

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FOR-HIRE VEHICLES

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October 15, 2018
Start: 10:04 a.m.
Recess: 12:23 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: RUBEN DIAZ, SR.
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Joseph C. Borelli
Costa G. Constantinides
Francisco P. Moya
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Deborah L. Rose
Paul A. Vallone

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Jennifer Tavis, Deputy Commissioner of Finance and Administration, NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission

Michael Anderson, Director of Programs
NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission

Valerie Joseph, Access-A-Ride Advocate, Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the Disabled

Joe Rappaport, Executive Director, BCID

Nicole Epstein, Gotham Government Relations,
NYETA, New Yorkers for Equal Transportation Access

Peter Mazer, General Counsel, Metropolitan Taxicab Board of Trade

Richard Lipsky, Medallion Owners' Representative

Jean Ryan, President, Disabled in Action in Metropolitan New York

Sergio Cabrera

Jacob Policano Appearing for David Byer, President of Committee for Taxi Safety

Pedro Gonzalez, Cab Driver Via Translator

Robert Ascevedo, Disabled in Action

Hector Herman, Via Translator

Rajame Linati, Cab Driver

Tarek Mallah, Global Head of Channel Development
for Curb Mobility Appearing for: Jason Gross,
Vice President of Curb Mobility

Justin Wood, Director of Research and Organizing,
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Scott Rudder, Vice President, Limo Association of
New York

2 [sound check] [background comments,
3 pause]

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.
5 [background comments, pause] [gavel]

6 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Good morning, ladies
7 and gentlemen. Welcome to this hearing of the City
8 Council Committee on For-Hire vehicles. I am Ruben
9 Diaz, Sr., the Chair of the Committee. Before I will
10 proceed, I would like to recognize my colleagues who
11 are here with us today. I have Council Member Koo
12 (sic) Council Member Rose. Today we will be
13 conducting an oversight hearing the accessibility in
14 the taxi and for-hire vehicle sector. There is a
15 vast room for improvement. In recent years TLC has
16 made great strides in increasing access-accessibility
17 and continue to do so. In 2004, there were only five
18 fully accessible taxis out of a fleet of more than
19 12,000 and by 2011, [coughs] this number was only
20 231, the rate of just 1.8%. Because of TLC various
21 requirements and incentives since then, according to
22 the most recent data, there are just shy-there are
23 just shy of 2,000 wheelchair accessible taxis
24 operating in the city. While this improvement is to
25 be commended, let's remember that London has required

2 all of their taxis to be wheelchair accessible since
3 1989. New York City has a long, long way to go.
4 [coughs] The for-hire vehicle sector is the—is
5 further behind, but with very recent developments in
6 the city, it's progress. The latest data shows that
7 while there—there are over 100,000 for-hire vehicles
8 on the road, barely over 100 wheelchair-accessible.
9 TLC's 2017 Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Rules
10 require the for-hire vehicle base to dispatch 25% of
11 their trips in wheelchair accessible vehicles by
12 2022, and more recent rules allow bases to opt into
13 an accessible dispatch program to meet certain
14 response time benchmarks for accessible trips. These
15 are important steps toward ensuring that for-hire
16 vehicles are available to all New Yorkers, and we
17 will be keeping close eyes on their progress. Today,
18 we will be—today we will be an opportunity—today will
19 be an opportunity for all of us to learn from the
20 Administration the disability community, the drivers
21 and industry groups about the way in which
22 accessibility has been improved the way this city has
23 fallen short, and the way we can do better. Before
24 we begin with testimony from the Administration, I
25 would to take a moment to remember Ms. Elizabeth

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6

2 (sic) Ramos, the tireless advocate on behalf of the
3 disability community who fought to ensure equal
4 access to taxis and for-hire vehicles for wheelchair
5 users. Please join me for a moment of silence.

6 [moment of silence] Thank you. I would now like to
7 welcome the representatives of the Administration who
8 are here with us today. Thank you for being here,
9 and before I-[off mic] Who is going to represent?
10 Who is going to represent? I'm also--also Council
11 Member Vallone is here today. [off mic] Whose
12 representative are we going to see? [background
13 comments] The Commissioner, the Taxi and Limousine
14 Commissioner will not be here today. She's sending
15 her Deputy Jennifer Tavis, and I want to be--I want to
16 make sure that even though the Commissioner is not
17 here today, this is one of the most important
18 hearings. We're going--we'll be dealing today with
19 accessibility for people who are handicapped, and it
20 will--it will also be nice to have the commissioner,
21 but she's not here today. The show must go on, and
22 we will go, and it's Jennifer Tavis. Take your
23 place, please and Michael Anderson representing the
24 Commissioner, and I hope that you have the questions
25 to conduct the--you are prepared to respond to all the

2 questions that we will have today, that we have
3 today. Will you take the oath of them?

4 LEGAL COUNSEL: Good morning. Do you
5 affirm to tell the truth, the whole before in your
6 testimony before the committee today?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: I do

8 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you. Yourself as
9 well.

