



PRESS RELEASE
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**TLC CHAIR DAVID YASSKY, MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR PEOPLE
WITH DISABILITIES COMMISSIONER SAPOLIN
PROPOSE NEW DISPATCH SYSTEM OFFERING
24/7 ACCESSIBLE SERVICE FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS**

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Commissioner

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***Lessons Learned from Pilot Project Help
To Build a New & Improved Service***

New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) Commissioner/Chair David Yassky and Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) Commissioner Matthew Sapolin today announced the proposal of a new accessible dispatch system that would allow wheelchair users to call 311 to request, anywhere in the city, a wheelchair accessible taxicab or livery vehicle, at the regular fare, with high standards of service.

This proposal follows a two-year pilot project, begun in July 2008 and concluding in June 2010, which facilitated 5,828 accessible trips for 2,700 unique customers, and cost \$1 million in City funding secured by the City Council. A report on the pilot project is available at www.nyc.gov/tlc.

At present, there are 240 wheelchair accessible taxis, but no coordinated way for wheelchair users to access them.

"While I want to reiterate the TLC's ongoing commitment to our longtime goal of full accessibility for all who use the services we regulate, the practical reality is that it does not make sense to have each car service company maintain its own wheelchair accessible fleet as our regulations now provide," said Commissioner Yassky. "What does make sense is to create one highly-responsive central provider that serves the entire city with high-quality accessible taxi and livery services, and is financially supported by our regulated industries."

"This proposal is intended to offer wheelchair users better, speedier service than that which is available currently from Access-A-Ride," continued Commissioner Yassky, "provided that they are willing to pay the going rate for a taxi or car service, which are higher than the cost of mass transit."

"While we continue to actively pursue long term accessibility goals in the city's taxi and livery industries, we are excited to reactivate the Accessible Dispatch program," said Commissioner Sapolin. "With the cooperation of both fleets, we believe wheelchair-using passengers will have a better opportunity than ever to take advantage of this form of public transportation."

"MTBOT has always done our fair part to keep the unsubsidized yellow taxi industry healthy and effectively servicing the public, whether it has been our support of medallion sales that have yielded hundreds of millions of dollars to the City or our funding and managing of outer-borough taxi stands and welfare-to-work programs," said Ron Sherman, President of the Metropolitan Board of Trade

“The TLC’s plan to require its regulated industries to fund a new centralized dispatch program for wheelchair accessible yellow taxis and liveries requires serious thought. Passengers in wheelchairs have long deserved reliable pre-arranged service. And while we are very cautious about any proposal that adds more cost to an industry that has seen its operating costs steeply rise, we look forward to hearing more about program specifics.”

"We are committed to making the dispatch program a success and bringing timely 24/7 service to the disabled community. Everyone has a right to taxi service and we understand that for our friends and neighbors in wheelchairs, this service is even more critical. We are proud to be the men and women who provide that service," said Bhairavi Desai, Executive Director of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, a union of over 14,000 drivers. NYTWA members were among the first to purchase accessible vehicles and participate in the dispatch program.

Said the Greater New York Taxi Association: “The Greater New York Taxi Association (GNYTA) applauds the New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission's efforts, under the leadership of Chairman David Yassky, to take steps to significantly improve the former accessible vehicle program to assist the disabled community. In particular we thank the TLC for seeking input from our association (which represents the vast majority of corporately owned accessible cabs) and for reaching out to the other industry associations and leaders for their input. We also credit the TLC for recognizing that the disabled community will be better served by combining the resources of the Medallion and the For Hire Vehicle industries.

“We thank the TLC for recognizing that all drivers should receive accessible and sensitivity training to serve the disabled community, and all New Yorkers, better. We also salute the TLC for recognizing that the program can only be successful if it is economically viable for its drivers. We also note that all taxi passengers now support the MTA through the taxi surcharge and urge the MTA to reciprocally aid the TLC by incorporating its Access-A-Ride program and by sharing in the responsibility to assist all New Yorkers.

Said the Livery Roundtable: "The Livery Round Table supports the TLC's initiative to create an accessible for-hire dispatch program as a more workable alternative to rule 6-07(f), and will help in any way possible to make it a success."

The TLC will suspend enforcement of existing rules requiring livery bases to provide accessible service throughout the proposal's consideration process

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