

Taxi and Limousine Commission Meeting
November 10, 2016

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NEW YORK CITY
TAXI & LIMOUSINE COMMISSION
BOARD MEETING

November 10, 2016
10:25 a.m.

33 Beaver Street
New York, New York

B E F O R E:

MEERA JOSHI, Chair and Chief Executive Officer

RYAN WANTTAJA, General Counsel

Board of Commissioners:

BILL AGUADO
EDWARD GONZALES
NORA C. MARINO
JACQUES JIHA
KENNETH C. MITCHELL

Reported By: Nicole Ellis

STENO-KATH REPORTING SERVICES, LTD.
139 MAMARONECK AVENUE
MAMARONECK, NEW YORK 10543
(212) 95-DEPOS (953-3767) or (914) 381-2061
FACSIMILE: (914) 722-0816
E-mail: stenokath@verizon.net

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SPEAKERS:

Lori Bores, MS Society

Sergio Urias

Kenta Little, MOPD

Stefan Henry

Eli Ramos

Waseem Ahmed

Edith Prentiss

David Pollack

Bill Scalzi, Metro Taxi

Doucoure Mamadou

Richard Thaler

Gary Farber

Jason Gross, Verifone

Tendi Sherpa

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CHAIR JOSHI: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for your patience. We're going to start today's Commission meeting now, the time is 10:25.

I want to first start out by welcoming our newest Commissioner, Ken Mitchell, who joins us from Staten Island. He replaces Elias, who was with us for 27 years. So Ken will stay with us for 27 years as well.

He, since 2011, has served as the executive director of the Staten Island Zoo, so he'll bring in occasional work for the guests. He was previously a Council member representing Staten Island North Shore Communities, and served as Chief of Staff and general counsel for former Council member and current Staten Island DA, Michael McMahon.

He's active in his community, participates on the Staten Island Economic Development Committee, United Activities Unlimited, and Lifestyles for the Disabled. And we look forward to working

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with you, Ken, so welcome.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIR JOSHI: I also want to take a moment to recognize the fact that the professional drivers of this Commission -- that this Commission regulates are almost entirely immigrants to the United States; over 130,000 immigrants or 91 percent of all of our drivers, who safely transport over a million New Yorkers and visitors to our great city every day.

Driving for hire is a steppingstone on the path to the American dream. Their service to New York City is invaluable. Nowhere else in the entire country is this volume of transportation being performed by such a qualified group of drivers.

As our Mayor said yesterday, "We in New York City, and especially here at the TLC, know and appreciate the value that immigrants bring to the City and to the for-hire industry," so thank you.

(Applause.)

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CHAIR JOSHI: And sadly, this is the second time in a very short span that I've had to announce the premature passing of a member of our TLC family. Ne Kway (phonetic), a TLCer for 22 years, passed away prematurely on October 28th. He was a quiet and kind man whose company was appreciated by all. He will be missed, especially by his colleagues in the Administrative Services Division.

So we'll now go to the adoption of the minutes. Motion to adopt the minutes from the public meeting of last month.

All in favor.

(Chorus of ayes.)

CHAIR JOSHI: With that, the minutes are unanimously adopted.

And we have next up is base applications.

MS. RICHARD: Good morning, Commissioners.

My name is Iesha Richard, assistant commissioner in the Division of Licensing and Standards.

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Today I have a total of 34 base applications for your approval; 2 new base applications; 29 base renewal applications, 10 of which have changes, including names, ownership, and location changes; and 3 base applications solely for changes of ownership or location.

Thank you.

CHAIR JOSHI: All in favor of approving the report.

(Chorus of ayes.)

CHAIR JOSHI: With that, the base report is approved.

Next on the agenda is a hearing today on proposed rules to extend our Accessible Dispatch Program. Today we'll have the public hearing, and afterwards I assume that on -- in December's meeting we'll have our vote.

The program connects passengers who need wheelchair accessible taxis to them by phone, app or online. It's growing in ridership every month, and wait times in Manhattan are now down to 12 minutes.

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In a few minutes we'll share with you a short film that illustrates how our current program is only half of the solution, the rest of the city needs the same service. So today's rules extend dispatch to every accessible yellow or green taxi citywide.

And just to clarify, this program only applies to accessible taxis. People often ask us about accessible liveries, black cars, and those cars dispatched by apps. As industry members know, we at the TLC are working on a proposal that would mandate that every base dispatch a certain percentage of trips in accessible vehicles. That proposal would be in addition to citywide dispatch systems.

Our ultimate goal, if we can get there, is to integrate accessible vehicles into the fabric of the fleet so everyone, no matter their level of mobility, can get one without having to call a separate service. Until we get there, citywide accessible dispatch provides this much

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needed service.

So now I'll turn it over to Ryan Wanttaja, who's sitting in for Chris Wilson this month, to give us the outline of the rules.

MR. WILSON: On the agenda are rules expanding the TLC's accessible dispatch services for taxis into a citywide service using both taxis and street-hail liveries.

These rules were published in the City Record on October 7, 2016, with a comment deadline of November 7, 2016. As of the comment deadline, no written comments were received, but we will keep that comment deadline open until the vote.

CHAIR JOSHI: And now we're going to turn to our -- the short film that we'd like everyone to watch, that I think better than anything we can say, illustrates what we are trying to achieve.

(Whereupon, short film was played at this time.)

CHAIR JOSHI: We're very happy today to have the producer of that film, Jason

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DaSilva, with us.

I'd like to ask him to come forward
to share a few comments.

(Applause.)

MR. DASILVA: Thank you very much.

So I just wanted to say that this
fight has been going on for years. It was
a big fight to get cabs into Manhattan. I
lived that life for years. Living in the
East Village, we finally got the
accessible cabs to be available by the
phone. And I tell you what a difference
it makes for me and for people in
wheelchairs to be able to call to get a
wheelchair accessible cab. Really, that's
the only way we can get around.