10 MICHAEL ANDERSON: I'm sorry. I do.

11 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Okay, Commissioner,
13 Deputy Commissioner Tavis thank you so--

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Good morning,
15 Chair Diaz and the members of the For-Hire Vehicle
16 Committee. My name is Jennifer Tavis, Deputy
17 Commissioner of Finance and Administration at the New
18 York City Taxi and Limousine Commission. Thank you
19 for inviting me to discuss the agency's progress in
20 making New York City's for-hire transportation
21 accessible to all New Yorkers. TLC's mission is to
22 ensure that all New York City receive safe, reliable
23 and accessible for-hire service. Over the past
24 several years the TLC has taken great strides in
25 making service more accessible for people with

2 disabilities. Today, nearly 3,000 out of the 125,000
3 vehicles regulated by the TLC are accessible to the
4 approximately 90,000 wheelchair users who work and
5 reside in the city. This represents significant
6 progress in providing wheelchair users a basic
7 service available to all New Yorkers. The ability
8 on-demand transportation from a curbside at any hour
9 of the day or night. Accessible transportation means
10 that New Yorkers and visitors to New York City who
11 have disabilities can participate in the life of the
12 city including access to health, education, culture
13 and family. In 2014, the TLC changed the landscape
14 of Yellow Taxi Service for people with disabilities
15 by requiring a percentage of each fleet to be
16 wheelchair accessible. Today almost 2,500 Yellow
17 Taxis are wheelchair accessible and available for
18 customers, an tenfold increase since 2014, and a
19 percentage of Green Taxis that started to hit the
20 streets in 2013 are also required to be accessible,
21 and although the number in service is lower than we
22 would like, there are approximately 2,000–200
23 accessible Green Taxis on the road in the boroughs
24 when five years ago there were none. To get more
25 accessible Yellow and Green Taxis on the road, the

2 TLC created the Taxi Improvement Fund. TIF and the
3 Street Hail Livery Improvement Fund, SHLIF. The
4 programs are funded through a 30 cent surcharge and
5 all medallion and street hail livery trips. Enrolled
6 owners are eligible to receive a one-time payment of
7 \$14,000 to offset purchase costs and up to an
8 additional \$4,000 a year for four years to support
9 owning and using a WAV vehicle up to \$30,000 total
10 over a 4-year period. TLC recently increased the
11 per-trip payment for drivers taking part in the TIF
12 and SHLIF Programs. They now receive—it was
13 increased from 50 cents to one dollar per trip
14 meaning enrolled drivers will receive one dollar for
15 every trip made in a wheelchair accessible Yellow
16 Taxi earning an additional average biweekly payout of
17 \$134. Since 2016, the program has paid out nearly
18 \$37 million to vehicle owners, and \$7.5 million to
19 drivers. Owners of accessible Green Taxis are
20 eligible to receive similar levels of support through
21 TLC's Green Grant Program. [background comments]
22 TLC also operates Accessible Dispatch Program that
23 provides passengers a safe, reliable ride in
24 wheelchair accessible Yellow and Green cabs all at
25 the metered rate. The program is the first operation

2 of its kind offering citywide wheelchair accessible
3 taxi service. Passengers can book trips on demand
4 via mobile app, text, web booking and traditional
5 calling requests, and can pay for their trips via
6 cash or credit card. The Accessible Dispatch Program
7 originally served only Manhattan, but in January of
8 this year it was expanded to all five boroughs. The
9 program has completed more than 60,000 trips so far
10 this calendar year, and median wait times for
11 Accessible Dispatch trips fell to 13 minutes
12 citywide, and the program fulfilled 84% of requested
13 trips. We work everyday to make these numbers even
14 better. To improve income opportunities for drivers
15 through Accessible Dispatch, TLC has passed rules to
16 equalize driver payments throughout the city. Thus,
17 there will be an increase in the rates for outer
18 borough based trips so that they match the trips that
19 started in Manhattan. Additionally, because drivers
20 have to spend time driving without a passenger to
21 pick up accessible dispatch trips also know as
22 deadheading, TLC will implement and across the board
23 a \$5.00 increase to these deadhead payments to
24 drivers. With these increases in place, and before
25 the meter even starts, drivers will be able to make

up \$35.00 per accessible trip while providing much needed service to New Yorkers with disabilities. Since 2014, the TLC has spearheaded a collaboration with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Access-A-Ride program to expand opportunities Yellow and Green Taxis. As a result of this partnership and after a testing phase, the MTA launched a taxi pilot, which provides Access-A-Ride service in mainstream vehicles so disabled passengers can travel using the same methods as other New Yorkers instead of a separate service. This partnership also provides additional income streams to taxi drivers and additional vehicle capacity for the Access-A-Ride program. As one Green Taxi driver put it at a most recent public hearing, we are doing 80% of curbside rides for Access-A-Ride passengers and accessibility rides, and this is really incremented our income. I have drivers who in five hours will make \$200 and they're happy. They're all day with Access-A-Ride. As of May, 2018 Green and Yellow Taxis provided more than 5,000 Access-A-Ride trips each day and the share has been steadily growing. Also, by using taxis and taxis apps for the first time, Access-A-Ride passengers can request true on-demand service, which

2 is life changing for passengers rather than the old
3 way booking 24 hours in advance and waiting up to
4 three hours for a ride. We are excited by the
5 possibilities offered by this partnership for
6 passengers, owners and drivers. We appreciate the
7 interest that we have received from Council Members
8 about deepening our collaboration with the MTA, and
9 we welcome your support. While there has been great
10 progress in growing the fleet of accessible taxis
11 from 2014 to 2018, the for-hire vehicle market grew
12 by over 50,000 vehicles, but woefully few of these
13 new cars were accessible. So, starting in 2016 the
14 TLC took the initiative to change that unacceptable
15 situation. Just ten days ago the TLC approved new
16 rules and New York has become the first city in the
17 nation to mandate that for-hire vehicles provide real
18 accessible service by increasing the number of
19 wheelchair accessible vehicles in circulation. TLC
20 now requires every base to either have an escalating
21 percentage of its trips done in wheelchair accessible
22 or to respond to requests for accessible vehicles
23 within a prescribed wait time. For example, within
24 the next year most passengers requesting a wheelchair
25 accessible vehicle must get it in less than 15

2 minutes and by the third year in less than 10.

