

Taxis For All Campaign

For wheelchair-accessible taxis and liveries in New York City, based upon universal design principles

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Group urges TLC: Don't miss historic opportunity – Mandate wheelchair-accessible taxis to accompany shift to “green” vehicles

The Taxis For All Campaign urged Mayor Bloomberg and the Taxi & Limousine Commission to mandate a transition to wheelchair-accessible taxis and other for-hire taxis, similar to the forward thinking that made higher mileage vehicles a requirement.

The Taxis For All Campaign – which is made up of the largest disability organizations in New York City – has called for a gradual adoption of accessible vehicles, particularly in the yellow-taxi fleet, and more accessible service in the livery and black car industries.

“We support greener, less-polluting vehicles – who wouldn't? – but wonder why the city would mandate this innovation and reject another,” said Anne Davis, the group's chair and a representative of the New York City Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Holding signs reading “Green + accessible cabs: Perfect TOGETHER” and “We like green cabs – We'd LOVE it if we could ride in them!” at the TLC's April 17th meeting, the group urged commissioners to heed the interests of all New Yorkers, including the tens of thousands who cannot use for-hire cars because they are not designed to accommodate wheelchair users.

At the meeting, the TLC was expected to vote to require black cars to meet higher gas mileage standards starting in 2009. It approved a similar mandate for yellow taxis last year.

Taxi fleet owners say it will take technological innovation to meet the TLC's miles-per-gallon requirements and that the ideal vehicle is not yet available – the same objection they and the TLC have been requiring wheelchair-accessible taxis. However, accessible taxis are now widely used across the U.S. and one company, Standard Taxi, is developing a new, factory-built accessible taxi.

The Taxis For All also released a letter to TLC Chairman Matthew Daus, urging him to include a representative from its group on the Iconic Taxi project.

“Unfortunately, the RFI does not declare that accessibility to people with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs, is a bedrock requirement for a successful iconic taxi design.... On the other hand, the City has taken the position that high gas mileage is a bedrock requirement for most future yellow cabs, and it is about to do the same with respect to black cars.”

“By choosing to move forward with one innovation rather than both at the same time, the City is missing an historical opportunity to transform the taxi fleet,” said Edith Prentiss of the 504 Democratic Club. “It's clear that if it's possible to produce a green taxi, you also can produce a green and accessible taxi.” Currently, only about one percent of the city's more than 13,000 yellow cabs are accessible; very few livery or black cars are accessible.