So what we're proposing here about
getting the cabs out, getting them into
the outer boroughs, making them available
so we don't have to use the ferry, we
don't have to deal with bullshit
Access-A-Ride, we don't have to deal with
subways -- I don't always talk like that.
But what you guys are about to do, this

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proposal is huge for people in wheelchairs. And I just want to say we're coming one step closer to making this a reality, to really making it possible that people in wheelchairs are living normal lives, able to get around just like everybody else.

James Weisman was huge in doing this, but I hear by year to 2020, 50 percent of the taxi fleet will be accessible, and I just want to commend you on that, and commend you on this potential bill.

Thank you.

CHAIR JOSHI: Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

CHAIR JOSHI: We're going to have a presentation on the specifics of the proposal with Alex and Rachel from our operations division, and they've worked very hard on the many small pieces that have to work together to pull off a program as expansive as this.

ALEX: Good morning. Welcome everyone.

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We're very excited about this new program, which is really just an expansion of our successful Manhattan program. And as you can see, since we've launched the program in Manhattan in 2012, we have several new additions to what the TLC is doing to expand accessible service. Including, like Jason mentioned, the 50 percent wheelchair accessible vehicle goal for yellow taxis, which we're well on our way to.

We have the Taxi Improvement Fund, which is providing payments to owners and drivers for putting WAVs on the road. And now we have the citywide -- getting ready for the citywide Accessible Dispatch Program.

Since the program launched in 2012, the Manhattan program that is, our WAV, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle, fleet has increased drastically by several hundred percent. We have more than 1,100 wheelchair accessible yellow taxis on the road. We have around 500 accessible

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green, SHL, taxis on the road. The Taxi Improvement Fund has really started to make payments and put incentives and money in the pockets of owners and drivers. And over 90 percent of drivers in New York City have completed WAV training and are in the -- more and more, as accessible service expands, drivers and the culture is changing and becoming an almost everyday routine, hopefully, as the program expands for drivers to provide accessible service.

As you see with our Manhattan program, last month was a record month. The program continues to get more trips and service to improve. This year we'll have over 60,000 trips, which will also be a record. And as you see by our fulfillment rate and wait times that are under 12 minutes, the program has come a long way.

What you see by this chart is that even as the program has grown as we've gotten more trip volume, wait times have

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gone down, which really shows that we have the capacity to expand the program without a dip in service and that's what we hope will happen as we go to citywide.

And as we know people in the Manhattan program have really taken to the program and community members are really using it, and we hope to see more and more of that.

And Rachel will talk about some more on the details here.

RACHEL: So as you can see from the statistics and from stories like Jason's, we've made a tremendous amount of progress in the many years we've been working on the Manhattan dispatch program. And we know that accessible dispatch can be a success, but we also know that we're very far from where we need to be in terms of making accessible taxi service a reality citywide, and that's what the citywide dispatch program is all about.

The demand is there, 80 percent of New Yorkers with disabilities live in the

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2 outer boroughs and cannot currently order
3 a wheelchair accessible taxi from their
4 homes. So in order to get from where we
5 are today to a successful citywide
6 dispatch program we need to work with the
7 more than 1,000 accessible vehicles in the
8 yellow and SHL sector that are already on
9 the road, as well as those drivers.

10 And as Alex mentioned, we're really
11 excited about the opportunity to work with
12 drivers, we're seeing more and more driver
13 engagement in the program. Drivers that
14 are excited to provide these trips and are
15 benefiting from providing these trips.

16 And we just honored 20 of our top
17 accessible dispatch providers at our
18 recent honor roll, and we're looking
19 forward to bringing this program citywide.
20 We're committed to maintaining quality
21 service as we do that, as shown by high
22 trip completion rates and low wait times,
23 as well as continuing to utilize
24 technology to make the program as
25 efficient as possible and provide top

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quality customer service.

So how will a citywide dispatch trip work? In many ways the same way that Manhattan dispatch trips work today. So passengers can book trips through five different methods; through a mobile app, by calling the dispatchers directly, by calling the City's 311 service, through a dedicated website or through text message. And regardless of how the trip request comes in, it goes to the dispatcher. A person physically is responsible for making sure that the trip request gets to a driver, that the driver accepts the trip, and that the driver makes it in a timely fashion to pick up the passengers.

And as Alex mentioned, our drivers are ready to take these trips. Almost all of our drivers have completed WAV training, so they're ready and able to assist passengers and understand how to use the equipment in their vehicles.

As the driver goes from the point where they accept the trip to the point of

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2 passenger pick up, they'll receive a
3 dispatch fee to make sure they're fully
4 compensated for their time that they spend
5 making these trips, and we'll walk through
6 that in just a second. Once the driver
7 gets to the passenger pick up point, the
8 trip proceeds as any other taxi trip; it's
9 a metered fare and there are no extra
10 costs to the passenger for using the
11 service.

12 So when we launch the citywide
13 dispatch program all drivers of wheelchair
14 accessible vehicles who are taking these
15 trips will be eligible for dispatch fee
16 payments. The dispatch fee payments will
17 make sure that the driver is fully
18 compensated for the time that they spend
19 traveling to the passengers pick up point,
20 as well as any time they might spend
21 assisting the passenger at the beginning
22 or end of the trip. The dispatch fee
23 payment will be based on the point of
24 origin for the trip. We have a schedule
25 for Manhattan based on our current

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program, and are proposing a schedule based on the outer boroughs as the program will be new in those locations.

So we know from what we've seen with the Manhattan program that we can make accessible dispatch a reality and make it a success. And citywide dispatch is really a critical next step toward our goal of providing accessible service across the five boroughs. We currently have more WAVs on the road than we've ever had before, we have more drivers participating in the program providing more trips than ever before, so we're in a strong position to expand the program citywide.

We're moving toward a launch in early 2017, and we're excited to continue the work that we've already started to set up this program to be a success. As the video, the testimony that we've heard and will continue to hear this morning, and statistics show, we know the demand for this program is real and the service can

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work, and we're really excited to bring this program to fruition.