3 Mobility is the lifeline of our city. So, increasing
4 the number of wheelchair accessible vehicle in
5 circulation benefits all New Yorkers as more of us
6 can get around and get more involved in the economic
7 and cultural life of our city. As you can see, TLC
8 has made meaningful progress in the last five years,
9 and there is still much to do. We recognize that New
10 York City serves as a model for other major cities
11 that aspire to make the for-hire vehicles accessible,
12 [coughing] and we will keep working to make sure that
13 New York leads the way for the entire nation and the
14 world. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you Commissioner
16 Tavis. Tavis?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Tavis.

18 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you. [coughs]
19 Commissioner, could you—before that, we have—we have
20 been joined by Council Member Rodriguez. [pause]
21 [Speaking Spanish] Thank you. [coughs] [background
22 comments, pause] Okay, okay. Commissioner, can you,
23 can you please tell me as of today how many
24 accessible Yellow Taxis are there in the road?

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: On the road?

2 Thank you for that question. We're very
3 happy to be here today to speak about the progress
4 that our agency has made in increasing accessibility
5 over time. As of right now, there are 2,467
6 wheelchair accessible vehicles-Yellow Cabs, and we
7 are aware of 1,938 that are currently on the road and
8 active with serving passengers.

9 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: You have collected
10 \$109 million for the public-from-from-to help owners
11 of cabs-of vehicles fix that care to be accessible.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Uh-hm.

13 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Out of the \$109
14 million, how much-how much are you-have you used
15 already?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: So, to date
17 we have paid out-I'll just make sure I use consistent
18 figures. It is-we have paid \$37 million to vehicle
19 owners and \$7.5 million to drivers.

20 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: How-how many again?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: \$37 million
22 to vehicle owners and \$7.5 million to drivers.

23 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: So, you have about
24 \$70,000 left? 70, about \$70 million?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: We have—yeah,
3 we've paid out—yeah, that's about—that's about right.
4 Well, I think we have \$70 or \$80 million left, yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Is that—is that
6 because people are not requesting the money or—or
7 because the—the agency is low in—in helping people?
8 Which one of the two?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: It—I think
10 there's been slower demand than we were anticipating.
11 That is the case, but we are working to ensure that
12 everyone has access to the funding that they need
13 that the drivers are receiving the funds that they
14 need in order offset the costs of modifying a vehicle
15 to make it wheelchair accessible and the drivers are
16 receiving incentives and we actually recently
17 increased the payout for drivers. It used to be a
18 dollar per trip. Sorry. It used to be 50 cents per
19 trip and we doubled it to a dollar per trip, and now
20 bi-weekly drivers are receiving on average \$134 in
21 payouts. So, that's about \$270 a month, which is, you
22 know, a very nice addition to their income.

23 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: I—I—I don't know if
24 you answered my question or not. My question was you
25 have \$109 million.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Uh-hm.

3 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: You have only this—you
4 have over \$70,000 left--\$70,000 million left. So, my
5 question was: Why do you have so much money left
6 because the people, the drivers are not requesting
7 the money or because the agency is slow in helping
8 the drivers? Which of the two?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: We are
10 receiving fewer requests than we initially
11 anticipated when the program was started. We are,
12 you know—I think everyone in this room is well aware
13 of the broader economic pressures that the industry
14 is facing, which has resulted I think in lower demand
15 overall. However, we have made every effort to ensure
16 that the dollars that we are paying out are adequate
17 to meet the needs of owners who are trying to modify
18 their cars to make them wheelchair accessible, and we
19 are looking to spend the money faster because we
20 recently increased the amount that we pay to drivers
21 for a trip that went from 50 cents to one dollar.
22 So, we will be spending down that money faster, and
23 by doing so, we'll be providing additional income to
24 the drivers who are providing this service, this
25 critical service?

2
3 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Does--does the TLC have
4 an estimated--have an estimate as to how many trips
5 refused or complaints are made because an individual
6 is in a wheelchair?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: I do not have
8 those numbers in front of me. We take service
9 refusals very, very seriously. They are followed up
10 on by our Prosecutions Team and any cases that result
11 in a finding that they have, in fact, discriminated
12 do result in action being taken against the driver in
13 the form of fines.

14 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Do you have--[coughs]
15 Can you tell me how many accessible Green cars on the
16 road today? You told me before when I asked you
17 about the Yellow. What about the Green car?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: So, for--for
19 the Green cabs there's about 250 on the road today.
20 I think we're all very aware of the pressures that
21 have made the green sector in particular struggle,
22 but we are very happy about those 250 that are on the
23 road, and they are providing service throughout the
24 outer boroughs, and they are a critical component of
25 our accessible dispatch program and of Access-A-Ride.

2 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: I know you--on another
3 topic you will recall that on April 30 2018, the
4 Commissioner gave testimony, and we signed a bill.
5 We approve a bill regarding Introduction 838, and
6 this bill was signed into law on August 14, 2018.
7 Today is more than two months later. Question: When
8 are the regulations going to be published, and when
9 will there be a hearing on this?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Thank you for
11 the question. We are hear today to focus on
12 accessibility. I can assure that the Taxi and
13 Limousine Commission is working to comply with the
14 legislation's timelines and to develop all of the
15 requirements associated with the high volume for-hire
16 service bill.

