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**PRESS RELEASE
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**TAXI & FOR-HIRE VEHICLE DISPATCH PLAN WILL BRING
RESPONSIVE ACCESSIBLE SERVICE TO ALL FIVE BOROUGHES**

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) is pleased to announce the release of a Request For Proposals (RFP) for the creation of a For-Hire Vehicle (FHV) Wheelchair Accessible Dispatch System. This system will allow wheelchair users whose trips originate in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island to call 311 to request (on a 24/7 basis) a wheelchair-accessible FHV at the regular pre-established fare, and with the highest standards of service in a reasonable timeframe.

At present, there is no coordinated or practical way to ensure the provision of quality For-Hire services for persons who use wheelchairs. The goal of this RFP is to create a centralized dispatch service that will direct FHV's or their accessible equivalents to wheelchair users who need them. Passengers calling 311 will be connected with a dispatcher who will be able to determine the closest available FHV.

The TLC releases this RFP as a complimentary solution to the parallel RFP that was released last week for medallion taxicabs that will service wheelchair users whose trips originate in Manhattan. The two dispatch programs, which are both scheduled to commence in March 2012, will work in tandem to provide equivalent wheelchair accessible services to those who need them throughout the five boroughs.

"We've made it a priority to increase the number of safe, reliable options for everyone who requires accessible modes of transportation" said Deputy Mayor for Operations Stephen Goldsmith. "The dispatch system, which will make better use of our existing resources, is an important step toward accomplishing our shared goal of increased access. We are going to continue to work with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and the community to exchange ideas and continue to look for new ways to improve access."

"The TLC has spent considerable time and effort working with the taxi and FHV industries and the disability advocacy community on learning the best ways to match the availability of our wheelchair-accessible taxicabs and for-hire vehicles with the people who need them," said TLC Commissioner Yassky. "And now is the time to make use of the lessons learned to create a system that is practical, efficient, and works for all stakeholders."

“We are happy to support the Accessible Dispatch program, as we hope it will provide increased access to our city’s taxi and for-hire vehicle fleets for people who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids,” said Mayor’s Office for People With Disabilities Commissioner Matthew Sapolin. “My office was created with a mandate to advocate for people with disabilities, which we do each and every day. As such, we will continue to aggressively pursue long term accessibility solutions for our city’s transportation system.”

“I welcome this proposal for a wheelchair accessible taxi and for-hire vehicle dispatch system to be offered to New Yorkers with disabilities,” said Council Member G. Oliver Koppell, Chair of the Council’s Mental Health, Mental Retardation, Alcoholism, Drug Abuse & Disability Services Committee. “However, we view the proposal as a first step toward the ultimate goal of an accessible taxi fleet.”

When the Administration announced plans for an improved Taxicab and FHV Accessible Dispatch System several months ago, we were pleased to welcome and highlight the support and participation of such industry organizations as the Metropolitan Taxi Board of Trade, the Greater New York Taxi Association, the Livery Roundtable, and the NY Taxi Workers Alliance.

Highlights of the RFP include:

- The dispatcher must respond to trips originating in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island and ending anywhere in the five boroughs, Westchester and Nassau counties, and the three regional airports;
- The dispatch system will be supported through a fee levied on the FHV industry;
- All drivers who operate a wheelchair-accessible FHV will be trained in passenger sensitivity and wheelchair assistance;
- Instead of many providers of accessible service, there will be one dispatcher responsible for providing this service

The dispatcher will be responsible for conducting passenger and driver satisfaction evaluations via focus groups, and to collect data to gauge the system’s performance on an ongoing basis.

The Medallion Taxicab and For-Hire Vehicle Accessible Dispatch program is a part of the Bloomberg Administration's comprehensive initiative to provide more and better transportation options for persons with disabilities. Another facet of this initiative was unveiled in tandem with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) on December 15, 2010, as Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, MTA Chairman/ CEO Jay Walder and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn together launched a pilot program to issue pre-paid debit cards to Manhattan Access-A-Ride customers who do not require wheelchair accessible transportation. These system users would instead hail medallion taxicabs at a significant savings as compared to rides they had previously taken in wheelchair accessible vehicles. The MTA anticipates a nearly 70% reduction in per trip costs for the serving the participants in this program, while providing a comfortable and convenient alternative.

To date there are 401 customers enrolled in the program who have taken 5,912 trips (2,125 trips in March alone).

The FHV RFP will be officially released today, with responses due no later than June 3, 2011. It may be viewed through WWW.NYC.GOV/TAXI.

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) was created in 1971, and is the agency responsible for the regulation and licensing of almost 200,000 yellow medallion taxicabs and For-Hire Vehicles, their drivers, and the businesses that operate and support their industries. It is recognized as the largest and most active taxi and limousine regulatory body in the United States.

To find out more about the TLC, or to review its rules, regulations and procedures, we encourage you to visit our official web site at WWW.NYC.GOV/TAXI or call 311 in New York City, or 212-NEW-YORK from outside of New York City.