

## Memo to all Elected Officials

### Stop the MTA's Collaboration with Companies that Discriminate

#### What needs to be done?

- (1) All collaboration between the MTA and E-hail companies like Uber that discriminate against the disabled needs to end immediately;
- (2) The MTA needs to work with the disability community and the taxi industry to devise an immediate on-demand system for disabled New Yorkers so that they can hail taxis when they are ready to travel-just like able-bodied passengers can now.

#### Rationale

The MTA-along with a wide range of observers-recognizes that the current Access-a-Ride system is dysfunctional, and that major reforms need to be made. Acting on this recognition, the transit agency-behind the scenes, and without informing the disability community-has embarked on a "proof of concept" experiment to determine the best way the para-transit system can be reformed.

<http://www.capitalnewyork.com/article/albany/2016/05/8599334/stringer-accuses-mta-access-ride-indifference-and-neglect>)

Unfortunately, the MTA has decided to include Uber in this preliminary due diligence. This is simply unacceptable! It is a disgrace to have the app-based car for hire companies like Uber and Lyft involved in the reform of para-transit in New York:

*"A mantra of disability rights activists is, "Nothing about us without us." ...Disability advocates, who fought hard for taxi access, are being undermined by the success of inaccessible transportation network companies, such as Uber, which have already shrunk the yellow-cab system and dealt it a severe financial blow. Taxis are the city's only for-hire vehicles reasonably accessible to wheelchair users."*

<http://www.crainsnewyork.com/article/20161013/OPINION/161019987/uber-gets-a-lyft-from-think-tank>) ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/uber-flirts-with-transit-agencies-across-the-us-for-a-share-of-paratransit-services/2016/03/05/5eb8b118-d751-11e5-9823-02b905009f99\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/uber-flirts-with-transit-agencies-across-the-us-for-a-share-of-paratransit-services/2016/03/05/5eb8b118-d751-11e5-9823-02b905009f99_story.html))

It doesn't make sense because these companies have been in the forefront of denying accessible vehicles to the disabled- contemptuously flouting the Americans for Disabilities Act by not providing a single accessible vehicle among the tens of thousands of car for hire vehicles they have on the road today in NYC.

Jim Weisman of United Spinal makes the compelling point:

*“To me, giving a contract to companies that refuse to take people in wheelchairs is ludicrous... If they refused to take black people in their cars, the MTA wouldn’t even consider giving them a contract.”*

<http://www.crainsnewyork.com/article/20161016/TRANSPORTATION/161019897/taxi-owners-worry-uber-and-lyft-will-win-lucrative-government-work>)

Fortunately, there is a better way. New Yorkers for Equal Transportation Access believes that the simplest and most cost-effective solution to this problem is to allow taxis to replace the entire costly and inefficient Access-A-Ride system. With the ranks of accessible taxi cabs increasing daily and with a court mandate that 50% of yellow taxis and 20% of green taxis must become accessible by 2020, it makes sense to use taxis to provide more efficient transit services. (<http://nyeta.org/>)

This is not either a radical or purely self interested concept. In the 2015 mayoral traffic study on the impact of e-hail cars on congestion, it was found that;

*“The City can expand the reach of accessible for-hire service by identifying ways to improve coordination between the TLC’s growing accessible taxi program and the MTA’s current Access-A-Ride system. The City’s accessible yellow and green taxis can help to provide greatly enhanced and more efficient service for Access-A-Ride users. The City and the MTA should continue to work together towards that end.”*

<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/For-Hire-Vehicle-Transportation-Study.pdf>

We agree, especially as the same study pointed out that the increase of e-hail companies created a negative zero-sum game for the disabled:

***"As e-dispatch continues to grow, the percentage of for-hire vehicles that are accessible will drop. Yellow and green taxi fleets, which are subject to accessible vehicle requirements, are losing their supply of willing drivers to e-dispatch services, which are subject to the equivalent service rule, but which are not subject to the judicial and statutory mandates affecting yellow and greens cabs. E-dispatched cars are not accessible to many people with disabilities including vision and hearing loss, or people using non-folding wheelchairs. As more e-dispatch vehicles are added to the road, the number of accessible yellow and green taxis becomes a smaller and smaller percentage of all for-hire vehicles – even without the drop in supply of yellow and green taxi drivers that the City is beginning to experience."*** (Pg.6)

In order for this system to function equitably, the MTA needs to devise a system whereby disabled New Yorkers are issued debit cards that they can use-just like EBT cards-when they are ready to travel. This way they have the means to hail a cab on the street just like any other New Yorker.

## **Please Join Us in Opposing Discrimination against the Disabled**

We are planning a press conference for the third week in November and are looking for state and city officials to stand up for the rights of some of New York's most vulnerable citizens. Let us know if you can stand up to the MTA's misguided collaboration with companies that actively discriminate against the rights of disabled New Yorkers to travel comfortably through the streets of our city.

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