CHAIR JOSHI: Thank you very much.

With that, I think we can begin our public hearing, unless any of the Commissioners have questions about the presentation?

(No response.)

CHAIR JOSHI: No, okay.

MR. WILSON: I'll note that at 10:36 we were joined by Commissioner Gonzales.

I'll ask speakers to state their name and organization with which you're affiliated prior to speaking.

And first up we have Lori Bores.

MS. BORES: Good morning, Commissioners and TLC staff. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today on this important change.

My name is Lori Bores, and I've lived with multiple sclerosis for 16 years. I currently serve as the vice chair of the Government Relations Advisory Committee, as well as a district activist leader for

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the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.
I'm also a member of Community Board 8.

For someone who lives with MS,
accessibility is essential. It's the key
to ensuring someone can have the best life
possible. Having accessible
transportation means someone can get to
doctors' appointments with limited hassle,
and can continue to be an active member of
the community.

Unfortunately not everyone in the
five boroughs has this option. Often
times it is those who need accessibility
the most who cannot afford to live in
Manhattan.

I applaud the TLC for putting forth
these recommendations that will greatly
benefit those who live with MS and need to
use a walker or wheelchair for mobility
purposes. By expanding the Accessible
Dispatch Program to all five boroughs
you've given people back their freedom,
and for that I thank you.

I hope some day the TLC would

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consider expanding this accessibility to other car services, such as Uber or Lyft, which can be a great convenience and a cost alternative to taxicabs. The disabled community deserves the same options as everybody else, and it's my goal to see more accessibility in car services.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to voice my support and suggestions.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next up we have Sergio Urias.

MR. URIAS: Good morning, everyone. My name is Sergio Urias, I'm a quadriplegic living in Long Island City. I'm an attorney and have practiced in the City for more than nine years.

Given the nature of my work, my clients expect me to be on-call 24/7 and to be available immediately when they need it. Having the flexibility to spontaneously move around the different boroughs is extremely important for me and

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for other people in my situation. In order to be competitive, it's extremely important to be able to expand the dispatch program, that has been very useful and helpful for mobility within Manhattan.

So I strongly encourage the Commission to approve the bill and thank you for your time.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next we have Kenta Little.

MR. LITTLE: Good morning.

Very brief, I would just like to say it is an absolute pleasure to embrace an essential and well-needed citywide accessible program.

My name is Kenta Little and I'm speaking on behalf of the Mayor's Office of People With Disabilities.

The Commissioner, who unfortunately was unable to make it today, is delighted at the idea that wheelchair accessible taxis will now be dispatched to all five boroughs on demand 24 hours a day, seven

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days a week. Having drivers that are well trained at assisting passengers with disabilities is an integral part of providing a service, so it's great to see so many drivers are completing the WAV training, as mentioned earlier.

The Mayor's Office of People With Disabilities is in full support of the program and looks forward to having accessible taxi services both in and out of Manhattan. We applaud TLC's efforts in getting drivers and owners to engage in the program and working to make providing accessible service a routine part of the taxi industry. Such strong policies reinforce elevating standards of services for all NYC constituents and visitors who all will greatly benefit from the Accessible Dispatch Program.

Again, thank you. It is an honor to see the expansion of accessibility throughout the City, and we're glad to be a part of the growth and development. Thank you.

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MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next up we have Stefan Henry.

MR. HENRY: Hello, everyone. I'm Stefan Henry. I'm a mechanical engineer student at the City College of New York.

I think this is one of the best program ideas I've ever heard, because I've been in a wheelchair for about 13 years, and I've lived in Brooklyn for all my life. I can tell you firsthand that traveling to school is very hard. Sometimes it will take me two hours on the subway if the subway even works. And if I happen to miss my Access-A-Ride, it's impossible for me to get to class on time.

So this program will help so many people just be more productive, be more able to get out and just contribute more in the ways they hope to in the community. Thank you.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next we have Eli Ramos.

MR. RAMOS: Good morning, everyone. My name is Eli Ramos. I had the pleasure

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of meeting some of you a few weeks ago at the TLC honor roll ceremony, so I apologize if a lot of this sounds redundant.

But basically to summarize what -- I am a Board member for the National Spinal Cord Injury Association, the New York Chapter. I also work closely with several non-profits in the New York, New Jersey, Metro area; Moving Forward, Wheels in Progress, to name a few. I also am a recent graduate from City College with a degree in international studies, and I look towards acquiring a Master's degree in public affairs, so I can't resist events like this 'cause this is part of what I like to do and see myself doing in the future.

From a personal standpoint, what this program has meant to me thus far is the ability to not have to rely on a schedule, such as some of us do with Access-A-Ride. The ability to be anywhere and everywhere at any time, which I think is a

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fundamental right to any human being
regardless of a wheelchair or not.

A common misconception is the disable
do not have the same commitments that an
able-bodied person may have, but as you
have seen with Stefan, with Sergio, we are
doctors, we are lawyers, we are students,
we are professionals ourselves, and people
depend on us as much as we depend on
people. And the ability to travel safely
and quickly from point A to point B is
highly important to us.

From a business standpoint, I think
this would be a very lucrative enterprise
for the TLC. There's obviously a high
demand for this kind of service and I
think we can all benefit from a program
like this.

Thank you very much for your time and
have a nice day everyone.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next we have Waseem Ahmed.

MR. AHMED: Hello. Good morning,
everybody. My name is Waseem Ahmed, I'm a

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green wheelchair accessible driver.

I would like to tell the Commission to pass this bill and we can start working on this. Thank you very much.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next we have Edith Prentiss.

MS. PRENTISS: My name is Edith Prentiss, and I apologize for the weird voice. I am the chair of the Taxis For All campaign, which most of you know has been around, unfortunately, for way too long; from the days when we had zero accessible taxis to three to eight, slowly growing.

