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**Taxi & Limousine
Commission**

Closing the Accessibility Gap: A Report on the TLC's Wheelchair-Accessibility Policies and Recommendations for Improving Accessible Taxi and For-Hire Vehicle Service in New York City

December 16, 2010

Agenda

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- ❑ Brief overview of wheelchair-accessible transportation in New York City and other cities.
- ❑ Accessible Dispatch Program & TLC rule 6-07(f)
- ❑ Recommendations & Next Steps

Wheelchair-accessible transportation in NYC

❑ Residents and visitors of New York City rely heavily on the mass transit network.

❑ This network is comprised of the MTA's subways, buses, commuter rails, Access-A-Ride, and TLC-regulated taxis and for-hire vehicles (FHVs).

❑ However, much of this network is still out of the reach for the approximately 60,000 wheelchair users in New York City.

❑ The MTA's Access-A-Ride service is not designed to provide on-demand, point-to-point service.

❑ Only 231 taxicabs are wheelchair-accessible, which is approximately 1 accessible taxicab for every 57 non-accessible taxicabs.

Accessible Dispatch Program – Overview

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- ❑ A two-year demonstration project (July 2008 - June 2010) to test passenger demand for wheelchair-accessible taxicabs.**
 - ❑ The program was run by a third-party contractor – Executive Transportation – with \$1 million of public funding allotted by the City Council.
 - ❑ Passengers could request an accessible taxicab by calling 311 or by contacting Executive Transportation directly.
 - ❑ Drivers of wheelchair-accessible taxicabs were required to be trained in the use of the dispatch equipment and passenger assistance techniques.

Accessible Dispatch Program – Who Used The Service?

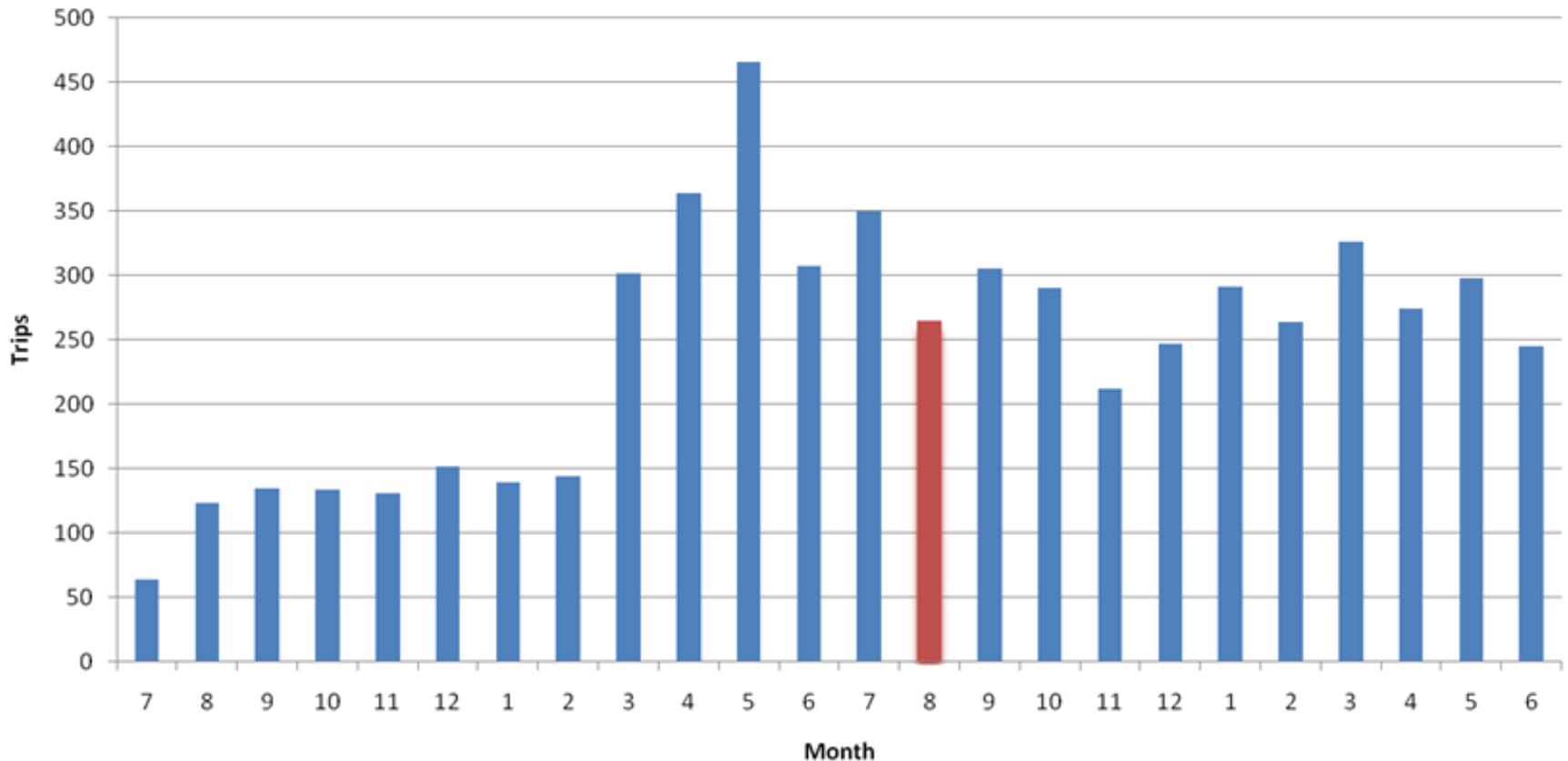
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- Usage of the program was relatively low and not very cost effective.**
 - We anticipated 250 calls per day, but the program averaged 8.1 calls per day.
 - \$1 million of City Council funding was spent on 5,828 trips (a per trip cost of approximately \$172).
 - A majority of trips originated (93%) and/or terminated (85%) within Manhattan, reflecting how taxicabs operate generally.
 - Most passengers were repeat-users.
 - Lesson learned: more outreach was needed.

