



TAXICAB, LIMOUSINE &
PARATRANSIT ASSOCIATION

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‘Ridesharing’ Taxis Will Worsen Disabled Access in Cities

Rockville, MD—With one quarter of San Francisco’s wheelchair-accessible taxis now sitting idle, a major non-profit transportation group is today warning that so-called “ridesharing” taxi companies that are spreading across North America will cause a deterioration in transportation services for people with disabilities.

“The influx of unregulated taxis, including uberX, Lyft and Sidecar, and their lack of regard for wheelchair accessibility has already begun degrading the public transportation environment,” said Robert Werth, president of the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association (TLPA) and owner of the Virginia-based paratransit company, Diamond Transportation Services. “Unless concerned leadership takes action, these unregulated companies, wherever they operate, will begin totally eliminating accessible taxicab options for the disabled.”

Many North American cities consider wheelchair-accessible taxicabs to be an essential component of their public transportation infrastructure. But a stark portrait of what the future looks like is already evident in San Francisco, where the city’s Municipal Transportation Agency is reporting that approximately one quarter of the city’s wheelchair-accessible taxicabs are today sitting idle because there aren’t enough drivers to operate them.

“Many drivers are switching to driving for unregulated taxi companies (“ridesharing”) due to their lower operating costs,” Werth said. “Because companies like Uber, Lyft and Sidecar don’t invest in fundamental safety elements—commercial auto liability insurance, police-conducted background checks, comprehensive driver training and independent vehicle inspections—they enable drivers to operate cheaply. But public safety, and now the disabled community, is suffering as a result. If city officials allow these companies to operate without the same mandates in wheelchair and accessible transportation that are required by licensed taxicab companies, then the disability community will be left behind.”

According to recent news reports, none of the “ridesharing” companies have formulated a clear plan for disabled accessibility. The business model for these companies does not bode well for accessibility. Wheelchair-accessible vehicles are expensive to buy and maintain, and the vast majority of “ride-sharing” drivers are part-time, amateur drivers who use their own vehicles. “Ridesharing” companies provide no financial incentive for their drivers to provide disabled access, unlike many licensed taxicab companies throughout the country.

“These ‘ridesharing’ companies are showing a wanton disregard for the disability community,” said Bobby Coward, Executive Director of DIRECT (Disabled Individuals for Real Empowerment and Community Training) Action, a Washington, DC-based disability advocacy and training organization.

“Because these companies operate outside of regulation, they have no incentive or directive for accessibility, no training for drivers in sensitivity awareness and accessibility standards, and of course, no means of providing accessible transportation. The statistics are showing a takeover in the streets by these companies, and that’s very, very worrisome to anyone who uses a wheelchair.”

About TLPA:

Established in 1917, the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association (TLPA) is a non-profit trade association of and for the private passenger transportation industry. Its extensive membership spans the globe to include 1,100 taxicab companies, executive sedan and limousine services, airport shuttle fleets, non-emergency medical transportation companies, and paratransit services. For more information, please visit www.tlpa.org.

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