17 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: So--so--

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: [interposing]
19 But we're--we're happy to address any questions in
20 follow-up conversations. I really want to focus
21 today on the community of people with disabilities,
22 and ensuring that we're addressing the critical
23 issues around accessibility.

24 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Okay. So, I'm going--
25 I'm going to keep on this question. Do we--[pause] Is

2 the Yellow Cab set to—is the Yellow Cab set for on
3 track to meet the 50% requirement?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: The Taxi and
5 Limousine Commission has continued to work hard to
6 ensure that the Yellow sector has the support that
7 they need to continue to modify their vehicles, and
8 to make 50% of new vehicles be wheelchair accessible.
9 However, the broader goal of hitting 50% by 20/20
10 we're concerned about it frankly. Given the overall
11 trends we've seen around Yellow Taxis and the
12 pressures that the industry is facing, we've seen
13 fewer new cars going on the road overall, and
14 consequently we've seen also few wheelchair
15 accessible vehicles even though we have been
16 enforcing the 50% of new car requirements, and so we
17 look forward to speaking with advocates later this
18 week about how we can move forward in the best
19 possible way to ensure that we continue to make
20 progress towards this goal, and to meet the needs of
21 people with disabilities who live in the city.

22 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: So, so, we both agree
23 that the—the people who are handicapped they need the
24 services. We both agree that we've been behind—the
25 TLC has been behind on providing the services. When

2 will you—when will you advise me as the Chairman of
3 this committee and the City Council to do to help you
4 improve the—the method in which you—you are providing
5 the services to the handicapped community?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: We are
7 continuing to focus on ways that we can incentivize
8 additional wheelchair accessible vehicles to be on
9 the road. We are very concerned to ensure that we
10 live up to the commitments that we have made. We
11 need to make sure that we are doing it in a way that
12 works in favor of people with disabilities and of the
13 industry. We their interest to be aligned, and we
14 very much want to engage in a dialogue with the
15 advocates, with this committee to ensure that we are
16 really looking at a broad range of possible solutions
17 to improve accessibility. We are—we feel that it is
18 critical that the—that the—that—that service continue
19 to improve that we continue to increase the number of
20 vehicles on the road that can provide this critical
21 service. It's been too long. The people with
22 disabilities have not received the same level of
23 service as everyone else, and we really need to
24 address that, and we welcome ideas from this

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2 committee from the disability advocacy community on
3 how we can continue to do that and grow that number.

4 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: So, okay. I want to
5 know if one of my colleagues has any questions? So
6 I'm going to—I'm going to call on Council Member--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [off mic]
8 [interposing] Rose.

9 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Rose.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you. Okay. I
11 wanted to address something that was in your--your
12 statement when you talked about the accessible
13 dispatch program, and you said that the program has
14 fulfilled 84% of its requested trips. Could you tell
15 me why it's only 84%--and then you say you're working
16 everyday to make these numbers better. How are--how
17 are you doing that? What's your plan of action?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Sure. So,
19 the 84% fulfillment rate, we would love it if it was
20 100% and we are continuing to work towards that goal.
21 We would like for every call to be answered in a
22 timely way with accessible transport. We--there are a
23 variety of reasons why a call--a call might not be
24 completed. Sometimes the passenger cancels.
25 Sometimes the driver is unable to complete. Our

2 accessible dispatch provider is committed to
3 providing a vehicle. If -if for some reason the
4 first driver that's requested doesn't make it, they
5 will dispatch another driver to do the pickup, and so
6 we are committed to ensuring that the trip is
7 fulfilled. The 84% pickup rate doesn't mean that the
8 passenger wasn't ultimately picked up. It just means
9 that either the first driver or the passenger may
10 have cancelled the trip. But we're working to
11 improve the numbers, and I'm going to let my
12 colleague Michael Anderson here who does the day-to-
13 day work speak in greater detail to how we are
14 working to improve those numbers.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Before he answers
16 that, are some of these missed calls due to the fact
17 that the driver doesn't wait the required amount of
18 time for the passenger to get to the vehicle?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: The program
20 does have built-into it, you know, there is an
21 established [coughing] length of time that they are
22 supposed to wait. If for some reason the driver does
23 not wait that period of time, you know, we would
24 encourage people to call 311 and register a
25 complaint, because it's really important to us to be

2 able to hold our drivers accountable for providing
3 the service that they are supposed to be providing
4 through this program. We are providing additional
5 compensation in association with this program. They
6 get compensated for the distance that they drive to
7 arrive at the point where they are supposed to do the
8 pickup? And so, I think there is—it's an important
9 expectation that they be able to wait and serve the
10 passenger. [background comments]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And have you found
12 that—that by giving them additional compensation that
13 the outer boroughs are being adequately served?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: We ae working
15 to increase the number of folks who are—the number of
16 trips that we are making in the outer boroughs and to
17 improve service in the outer boroughs. We've seen,
18 to be frank, the majority of our—our volume of trips
19 through accessible dispatch have continued to be
20 Manhattan. We've seen fewer trips in—in the outer
21 boroughs, but we really want to spread the word that
22 the service exists, and ensure that we're maximizing
23 the opportunity associated with it, and we've
24 actually recently taken steps to increase what we're
25 paying to drivers to do—to pickups in the outer