In 2012 when the Accessible Dispatch Program was proposed, many of us in the community opposed it. And we opposed it for a simple reason, one that we're still concerned about, which is the end. How many vehicles we're really talking about.

A couple months ago at the Taxis For Tomorrow meeting, we heard the numbers of 500 accessible yellow and 800 accessible green. Today we're hearing there are

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1,600, which are 11,000 yellow (verbatim) and 5,000 green (verbatim) or whatever, you get the point.

But our concern is that if we still are hearing anecdotal reports about the inability of central dispatch to provide trips, particularly the problem for people who attempt to prearrange trips, which we know pretty much fell apart, it's a real concern.

Now in 2013 when the greens began their proposal was -- that we very strongly supported, was that there would be two scheduled dispatches. We thought that was a little silly but, you know, you want two administrations, it made you happy, fine. Unfortunately, the Mayor opposed that saying that every base has its own dispatch, which is true, but unfortunately many of us have discovered getting a trip from a base with WAV vehicles, as listed on the TLC website, is next to impossible.

I actually have been known through

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many of the drivers in my community in northern Manhattan, as an after-effective serving on my Community Board's Taxi and Transportation Committee, they are usually the ones who get me an accessible trip.

If I call a base I get things like, We don't have any. I hear, Oh, go up to Dyckman Houses, that's where the accessible drivers hang out. Or the third option is drivers who pass me on the street and will stop and say, Are you looking for an accessible trip? Let me call my friend.

I think many of us are concerned that no matter what the end is, it's not going to be enough for five boroughs. Remember A Ride For All? The for-hire vehicles supposedly serving five boroughs, didn't work. We believe that it's only if and when the TLC forces, entices, incentivizes all parts of the industry to participate, then and only then will we truly have equivalent service.

I actually remember equivalent

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service, for those who weren't on the dais at the time, it's never been (inaudible), and that's a very frustrating and disconcerting issue. The reality is until we have a large enough end, we're never going to have an effective utilization of taxis, WAV, otherwise, by the Access-A-Ride program, which most of us would love to see. I love it if I get an MV1, it's great. I'm not sharing the ride, we get where we're going, it's easy.

Until we're at a system and a point where we have pretty much gotten rid of the buses, which we all acknowledge we will need for a certain portion of the population of the Access-A-Ride users, right now where 14.4 percent of the population of Access-A-Ride users need an accessible trip. When we're looking at the percentages, even with the numbers you reported this morning, it is a very small percentage. And we're not discussing how many vehicles are in parking lots and medallions are on the shelf. It's a

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particular concern to us, but we are very excited. This is finally -- Meera is quite tired of hearing me say, So when? It's a great move, but it's not the be all and end all. Thank you.

CHAIR JOSHI: I just want to comment quickly on a point you raised, that I think is a point we said in the very beginning.

Dispatch is always a separate service, and it can be really good, and that's what we hope for, but it's never the final answer. The final answer is using -- everybody using the same service. Which is why we've been talking with stakeholders, and with you, and many disability advocates, about a trip percentage mandate in the FHV world so that those accessible green taxis are put back into circulation, and that becomes normal to see accessible cars when you order a car, whether you need one or not. Like, can you imagine that? And it becomes part of what people come to

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expect.

So we're going to work very hard on the citywide dispatch, because that is the solution today. But the long-term solution is a world where you don't have a separate system, where everybody can use the same system to get where they need to go.

So if you still have some more patience for us Edith, I'm sure you do, this one will take a little longer.

MS. PRENTISS: We are, though, concerned with the concept of the mechanics you're going to be utilizing to bring the greens into central dispatch. And are very concerned with how that's going to work. I'm sure it's going to be very technical.

CHAIR JOSHI: We're happy to meet with you to discuss that, and there will be a lot of those kinds of meetings. Rachel and Alex, as I mentioned in the beginning, have done an excellent job of mastering all the smaller pieces that need

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to work together, so they're available to meet with you on those issues.

MS. PRENTISS: It's been four years, central dispatch is sort of working in Manhattan. It will be -- the first trip to Staten Island will be the best one. Thank you.

CHAIR JOSHI: And I'll end on this note, at least it's movement.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next up we have David Pollack.

MR. POLLACK: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is David Pollack, I'm the president of the TSA, Taxicab Service Association, representing medallion lenders, and I've been a lifelong advocate for the yellow taxi industry and believe that anything that puts more money in our drivers pockets is better for the public and better for everyone all around.

What Edith said was incentivize the outer boroughs. One of the things I think the TLC needs to concentrate on a little

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more, and you started to do it, are the positives of driving an accessible yellow taxicab. I saw 1,000 drivers signed up for TIF, two weeks ago it was 650 drivers. And they get 50 cents more per trip. Besides picking up disabled passengers because it's the right thing to do, there needs to be an incentive there so it's not a loss of income.

I don't know how the algorithms work, one of the driver's perceptions is if I'm near the 59th Street Bridge and there's a disabled call in Long Island City, I have to go over the 59th Street Bridge 'cause by the crow flies I may be a mile away, but someone near La Guardia Airport who's driving back empty, who would love a fare on Long Island City who may be five miles away would not get the fare.

As I said, I don't know how the algorithm works, but I hope you will look at the technological aspects of it to provide a faster service, as opposed to what seems to be the right thing to do to

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service the disabled community better and get the closest driver, it might not be the fastest driver, which would make it less profitable for everybody.

CHAIR JOSHI: We'll definitely take those comments in when we talk to the dispatcher about actual operations and algorithms.

But I also want to point out, that I don't know if we brought this home in our presentation, but the financial incentives for drivers are pretty significant. They're 50 cents per ride, and I think the larger portion the drivers come to appreciate is the deadhead fee. Long ago there was a Accessible Dispatch Program where we didn't have a deadhead fee, and without the driver participation it's very hard to launch a program like this.

