



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1706

Resolution calling upon the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission to provide alternatives to the Accessible Dispatch System pilot program, which currently requires taxi and livery drivers to send and receive text messages to and from a central dispatcher while on duty.

By Council Members Weprin, Gerson, Gonzalez and James

Whereas, In August 2008, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (“TLC”) launched its Accessible Dispatch System pilot program; and

Whereas, The Accessible Dispatch System pilot program is a two-year demonstration project that will provide dispatched, wheelchair accessible service to passengers through New York City’s 311 system; and

Whereas, The goal of the program is to help the TLC learn how to best match wheelchair accessible taxicabs with passengers requiring transportation service; and

Whereas, Through 311, wheelchair passengers are connected to a central dispatcher who then communicates electronically via text message with participating drivers in the program; and

Whereas, The closest available driver sends back a text message to the dispatcher through a wireless Blackberry mobile device; and

Whereas, Drivers are required to text the dispatcher when they have arrived at the pick-up location, and also when they have “loaded” and “unloaded” a passenger, according to the “Accessible Taxi Dispatch Driver’s Guide” on TLC’s website; and

Whereas, There is a growing national concern regarding the dangers of text message related crashes based on the increasing number of vehicular accidents being reported in the news involving this practice; and

Whereas, Many studies have also demonstrated that using hand-held cell phones while driving can be

dangerous and is a common driver distraction; and

Whereas, According to an article on January 2, 2008 from The University of Utah's online newspaper, *U News Center*, the University's recent study on driving and cell phone use revealed that cell phone users were 5.36 times more likely to get in an accident than undistracted drivers and that drivers talking on cell phones are as impaired as drivers with the 0.08 percent blood alcohol level that defines drunken driving in most states; and

Whereas, According to a June 2008 statement by the Insurance Information Institute, the dangers associated with driving and cell phone use, including text messaging, involve drivers taking their eyes off the road, which impairs their ability to concentrate on driving and jeopardizes the safety of vehicle occupants and pedestrians; and

Whereas, According to the TLC's 2007 annual report, there are an estimated 231 wheelchair accessible taxicab medallions in New York City, more than any other city in the nation; and

Whereas, The safety of drivers, passengers and pedestrians in New York City may be at greater risk when taxi and livery drivers are encouraged to use texting devices while on duty; and

Whereas, Although the Accessible Dispatch System pilot program requires drivers to pull over when using their Blackberry device, there is concern that some drivers may not be following this rule; and

Whereas, Even though TLC's efforts to enhance service are commendable, it must seriously reconsider its decision to allow drivers to send and receive text messages, which can be counterproductive to such efforts for safety reasons; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission to provide alternatives to the Accessible Dispatch System pilot program, which currently requires taxi and livery drivers to send and receive text messages to and from a central dispatcher while on duty.

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