2 boroughs, equalizing the amounts with Manhattan and
3 then raising the payment—those deadhead payments for
4 the distance to the pickup point by \$5.00 across the
5 board to increase the incentive for—for these drivers
6 to go out and do the pickups even in outlying areas
7 where they might not normally be circulating.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And I haven't
9 forgotten that I want to know how, but have you found
10 the—the number of accessible vehicles really is
11 inadequate citywide. It's totally inadequate, but
12 have you found that—do you have any numbers of what
13 the number—the amount of vehicles, accessible
14 vehicles are available to the outer boroughs?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: So,
16 theoretically, any of the 3,000 vehicles that are
17 across all of the sectors that are wheelchair
18 accessible can do pickups in the outer boroughs,
19 Yellow, Green and for-hire vehicles, they're all able
20 to do outer boroughs pickups.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Do you maintain any
22 type of—of data in terms of the number of available
23 accessible cabs, and—and I'm from Staten Island so I
24 guess, you know, the outer borough I'm most concerned
25 about would be Staten Island.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Uh-hm. I do
3 not have the numbers with me today. We could—we
4 could certain follow up, and look at the trips that
5 are provided through accessible dispatch from each of
6 the boroughs. We'd be happy to follow up with that
7 information.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Please. I'm
9 especially interested in the number of—of Green cars
10 that are accessible. On Staten Island I would like
11 to know the total number of Green cars and then the
12 total number of accessible vehicles because I don't—I
13 frankly I don't see, you know, very many of them. So,
14 could you answer how you're planning to increase the—
15 the number of accessible vehicles?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: So, we are
17 taking—we have—we provide incentives for the Greens
18 as the Green taxis as well as the Yellow taxis.
19 Owners can receive up to \$30,000 starting with a
20 \$14,000 initial payment to modify their vehicles to
21 make them wheelchair accessible, and then it's up to
22 \$4,000 a year for, you know, maintenance costs
23 associated with wheelchair accessible vehicles, and
24 then for drivers, both Green and Yellow receive one
25 dollar per trip provided in an accessible vehicle

2 regardless of whether the passenger has need of
3 wheelchair accommodation. And we just recently put
4 forward rules to hold the for-hire vehicle sector
5 accountable for providing accessible transportation.
6 Too long they have ignored their legal requirement to
7 provide accessible transportation. There are about
8 250 for-hire vehicles on the road today that are
9 wheelchair accessible, and that is less than 1% of
10 the total for-hire vehicles on the road, and that is
11 why we have put in place a new mandate that will be
12 going into effect to require either a certain
13 percentage of trips to provided in wheelchair
14 accessible vehicles or for the service to be provided
15 within a certain set wait time.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, you're saying
17 you're trying to incentivize drivers of accessible
18 vehicles.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Uh-hm.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Are you increasing
21 the numbers of-of licenses that are being given to
22 accessible vehicles and are there more accessible
23 vehicles being produced because at one time that was
24 a concern that there weren't an adequate number of
25 accessible vehicles within the price range that made

2 them, you know, cost effective. So, are we—what do
3 you doing in terms of that?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: You know,
5 it's very important that we make sure that we are
6 implementing both mandates and even incentives in a
7 way that makes this not only feasible, but a
8 desirable option for our owners and drivers, and we
9 have implemented the Taxi Improvement Fund and the
10 Green Grant programs to make it possible to modify
11 vehicles, and there are a range of vehicles that we
12 allow them to use. By providing these grants, it
13 offsets the costs. The vehicles that can be used for
14 this purpose, you know, are standard vehicles that
15 can be purchased like any other, and then they go to
16 a—a modification business that adds in the ramps and
17 the various accessible equipment, the securements and
18 so on and so forth. And then they come to TLC who
19 inspects and makes sure that everything meets the
20 specs, but I'm—I'm not aware at this juncture of any
21 challenges in terms of the supply of vehicles.
22 There's a supply of wheelchair accessible equipment.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Right, and we've
24 heard from the actual consumers that the—the type of
25 vehicle is important in terms of accessibility. So,

2 it seems to be that most are rear-loading, which
3 seems not to be the safest type of loading as opposed
4 to side loading. Can you tell me the number of cars
5 that you have that are rear-loading and are side-
6 loading, and if there—if you're looking at, you know,
7 safety issues in terms of how passengers are loaded.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: We have heard
9 that feedback. Thank you for raising this. We have
10 heard the feedback from—from the community of people
11 with disability. It's that they prefer the side
12 entry to rear entry. The majority of the vehicles on
13 the road today are rear entry. My understanding is
14 that it's somewhat less expensive to modify vehicles
15 for rear entry than it is for side entry, and that's
16 drive decisions on behalf of a lot of our owners. We
17 are—we have authorized two vehicles to be able to be
18 modified for side entry, and we are happy to engage
19 with—in discussions about how to increase the numbers
20 that are on the road that offer side entry. I do not
21 have the specific numbers of how many are side entry
22 versus rear entry at this moment, but I'm happy to
23 try and follow up with you with on that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I would—I would
25 really like to see them, and if the number of

2 requests to, you know for a modification, and
3 training. How are the drivers trained to assist
4 people who need accessible vehicles, and more
5 visually impaired or deaf passengers?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Absolutely,
7 and thank you for bringing up the--there is--there's a
8 wide variety of disabilities, and we need our
9 vehicles to be accessible for all of them, and we
10 need our drivers to be aware of the needs of all of
11 all of our passengers so that they can provide
12 appropriate assistance.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Are there--is there
14 any training specifically that drivers of accessible
15 vehicles now have to take--