Today's Manhattan-only program offers between \$10 and \$20, sometimes upwards of \$20 as the deadhead fee, and the borough program will allow drivers to make the same amount they would make on a metered

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trip from the point where they get the call to the point where they pick up the passenger. So in essence they're getting the two fares, because they'll get the deadhead to pick up the passenger, which is equivalent to the metered fare, plus the metered fare when they take the passenger to where they need to go.

And if there's more we can do to support those incentives, we definitely will, because it pays in many dividends for the passengers.

MR. POLLACK: That's why I support the bill, \$30 for two miles or more for deadhead, that means you don't have a passenger, you're going out of your way to pick up the fare. If I lived in Ozone Park, if I live in Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Manhattan, by the crow flies, may be the closest wheelchair accessible fair, or a driver looking to get into Manhattan who's in Downtown Brooklyn or near the 59th Street Bridge. There are plenty of drivers who don't want to wait

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at JFK Airport, who are going to come past Staten Island and Brooklyn and Ozone Park anyway, let's get those guys the fares, so it's more effective and reinforces what we all want to do here, which is to help the disabled community and make this a success. Thank you very much.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next we have Bill Scalzi.

MR. SCALZI: Commissioners, thank you.

Good morning. My name is Bill Scalzi, I'm here today as the current vendor of the TLC's Accessible Dispatch Program. I'm also president of the Taxicab Limousine Transit Association, a nonprofit organization whose longstanding mission has been the cause of advancing, enhancing, and supporting the ground transportation industry.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to voice our support for the proposed accessible dispatch rules. My company is in complete

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support of the expansion of the current Manhattan-based pilot program to provide the program services to all five boroughs of New York City. As many of the Agency's employees know, I've been calling on the TLC to expand the project to all boroughs for several years because the demonstrated need is so great.

In my role as the TLC's current vendor for the Manhattan program, I can tell you firsthand experience how important the service is by simply looking at the value of the pilot program dispatches. The initial program projected 5,000 calls for the first calendar year. Actually we were near 50,000 calls in that first year, and that was limited to just Manhattan. So while we have had tremendous success in the program thus far, the enactment of these new rules will enable us to far better serve the accessible needs of the community.

In the proposed rule providing definition and clarity for owners and

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drivers alike, the rules will not only increase service access for our customers, they will improve the rider experience. The new rules set time limits for dispatch and provide a single telephone number for the new citywide service.

The rule also recognized that technology is continually changing in our industry, and that more connection between the TPEP technology providers, the dispatch technology providers, and the yellow and green operators is important so that we can all better understand the collective requirements and streamline solutions. For instance, understanding the resistance a technology provider may have for putting a second terminal in the car.

So in conclusion, these new rules will not only increase service for our customers, but will enhance support for -- industry support. I would like to say, too, that listening to what I've heard so far sitting here, I've got to, once again,

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commend the City for this program, because we've been in there for the long haul since we launched in 2012. We've seen great success, we've had challenges, but those challenges are always overcome with the opportunities.

So getting service to an average of 12 minutes in Manhattan is not an easy task, but I have to tell you with the incentives that you've already built into the program, with the deadhead miles as you mentioned before, Commissioner, and even now the 50 cents has been a tremendous aid for us in dispatching these calls at a far more streamline.

As we heard, I could not say it better than some people who speak about the need for the service. And it's what we've always been about, and we're absolutely honored to be part of the program for this period. So thank you very much.

CHAIR JOSHI: I want to also thank you for being our partner in this program

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in the Manhattan dispatch, because it was difficult in the beginning, and we all had to make lots of changes but we're getting record numbers of rides every month, which also speaks to demand.

A lot of times people tell us you should have a service that meets demand. We don't know what that is, because there's a whole pool of passengers that have not had the ability to travel in a taxi. So what we're learning is demand will be much greater than what we ever think it will be.

MR. POLLACK: I couldn't agree more. It's the pent-up demand that we haven't experienced. On demand is always tough because there's no mass notice of it, but we've been successful as a group working together. So we're very pleased. Thank you very much.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next we have Doucoure Mamadou.

MR. MAMADOU: Good morning, guys. My name is Doucoure Mamadou. I own one

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handicap vehicle and I drive it myself every day. So I'm here to share my experience with you guys.

I think the most important thing for me is that every time we pick up handicap person, they have to give us their credit card to swipe for them or they forced to pay us in cash.

And I wrote TLC letter last March expressing why there's no terminal where there's handicap area, so they can pay privately of their own space, they don't have to get driver involved. And there was no response. So maybe the bottom of the letter I stated if this were to get implemented, I want to be recognized. That might have thrown away.

And the second part is, we love to help our customers. We love to help our customers. We have issues when we loading and assisting them off the vehicle. First, you're not going to have no parking space. You have to either go to hydrant or double-park and put your lights on, the

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trunk is open, assist them to the sidewalk. I had two tickets, both was found guilty. I went there with the --

CHAIR JOSHI: Were they NYPD-issued tickets?

MR. MAMADOU: Traffic agent issues tickets, and it says the vehicle should not be double-parked, even though they see the trunk is open, I'm assisting someone to the thing.

So actually I was not mad, because I said if I were to go to the hearing, they would find me not guilty because I have the reasons. And I expressed them, find me guilty. Appeal it, stand, they didn't, you know, I have to pay for it.

So those are the issues that is very important --

CHAIR JOSHI: Would you mind, just because we're having discussions with NYPD on this very issue, your experience would be helpful to illustrate. So if you can speak to someone in the back --

MR. MAMADOU: I'd be more than happy.

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CHAIR JOSHI: -- and we can get the details of your experience, because this is an issue that we've been talking with them to encourage and recognize when a wheelchair accessible vehicle is helping a passenger get in and out, that ticketing someone is not exactly encouraging the policy that the City would like to implement.

MR. MAMADOU: I'd be happy to do that.

