



Taxis for All Organizer's Forum Cheat Sheet & Resources

Accessible Taxis Legal Requirements

Providers of taxi service must comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements as private entities transporting people that request demand-responsive transportation.ⁱ With demand-responsive service, the customer is provided transportation along a non-prescribed route.ⁱⁱ Limousine and sedan services must also comply with ADA requirements. While the ADA does *not* require taxi companies operating sedan-style taxis to be wheelchair accessible, there is a wheelchair accessible requirement for vans. There are a number of important accessibility and non-discrimination measures that taxi companies must adhere to; including training, providing accessible communication, and service, and rides to people with guide dogs.

Taxi Industry Issues

- Taxi service models are different around the country!
- Attracting taxi companies and drivers to provision of accessible service can be difficult
- Funding for Accessible Taxi Service
 - Medallions - A medallion is a permit to operate a taxi and an asset. In a medallion system a city restricts the number of medallions that can be purchased, and the number of taxis that are on the street. The taxi authority sells the medallions to drivers or companies at a set rate initially. Over time, the medallion increase in value and becomes an asset for the owner. Accessible medallion sales can create revenue for a city and taxi authority, as well as value for the owner. Medallions are criticized by some for creating monopolies and profits for few.
 - Additional funding mechanisms and incentives for increasing accessible taxi service:
 - Allowing accessible taxis to remain in service as long as they pass inspection, rather than the usual age limits;
 - Allowing accessible taxis to go to a separate, faster line at train stations or area airports;
 - Providing a tax credit for accessible taxi owners;
 - Negotiating the purchase of accessible taxis at a set price, and then passing along the savings when the taxis are leased or sold to taxi owners;
 - Waiving license fees for accessible taxi owners, or charging a fee for owners of non-accessible taxis;
 - Using accessible taxis to provide rides to paratransit or service program-eligible passengers.
 - Using U.S. Department of Transportation Section 5310 funds, federal loans, loan guarantees, local budget grants, foundation funds and/or matches, or social impact bonds.
- Difference between Hail and Dispatch

- In larger cities, a potential passenger can hail a taxi on a busy street.
- Some taxi companies use dispatch software that allows passengers to call, reserve online, or use an app on their phone to reserve a taxi.
- In many cities with relatively few accessible taxis a person with a disability may not be able to hail a taxi.
- Transportation Network Companies (TNCs)
 - New transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber, Lyft and Sidecar use dispatch software that allows passengers to call, reserve online or use an app on their phone to reserve a ride in a sedan, taxi or someone's private car.
 - TNCs are largely unregulated and most TNCs do not offer accessible service.
 - Keep an eye out for TNC debates in your hometown. The disability community needs to demand accessible service in all modes of transportation.

Arguments against Provision of 100% Accessible Taxi Service

- Driving an accessible taxi can lead to: higher gas costs, higher maintenance costs (for cars that aren't purpose built), higher environmental impact, decreased useful life of the vehicle in years, higher cost of the car, potentially fewer tips, time and money lost when helping a chair user enter or exit the taxi, potentially shorter trips, and potentially higher insurance.
- People with disabilities need special service that can only be provided by sensitive, highly trained individuals.

Arguments for Accessible, Inclusive Taxi Service

- Access to transportation is vital for employment, participating in civic and religious communities, supporting one's family and maintaining an active social life. According to the US Census Bureau, in 2012, only 33% of working age people with disabilities living in the community were employed.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Taxis can be a transportation option for people who cannot drive or afford their own cars.
- Taxis are generally available 24 hours a day and generally do not need to be scheduled far in advance.
- Taxis can be used in an emergency or when other transportation falls through.
- Accessible taxis can provide a less costly alternative to paratransit, Medicaid ambulettes and other transportation services.
- Accessible taxis can be used by all passengers. A properly designed accessible taxi could also store extra luggage, strollers, and sports equipment.
- Adults with disabilities are twice as likely as those without disabilities to have inadequate transportation (31 percent versus 13 percent).^{iv}
- **Access to all forms of transportation is a civil right!**

Taxis for All Campaigns (a snapshot)

- New York City – Packed City Council hearings, advocated on the local and state level, filed a lawsuit, recently won 50% of all taxis in Manhattan will be accessible by 2020.

- Toronto, Canada – Campaigned and produced a report advocating for accessible service. City Council recently voted for 100% accessible taxi service by 2024.
- Washington, DC – 2012 law mandated creation of a taxi commission disability advisory committee comprised of taxi, city and disability community representatives. The committee has released its report advocating for 100% accessible taxi service in the District. Just the beginning.

Lessons Learned

- Lawsuits work, but can be time-intensive and expensive.
- Weighing in on City Council and committee hearings and reports can work.
- Partnering outside of the disability community (taxi reps, state Medicaid offices, faith and civil rights groups) is a good idea.
- Boots on the ground, stories, media (eg, Jason DeSilva’s video), and tried and true direct action are probably necessary.
- The taxi systems may be different, but the arguments and issues are the same.

Resources

United Spinal Advocacy Center

<http://www.unitedspinal.org/increase-access-to-taxis-for-all/>

Provides a summary of the issue and United Spinal Association’s efforts to increase accessible taxis in New York City and Washington, DC. Find related documents on the Updates tab. Please contact ctyson@unitedspinal.org with questions or for alternative formats of documents.

Easter Seals Project Action: Taxi Services Resources

<http://www.projectaction.org/ResourcesPublications/TaxiServices.aspx>

Provides an easy to understand Questions and Answers document, a toolkit for taxi owners and drivers, and *Moving Forward Together: Workbook for Increasing and Initiative Accessible Taxi Services*.

National Council on Disabilities (NCD)

<http://www.ncd.gov/policy/transportation>

Provides letters and reports from the NCD related to transportation going back to 1986. The 2005 report, *The Current State of Transportation for People with Disabilities in the United States*, covers taxis and will be updated soon.

United Spinal Association advocates for accessible, affordable, reliable, and safe transportation for all.

ⁱ 49 CFR § 37.29(a) (1991).

ⁱⁱ 49 CFR § 37.3 (2011).

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey, American FactFinder, Table B18120; <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>; referenced by the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium.

^{iv} CDC Promoting the Health of People with Disabilities, department of Health and Human services, at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/pdf/aboutdhprogram508.pdf>