duplicate shops in the survey responses, some of them with different stated rates.
- Statement: Co-Chair Gotham notes that the data needs to be cleaned up (i.e. duplicates, typos, etc.). Co-Chair Gotham also suggests that the auto body shops can consider getting a graduate student to help with data analysis.

Insurer Survey Discussion:

Board Member Stark explains how the working group created the insurer survey.

- Suggestion: The Board could put a question in the survey about the size of the shop under contract.
 - Response: Not sure if the insurers would have that information.
 - Response: Number of repairs might work.
- Statement: Doesn't understand what size of shop has to do with labor rate.
 - Response: Co-Chair Gotham responds that is more data to look at and consider.
- Suggestion: Board Member Bernard suggests adding a question to the survey to look at paid claims to referral shops vs. non-referral shops over 12 months?
 - Response: Board Member Stark responds that the insurers would be okay with that.
- Board Member Merante motioned to poll the Board to approve the survey with Board Member Bernard's suggestion (total number of claims made by referral networks and non-referral networks in the 2024 calendar year). Board Member Bernard seconded this motion.

- Co-Chair Gotham stepped away from the meeting at 3:22 p.m. and returned at 3:36 p.m.
- Board Member Stark motioned to vote on approving questions 1-9 and having the working group work on edits to the discussed question about number of claims. Board Member Burke seconded this motion. This motion passed unanimously.

Next Board Meeting:

September 15 at 2 p.m.

Motion to Adjourn:

Board Member Starbard motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Board Member Smith seconded this motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote, and the meeting was adjourned.