Most important we need to make sure there's a payment system in the vehicle, without drivers. The vehicle owners, because if you implement with all -- they're going call us, you pay \$1,000 to put extra one back there. We're the only one who pay the 5 percent and the credit card prices and fee in this day and age, taxi drivers. You go to any place, owners -- I run business for 21 years, which my clients include from Taxi & Limousine Commission, known me for 21 years. No one is paying 5 percent of

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credit card prices and fees today, no one. And \$55 a month is the fee include the same equipment that we use to do. So we want have handicap vehicles, I have business cards that I give out when I pick up somebody, they call me, no dispatch directly to go pick them up, with that fee. Including last night I took someone to Carnegie Hall.

We doing everything we can, but TLC does not have actual experienced drivers. You have companies here who is most interest in getting -- I came here three times for public hearing, no actual drivers here who have experience. My vehicle right now park, because this is very important for me.

So get this involved and drivers who doesn't speak English. Like you said, 31 countries, to talk to you and tell you what we need to be doing.

CHAIR JOSHI: On that note, I'm also going to ask that we have your contact information because we are working with

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drivers as we roll out the citywide dispatch program to see what feedback we can integrate into it.

MR. MAMADOU: There's a lot of issues regarding this program to be successful, and they're not happening right now because most people who have handicap vehicle, including myself, don't know if I'm going to renew the permit, based on all issues regarding the TLC and things. So those are the issues that need to be discussed. Thank you.

COMMR. MARINO: Do you support this with amendments, is that your position?

MR. MAMADOU: I absolutely support with the amendments, and I also encourage TLC to have more accessible vehicles in the street. Not only creating them to put them in the street, but you have to have a policy and system that they will openly -- they not be upgrade now. Now I see someone in the street, and I have a passenger that's wheelchair, I have to pass them. Three times I'm doing this to

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customers, You don't have to pay me a fare, would you please take cab so I can take this gentleman. Three times myself doing that. So there's taxi drivers who actually do that good, but you don't know nobody -- in the system here is all suit and tie, it's not actually --

COMMR. MARINO: Also I think pulling over and being ticketed is rather outrageous, and I hope we can work with the NYPD and make sure that never, ever happens again. That's outrageous.

MR. MAMADOU: Definitely. And even, you know, when you go to the medical clinic, they have ambulance -- not ambulance, you know, Access-A-Ride can park, but TLC vehicles are not allowed to park.

COMMR. MARINO: Thank you very much. Thank you for bringing that to our attention. That's ridiculous.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next up is Richard Thaler.

MR. THALER: My name is Richard

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Thaler. Hello, Chair Joshi and Commissioners.

Chair Joshi, in your introduction you did address the Commission's consideration of the role of FHV's in citywide accessible dispatching, but I have a question about FHV's. There are a number of bases that have more accessible affiliated FHV vehicles than the minimum requirements. So my question is, why can't they immediately be included in the pool for dispatching, and the only thing they may require is a very inexpensive GPS device for that purpose? But why can't you immediately include all of those FHV's right now in the pool of medallion cabs and SHLs? I don't see why. That's my question.

CHAIR JOSHI: Okay. I think that as we roll out the program, we'll have to -- we may have to recalibrate what vehicles are used for dispatch. And if it looks like we need to expand, I don't think this Commission is against making a program

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bigger if it's successful.

MR. THALER: Then those FHV's presumably will also enjoy the financial benefits, the grant for purchase and the ongoing payments, the FHV would enjoy the same financial benefits of the other segments.

CHAIR JOSHI: If there was a funding source for that.

MR. THALER: Well it has to be addressed, because before the system there wasn't a funding source until you created one. Thank you.

MR. WILSON: Thank you.

Next up is Gary Farber.

MR. FARBER: Good morning, Commissioners, Ryan. My name is Gary Farber. I represent A&K Luxury Base Limo, and a few other companies that deal with accessible transportation.

Many, many times I've spoken about this issue. The goal here is to provide accessible transportation. I believe TLC has failed in that attempt to the outer

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boroughs. Everything that this Commission does benefits greatly the Manhattan trips. And, of course, it's working fantastic because it's such a high concentration of vehicles on the island. It's that simple, that is the only reason why it's working.

Let's look at outer boroughs. The original plan for green accessible taxis was to have 3,600 accessible taxis. We've sold only 1,948 permits, that's already almost half of the proposed plan. Out of those 1,900 permits, how many are actually active with TLC right now? It's less than 600 active permits. That doesn't mean there's 600 vehicles.

I represent more than 400 vehicles that are standing in parking lots, and the only reason for that is because there's no drivers. How do we expect to service this community with vehicles that need drivers? We also operate a school for TLC training, wheelchair training, and 24-hour class. We go for about 200 students every single week, we haven't been able to convince one

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to drive this vehicle.

Now I ask you, what are we trying to do? We're trying to mask this by saying we're going to create a service that the wheelchair able community can use. But we're not, it's just another solution, it's a Band-Aid. It's going to create more problems. It's going to give us less ability to rent our vehicles. We're not going to have the opportunity to rent vehicles with more dispatch on it. We're now providing a service, we're dispatching our vehicles to people who need it. We're not going to give those vehicles to an outside dispatch source so we can provide the service that we're already doing. It's absurd.

For this program to work, there must be dedicated vehicles, must be dedicated vehicles. We cannot leave it up to the drivers to decide whether they want to do the pick up or not. These pick ups must be mandated. The way it stands right now, you're hoping you're going to have a large

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enough driver pool to service this program, but you're not because the numbers say you don't have enough vehicles. And I don't believe the rest of you Commissioners understand those numbers.

I don't know what you're being told, but there are no vehicles available in our outer boroughs for this program. There are none. I can take you to our parking lots right now where we have 400 green cabs standing doing nothing and every single week we're losing vehicles, we're painting them black and giving them to Uber because the owners of these vehicles don't want to do this business anymore.

What's the percentage of the industry that is owner-operated like this fine gentleman here that was talking about how he cares about the wheelchair community? There's only about 150 of them. The rest are owned by doctors, dentists, lawyers, they don't care. All they do is rent their cars, but they can't get drivers

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into those cars.