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: [interposing]
17 Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: --that's mandatory,
19 and it covers a full range of disabilities?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Yes. So,
21 every driver regardless of what they're going to
22 drive all drivers have to go through mandatory
23 training when they are getting licensed by TLC and
24 they have to pass an exam, and accessibility needs
25 are covered in that training, and we also offer

2 training and refresher trainings that they can
3 attend. Our Accessible Dispatch Provider provides
4 regular trainings to refresh people on how to use the
5 securements in the different types of vehicles that
6 are on the road today, and how to provide appropriate
7 service, and we also do outreach to drivers and
8 provide them with educational brochures, and try to
9 provide them with all of the support that we can to
10 ensure that they know how to serve people with
11 disabilities and that they provide a appropriate
12 assistance.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Green car drivers
14 are now answering Access-A-Ride calls, and in your-
15 your statement, there's about 80-80% of the curb
16 rides are for Access-A-Ride passengers now. Is that
17 an accurate number?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Let me look
19 back at this. So, so this is-that was a statement
20 from a driver who was saying that he individually had
21 found that curb was providing a significant number of
22 Access-A-Ride trips. I-I think that the Green
23 wheelchair accessible vehicles are very heavy
24 participants in-in the Access-A-Ride program and
25 pilot, and you know, that's individual drivers

2 clearly relying on it every heavily. It does not
3 represent overall the Green taxis. They're not--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: [interposing] Do
5 you have a sense of--of what, you know, the overall
6 usage is, the relationship between Access-A-Ride
7 pickup and Green Car Pickups or tax. I mean for
8 hail?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Uh-hm. So, I
10 don't have the breakup, the breakdown in front of me
11 of Green versus Yellow. I know that overall we do
12 about 5,000 rides a day for Access-A-Ride, and in the
13 outer boroughs those are predominantly done by our
14 accessible green taxis.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Is there a move to
16 move away from the traditional Access-A-Ride transit
17 system to accommodate the--the taxi and for-hire
18 industry?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: We are very
20 happy to be providing service to people with
21 disabilities and we are very happy to be giving trips
22 to our drivers, but I think for broader questions
23 around the future of Access-A-Ride, MTA would be
24 better positioned to respond. We are happy to
25 partner with them on this program, and feel that this

2 is really a win for all concerned, but they're really
3 the ones who lay out the—who lay out the policies and
4 determine the—the future of—of that program.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: And I just have one
6 more question. When a Green or for-hire car, livery,
7 whatever picks up an Access-A-Ride call, and an
8 Access-A-Ride call usually a passenger pays \$2.75.
9 Who subsidizes the cost for that trip beyond the
10 \$2.75, and say a trip to the outer boroughs. I had
11 constituents that leave Manhattan Hospital and will
12 go to Staten Island. Who subsidizes the other part
13 of that ride?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: The MTA does
15 and they are able to do it in general at lower cost
16 than for their usual Access-A-Ride service when they
17 are doing it through us.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: So, that's a part
19 of their—their budget?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Yeah.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay. I just want
22 to say, you know, on behalf of—of people who have
23 different abilities New York has to do better in
24 terms of the accessible vehicles that we provide, and
25 we're putting a lot of resources into the—the taxi

2 services across the board, and—and I want to see
3 that, you know, we have safe vehicles that are easy
4 for the consumers to access, and make sure that they
5 are available and that the outer boroughs have, you
6 know, and equal share of these vehicles. No one
7 should have to wait for an excessive amount of time
8 to get a ride. Thank you.

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you, Council
11 Member. We have been joined by Council Member
12 Rosenthal, and Council Member Moya. Commissioner,
13 you know, I have noticed—I have noticed through the
14 hearings that I have attended here in the City
15 Council that this committee if one negative moment
16 the most--is not one most attended hearings. Every
17 time that we have a hearing a lot of people. I'm
18 looking at that front row, and I see what I see. I'm
19 not a handicap. I am not, but this morning to get
20 here I had to get up early, real early to get ready
21 to be here. I'm not a handicap, but I have to get up
22 early. I'm looking at that row here. I say how-how
23 much sacrifice? What did they do this morning? What
24 time did they get up? What—how many things they went

2 through to be here this morning to the hearing? Why
3 do you think they're here for, Commissioner?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: I think that
5 they are here because this is a critical issue to
6 them. It's a critical issue for us. I think that
7 everybody in New York City deserves reliable on-
8 demand transportation, and no one should be excluded
9 from that. It shouldn't be the case that they have
10 to get up, that people with disabilities have to get
11 up hours and hours before they want to arrive
12 somewhere, and that they should have uncertainty
13 around whether they are even going to arrive on time
14 with the wait times. Everyone should be able to rely
15 on transportation in the city. It's critical to
16 their ability to participate in the economic life of
17 the city to get to a job on time everyday. It's
18 critical to their ability to participate in the
19 social life of the city and the cultural life of the
20 city. It should be a basic think that everyone in
21 the city has access to and we really want to be a
22 part of fixing the problem.