Accessible Dispatch Program – Who Used The Service?

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Trips by Month (2008-2010)

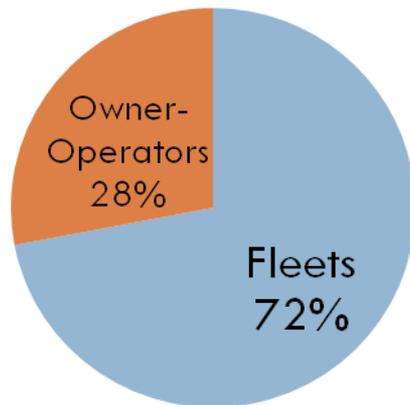


Accessible Dispatch Program – Who Provided the Service?

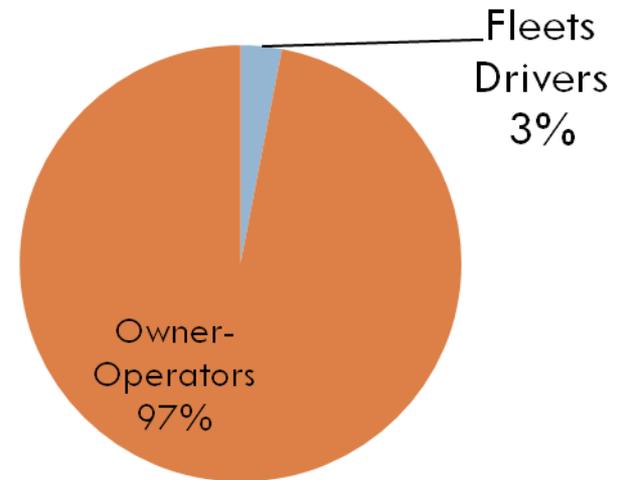
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Independently-owned (non-fleet) taxicabs provided the overwhelming majority of the service.

Who Owns the Accessible Medallions?



Who Performed the Service?



Drivers of fleet-owned accessible taxicabs did not benefit from the discounted price of the accessible medallions.

Lesson learned: drivers were not properly incentivized during the program.

Overview of TLC Rule 6-07(f)

- ❑ Requires all FHV services to provide “equivalent service” to wheelchair users. However, most FHV services cannot provide equivalent service.
 - ❑ **There are 16 TLC-approved wheelchair-accessible vehicle providers for the 760 FHV services.**
 - ❑ Among the 16 providers, there are only 23 wheelchair-accessible vehicles. All are either retrofitted Dodge Grand Caravans or Ford Econoline vans.
 - ❑ **This amounts to only one accessible vehicle for every 1,565 non-accessible FHV.**

Issues with TLC Rule 6-07(f)

- ❑ **High Cost.** FHV services typically pay \$300 to \$600 annually to a wheelchair-accessible provider and a per trip charge that is usually more than a trip for a non-accessible vehicle.
- ❑ **Low Demand.** FHV services get few passenger requests for accessible vehicles.
- ❑ **Non-compliance.** Many FHV services fail to provide “equivalent service” by quoting a higher price or a longer wait time for a wheelchair-accessible vehicle.

Recommendations & Next Steps

- ❑ Given the lessons learned from both the Accessible Dispatch Pilot Program and the challenges of TLC Rule 6-07(f), we recommend establishing an improved version of the citywide accessible dispatch system for the five boroughs of New York City.

- ❑ We propose that the dispatch program have the following characteristics:
 - ❑ **Utilize existing infrastructure**— The new system would take advantage of the existing set of 231 wheelchair-accessible medallions. And if necessary, additional wheelchair-accessible FHV's.

 - ❑ **Service standards** — The new system must incorporate standards for response time and fare to ensure that wheelchair users have access to comparable service.

Recommendations & Next Steps

- ❑ **Driver subsidy** – Drivers are not appropriately incentivized to make accessible dispatch trips. Specifically, drivers should be compensated for the “dispatch” portion of a trip to ensure drivers participate.
- ❑ **Increased enforcement** – Rules on refusing dispatches and driver training must be enforced to ensure a high level of service.
- ❑ **Funded by a fee** – Both the owners of medallions and the FHV industry would contribute to the operation of the dispatching system.
- ❑ **Driver training** – All yellow taxi drivers will be required to receive the necessary training to drive wheelchair-accessible vehicles. Also, additional training may be necessary to overcome resistance to the dispatch model.

Recommendations & Next Steps

❑ **Request for Information.** We are releasing a Request for Information (RFI) today to ask industry stakeholders, and other members of the public, how this new dispatch system should be designed and operated.

❑ RFI responses are due by **January 31, 2011**.

❑ We ask that all interested parties submit a response. We hope to receive responses specifically from government agencies and municipalities, service providers, private industry, passengers, drivers and advocates.

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