So these are grand, grand plans, and it sickens me to hear that this service is so badly needed, but this is not a solution for it. Yes, there must be an accessible dispatch, it has to be. But what are you going to dispatch?

CHAIR JOSHI: I think to address one of your points, drivers -- and we could go on and on, and Gary I know very well you're opposed to this, and you prefer there be a dedicated fleet, and you even suggested that your cars would be perfect for that job --

MR. FARBER: Just for the borough.

CHAIR JOSHI: But that's not the process that we went through. We went through a process that allows vehicles from every borough, those that are owner driver, those where someone owns five of them, and even garages and corporations that own lots of yellow taxis, that they can all contribute to it. And we built in an incentive program with that.

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And, you know, there are definitely challenges with accessible greens that are on the road, this is not a solution that will completely obliterate that problem, but it's a step in the right direction. We have other proposals, we're not an agency that's going to say, It's a problem, we threw up our hands and that's it. We're going to take steps, incremental as they may be, to get the yellow taxis back into circulation.

So I appreciate your feedback, but I don't think we were contemplating, which is why we'll probably continue to disagree, giving the entire Accessible Dispatch Program to one garage.

MR. FARBER: We understand that completely, and that was not our suggestion.

What I'm saying is this, is that this is going to destroy the green taxi industry. Let's be real. If that's what we're trying to accomplish, it can be done.

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CHAIR JOSHI: I beg to differ with you. You can say it may not help them as much as you want, but I can hardly agree it will destroy it.

So in the interest of other people that have come to testify --

MR. FARBER: They've been given a lot more time than me to testify, so I believe I deserve some time.

CHAIR JOSHI: I'm not too sure about that.

MR. FARBER: So right now we know as of today in the morning, you had 614 active permits, okay. Let's see what you have a month from now. I guarantee it's going to be 20 less.

CHAIR JOSHI: Okay.

MR. FARBER: With all the things you're rolling out, all the incentives for the drivers and vehicle owners, why are they dropping like flies every single day? This is not a solution.

And again this will pass, I know that this will pass because on December 10th

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you have another public hearing that, why we going to up the grants, but you have to have this equipment in your car. I know this will pass.

My concern is this, when are we going to realize when it's too late for the green taxis? And then the yellows will be fine, Uber is going to do fantastic 'cause they have all the drivers, that's all great. But at the end of the day, the wheelchair accessible vehicles are going to disappear.

CHAIR JOSHI: Thank you for your comments.

MR. FARBER: Commissioners, you have to do your own research to find out the state of these green taxis. You must. You can't just listen to what they say, you have to look into this. I've contacted some of your offices, I've never got a call back.

MR. WILSON: Thank you, Gary. Thank you.

MR. FARBER: You're very welcome.

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MR. WILSON: Next up we have Jason Gross.

MR. GROSS: Good morning. My name is Jason Gross, I'm here representing Verifone, one of the TPEP vendors.

I first wanted to say we're very in support of the aim of the program and the general framework of the program, but we wanted to cover three topics we thought were necessary to address in our goal of getting this program to be implemented most efficiently and effectively.

With respect to the requirements of the TPEP vendors. We feel that perhaps in its vigor to do this quickly, the TLC has left the requirements overly vague, and put an undue burden on the TPEP vendor to integrate with as yet unnamed, unselected, undefined technology provider and solution.

CHAIR JOSHI: Has your company not been in touch with the company that was selected? 'Cause my understanding is you've had conversations with them.

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MR. GROSS: Yes, we have had conversations.

CHAIR JOSHI: So they're not unknown and you've met with them.

MR. GROSS: My understanding is that's yet unannounced. But we have been in discussions and we are working towards implementing what I'm here asking the TLC --

CHAIR JOSHI: In other jurisdictions, does your company work with the company that we selected?

MR. GROSS: I'm not actually sure of that.

CHAIR JOSHI: My understanding is you do in Chicago.

MR. GROSS: We have done some integrations with that dispatch provider, but each one is unique. And again, what I'm here to talk about I think reflects our experience.

When the original program was created in 2012, the technology that existed in the taxis from the TPEP providers was

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vastly different. The need for a second terminal piece of hardware in the front seat was in large part due to the fact that the existing technology was not set up to allow for dispatch calls to come through to the drivers.

As you well know, both us and the other significant TPEP provider now have terminals in the front of the taxis for our respective e-hail apps that allow a passenger to request a cab in advance, as well as on-demand or up to one day in advance to book that reservation. We're sending that dispatch job to a driver of a yellow or green taxi. And the user who's using our app is able to see that taxi come, they're able to pay from the app, which might help solve one of those other problems.

So I'm not here to push our specific app technology, but I do want to mention that over two, three weeks ago, we launched wheelchair accessible as an option in the current app. We have set up

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over 1,100 vehicles, and have done over 100 completed trips while not participating in the deadhead program or any other.

So we know the technology that exists in the taxi is capable of delivering this experience. More to the point, we've actually opened up that technology to the MTA to allow the Access-A-Ride system to have a phone-based dispatcher, for which we'll provide back up, take a call from a passenger to request a ride, and deliver that ride through our existing technology. And why we believe that is so important is now, especially that you have dispatch calls coming from e-hail providers, you are now having, under this proposal, two systems that could be receiving dispatch requests at the exact same time through two completely different work flows and interfaces.

So it's not just the unnecessary cost of installing additional hardware, both in time and money, but it's also the

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potential for confusion of what we call race conditions. There are two things happening at the same time that shouldn't be allowed to happen at the same time.

CHAIR JOSHI: Is your proposal that there's, I'm just going to say generally, no need for a central dispatcher because the e-hail providers could provide that function?

MR. GROSS: I wouldn't go so far as to say we recommend that, because that would again require you dictating a certain level of cooperation between the various technology providers.