23 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: And I will also say
24 that if they're here, and they make a sacrifice to be
25 here, we also have here, and then commissioners who

2 have been here. I mean look at them. I don't think
3 that the sacrifice they make to be here should be
4 ignored, and—and I'm looking forward—I'm looking
5 forward for the day when they don't have to come here
6 not even them, the other—the other taxi drivers. We
7 just got another one that got—killed himself a few
8 years ago (sic) and then this is—and I've been trying
9 since I became Chairman of this Committee, I have
10 been trying to see how we could fix the problems.
11 It's probably the same group, but they don't go away.
12 People—people they have been harassed. They have
13 been arrested for loitering. They could have been
14 abused. Someone is going to hide even though we make
15 it easy for the—for the taxi—this committee under the
16 direction or the permission of—or leader, Corey—
17 Council Member Speaker Corey Johnson has done
18 everything possible, everything possible and I
19 appreciate the—what Speaker Johnson has everything
20 possible to give the Taxi and Limousine Commission
21 the authority, the power, the means for—for—for the
22 problem to be solved. I don't see. It's like it's
23 taking the time and doing things, and sometimes you
24 get frustrated, but we have to continue. I would
25 like to see—again, I am looking forward to all of

2 you, and this committee is working on your behalf and
3 Council Member Speaker is working very, very—doing
4 everything possible to help solve the problem that
5 you're facing. I thank you for being here this
6 morning. I hope that soon you don't have to come
7 here. Soon everything will be on the rest of the
8 drivers to—so, I am—I think that Council Member
9 Rosenthal has some questions. Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so
11 much, Chair Diaz. This is the first time I've been
12 at one of your committee hearings. It's a pleasure
13 to be here. Thank you so much for testifying. I'm
14 aware of this issue from only the perspective of the
15 disabilities community. So, forgive me if my
16 questions are naïve, but am I right in understanding
17 that we're—that it's a very difficult challenge for
18 the city that the MTA is legally responsible for
19 getting people with disabilities around. The
20 mechanism they use is an Access-A-Ride, which
21 everyone agrees stinks, and then I hope that wasn't
22 out of turn.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: [off mic]
24 [laughs] It wasn't.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Sorry, and
3 then, but they're doing this pilot project now,
4 right, that they pay for the difference in what the
5 cost is between, you know, the full cost of the ride
6 and \$2.75 that someone pays. What do you think the
7 chances are or how do we best advocate for the MTA to
8 expand their pilot program to be comprehensive in
9 that what are the obstacles getting in the way of our
10 asking the MTA to fully fund that which is their—I
11 think legal obligation, but I'm—as I say, a little
12 less familiar. I know it's more complicated than
13 this.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Thank you,
15 Council Member. We are very happy to be partnering
16 with the MTA, and we think that it is a really
17 wonderful service to be able to provide to people
18 with disabilities. We are very happy to be providing
19 on-demand service through this pilot to the pilot
20 participants, and I know that it would be huge
21 progress if MTA were able to expand this to be
22 universal instead of just for the thousand or so
23 people were the participants in the initial pilot. I
24 think they're expanding it somewhat now, but it's—
25 it's still not universal. You know, I—I think the

2 MTA would be best positioned to answer the question
3 about what resources would be required. We are ready
4 and willing to partner with the MTA in any way that
5 is needed. We think this is beneficial for the
6 passengers with disabilities, and we think this is
7 beneficial for our drivers. So, it's really a win
8 from our perspective, and we are happy to engage
9 anyway that we can in—in this pilot and be supportive
10 of the MTA and as they decide the future of that
11 program.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: That's really
13 great to hear. I appreciate that. I have heard that
14 for the lucky few that are in the pilot program it
15 provides dignity, respect, and speed at what is the
16 cost that anyone would pay if they were on the MTA,
17 \$2.75. So, again, you know, one of the things that
18 I've been really trying to drum home to the MTA is
19 they have tremendous cost in efficiencies in the way
20 that they run their program. Certainly through their
21 procurement mechanisms, which are deployed flawed, and
22 I think Andy Byford is maybe talking about taking
23 some of that on, but I'm thinking is do you think
24 under their current, you know, the current amount of
25 funds they have that they could pay for more people

2 to be part of the pilot. What do you—do you—have you
3 guys done some analysis to understand what the cost
4 to the MTA might be if they were to fulfill their
5 obligation to the disabilities community, and they
6 would pay for enrolling everyone, you know, which is
7 as it should be.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: We want to
9 partner with the MTA on this program. We're in
10 regular dialogue with them. We talk to them every
11 week, and I unfortunately am not privy to the MTA's
12 overall budgetary conversation on this. I—I have
13 heard certainly that cost is a major consideration
14 for them, but they would really have to answer that
15 question about what additional budget might be
16 available, but we are continuing to talk about a
17 variety of options that might allow us to broaden the
18 program, and I want to give Michael Anderson who
19 oversees the team that runs that program day-to-day,
20 a chance to provide additional detail on what we've
21 been discussing with Access-A-Ride.

22 MICHAEL ANDERSON: Sure. So, I think
23 it's probably important to just lay out our—our
24 relationship with Access-A-Ride. We—this I s an
25 Access-A-Ride program, and we serve as subject matter

2 experts in a consultative service, and so we don't
3 really have information about the decision making
4 around how they're going to expand the pilot to
5 include more people or not. You know, as our
6 commissioner said, we are extremely supportive of it.
7 We have our own set of financial incentives that we
8 use to give owners and drivers of wheelchair
9 accessible taxis a reason to be out on the road, and
10 to pick up passengers, and, you know, so we feel like
11 we're doing—we're doing a lot on our side, and I
12 would have to ask—I guess the MTA will have follow up
13 on theirs.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And I want to
15 correct myself. Some one is furiously texting me
16 that the MTA's obligation is for Access-A-Ride that
17 they're not obligated to provide respect and dignity
18 for—they're not legally obligated to provide the
19 service in a way that's respectful to the person
20 taking Access-A-Ride, but that they are fulfilling
21 their mandate, their legal mandate via Access-A-Ride.
22 I would argue that because the pilot has been so
23 successful and you've demonstrated that and, you
24 know, don't such a good job working with them that I
25 hope—I'm sure the MTA is aware from people that they

2 would like this program to be expanded, continued and
3 expanded. But, again, I would just like to reiterate
4 if there's any way that us as a Council can be
5 helpful in getting the MTA over that dignity hurdle
6 that I'm certainly here. I'm sure, you know, we're
7 all supportive of the disabilities community, and we
8 would be happy to help. Thank you. Thank you, Chair
9 Diaz.