CHAIR JOSHI: The two TPEP vendors.

MR. GROSS: Sure. I'm not here to say one way or the other that we think that's a good idea. But I would say the ability to talk to our 12,000-plus vehicles and dispatch to them through the existing technology should be considered in the creation of the rules and regulations, because we think that would be a far more time and cost effective

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manner to implement a program like this.

CHAIR JOSHI: Thank you very much.

MR. GROSS: Thank you.

MR. WILSON: Finally, our last speaker on the list Tendi Sherpa.

MR. SHERPA: Good morning, Commissioners, and good morning all TLC staff and ladies and gentlemen.

I'm green cab with accessible green taxi. I did this almost like three years now. I really like to work like that. I really like to work with dispatch system. But I see, like, kinds of the deadhead fees, like central district is \$10 and ours is like \$6. It's kinds of like commission for us.

And also I don't know very clear when we bring the dispatch, like with access in Manhattan, and when I go out of borough, we can get our dispatch, we can get dispatch on -- I'm confused. And also, out of green cab, it's now like three years, I have a lot of friends on the road for three years, and now our car is kind

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of, like, older. We need a lot of maintenance fee. And so, you know, we need, like, same as yellow industry, like yellow. We need the financial support.

If you continue help us, we can bring our vehicle on the street, otherwise we cannot.

CHAIR JOSHI: I just want to note that we published -- and we'll have a hearing next month -- on additional incentives for green taxis, that would include money for maintenance and money that would help you towards the purchase of a vehicle that would be more on the same level as what the yellow taxi owners get.

So hopefully you'll read those and we're happy to discuss them with you. Anyone in the back can give you the details of them, 'cause we certainly understand there needs to be owner and driver incentives in order to keep accessible taxis on the road. So thank you.

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MR. SHERPA: And the MTA 50 cents.
As owner of the vehicle, I would like to pay by myself like how I do like the TLC 30 percent surcharge. We people like paying by our set, not going by paying them and then -- three years, I haven't got any check from the like base letters. I don't know what might be like three years after, if the base is not busy, so we're going to be effect for that.

CHAIR JOSHI: Okay, thank you.
Unfortunately that's in state law, we which we can change that, but that doesn't mean we can't try.

MR. SHERPA: Thank you.
And the deadhead fee. Like Manhattan is \$10 and our borough is \$6.

CHAIR JOSHI: So the Manhattan fee started out as the same level as the metered fare. By the third year of the program we were able to increase it, so the outer borough program is also starting out at the metered fare, and our hope is over time we can also increase it to the

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same.

MR. SHERPA: Same is good.

CHAIR JOSHI: I do also want to read a statement from Gale Brewer, who wanted to testify in support of the rules, but was not able to make it today. And I'll read the statement as if I was Gale Brewer.

"My name is Gale Brewer, and I'm the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you Commissioner Joshi for the opportunity to testify today on the citywide dispatch program.

"In December 2013, the Taxi & Limousine Commission announced the landmark decision that mandates at least 50 percent of the City's yellow medallion taxis be wheelchair accessible by 2020. As I've testified many times before, we should continue to fight until every taxi and livery vehicle is wheelchair accessible, but the 50 percent threshold is nonetheless a much awaited and much welcomed development for New Yorkers

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living with mobility disabilities.

"However, as any New Yorker who uses a wheelchair can tell you, it can still be difficult to access these vehicles when needed even with a clear increase in accessible taxis on the road.

"Fortunately, under Commissioner Joshi's leadership, the TLC is continuing to take steps to address this issue. The Commission's Accessible Dispatch Program was launched in 2012. Since then, New Yorkers with mobility challenges have had the ability to hire accessible transportation services on-demand or by reservation at no extra cost to the passenger. By all measures, the program has been a success, with 60- to 70,000 trips taken via the program per year.

"This service, however, has thus far been limited to Manhattan despite a significant number of New Yorkers with disabilities living in the outer boroughs. With the expansion plans being discussed today, however, New Yorkers citywide will

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be able to book a wheelchair accessible trip simply by calling 311, calling or texting a request directly to the dispatcher, or booking through a website or using a mobile app. This will be welcomed news to the thousands of New Yorkers living with mobility challenges, many of whom struggle to find accessible vehicles to travel from the outer boroughs to their jobs, appointments or visit friends and family in Manhattan or elsewhere.

"TLC tells me they anticipate an additional 100,000 trips to be taken through the program in the first year, and up to 300,000 by the third year. As a result, TLC also tells me the citywide program will begin with more than 1,000 wheelchair accessible vehicles. We will have to closely monitor the program to ensure that this is a sufficient number to handle the significant increase and demand.

"Thank you again for the opportunity

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to testify today on the this exciting expansion. I look forward to continuing to work with the TLC to look for similar innovative ways to expand transportation options for New Yorkers living with disabilities."

I think that ends our Commission meeting, and then -- I'm sorry, a lot of elected officials couldn't make it today, and sent in statements.

So another quick one from Bronx Borough President, Ruben Diaz.

"A citywide accessible taxi dispatch program, one that could provide all passengers with a physical disability with safe and appropriate services at no extra charge, is a much needed amenity in our city.

"I commend the New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission for developing a framework for such a system that can ensure better transportation for people with disabilities throughout the five boroughs."

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And I think with that, that ends today's hearing. I thank everybody very much who came, especially those in wheelchairs who had much more difficulties getting here than the rest of us. But hopefully the goal of this program is that won't be the case in the future.

Thank you. The time now is 11:35.

(Time noted: 11:35 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK)
) ss.:
COUNTY OF QUEENS)

I, NICOLE ELLIS, a Notary Public for and within
the State of New York, do hereby certify:

I reported the proceedings in the within-entitled
matter, and that the within transcript is a true
record of such proceedings.

I further certify that I am not related to any of
the parties to this action by blood or by marriage
and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of
this matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
this 15th day of November 2016.

NICOLE ELLIS

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