10 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [coughs] Thank you,
11 Councilwoman. We have been joined by Council Member
12 Borelli. I don't know. There's--there is more
13 questions from the Council members. So, before we
14 dismiss the Commissioner, again I would like to
15 express my apologies to the--the audience and I hope
16 that the day will come when you don't have to come
17 here, you don't have to get up early. I'm calling--I--
18 I think that there is Mayor's representative--a
19 representative from the Mayor's Office here. So,
20 whoever is representing the Mayor, I'm calling on the
21 Mayor to call--to--to--to get into the TLC to move
22 because the Council again under the additional--under
23 the leadership of Corey Johnson have given the TLC
24 all the tools. We have passed laws. The
25 commissioner was saying that she cannot do it because

2 it was supposed to be done by-by the Council. So, we
3 have done—we have passed laws, and we are giving the
4 TLC the authority and the tools to move. Obviously,
5 TLC is dragging its feet. So, they got—the Mayor has
6 to come and jump in and be sure that we move, and
7 that with TLC. So, maybe who knows, I'm praying some
8 day you don't have to come back here, that we got all
9 the services that you're supposed to get on time and
10 nice and neat and clean, and the driver doesn't have
11 to be being arrested. They don't have to be killing
12 themselves. It would be a wonderful world, and I'm
13 working and I will do everything possible, and I
14 appreciate again what Speaker Johnson his support for
15 this committee and all the members of the committee
16 support and work. So, saying that, I appreciate you
17 coming today, Commissioner. I don't know if you want
18 to address them before you go.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Thank you all
20 for being here today. I really look forward to
21 hearing from all of you. I am sure that a number of
22 you are planning to give testimony, and I really
23 welcome your input.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you,
3 Commissioner for being here today, and there are no
4 more questions for you.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER TAVIS: Okay, thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you.
8 [background comments, pause] Now we want to
9 [coughs]—now we want to call onto the public, those
10 of you that came here to testify today. I'm going to
11 call—call you by a group of five. So, when you hear
12 your name, please come and sit—they can sit in the
13 chair. [speaking Spanish] I'm starting with Peter
14 Major, Nicole Epstein, Epstein, Ryan Price, Ryan
15 Price, Joseph Rappaport, and Richard Lipsky.
16 [background comments, pause] [speaking Spanish]
17 [laughs] Are we ready? Let's start with—what's your
18 name again?

19 VALERIE JOSEPH: [off mic] Valerie
20 Joseph.

21 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Okay. [background
22 comments, pause]

23 VALERIE JOSEPH: Good morning. My name
24 is Valerie Joseph. I am an Access-A-Ride advocate
25 for the Brooklyn Center for the Independence of the

2 Disabled. BCID is a member of ARG, the Access-A-Ride
3 Reform Group. We call it ARG because that is what
4 riders often think about the Access-A-Ride service.
5 Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the
6 Council today. Last month 60 Access-A-Ride users
7 made their voices heard at the MTA Transit Committee
8 Meeting. Dozens of us testified in support the MTA's
9 innovate On-Demand pilot, which allows a limited
10 number of Access-A-Ride riders to get On-Demand
11 Service using the curb app or calling in for the MTA
12 to connect us to a ride right away. For the first
13 time Access-A-Ride users can get a ride without
14 having to reserve a one-day in advance. Finally, we
15 can go directly to our directly to our destinations
16 without going in the wrong direction or picking up
17 three or four other people. For once we can where
18 were we want when we want. It is a fantastic
19 program, and we urge the MTA to expand all Access-A-
20 Ride riders to be able to use this service, but if
21 only a handful of for-hire vehicles are accessible,
22 as the case is now, the MTA will have a tough time
23 deliver-delivering adequate service. That is why we
24 need to Council's leadership in making accessibility
25 the norm for FHV service, not the rare exception. I

2 can't talk enough about what the MTA's now on-demand
3 service has done for my life, but I will keep it
4 brief. It has made a huge difference. I'm a Queens
5 resident [bell] who works in Brooklyn, and also I
6 must tell you that I go to meetings throughout the
7 day, and to get Access-A-Ride I would have to call a
8 day in advance for an impromptu meeting. So, I love
9 the service, and thank you very much for your
10 support.

11 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you, thank you.

12 JOE RAPPAPORT: I'm Joe Rappaport. I'm
13 the Executive Director of BCID and along with our
14 work on the ARG Campaign as Valerie mentioned, we're
15 also a lead member of the Taxis for all Campaign. We
16 really appreciate your having this hearing on this
17 important civil rights issue, and that's what it is.
18 It's not jut an MTA issues or TLC issue. It's a
19 citywide question of civil rights, the ability of
20 people to get around as easily as possible no matter
21 whether they have a disability or not and that's why
22 we're here today urging that there be more,
23 significantly more accessibility within the—in the
24 for-hire vehicle industry. When our community last
25 visited City Hall, we joined Mayor de Blasio and

2 Council members including you and the Taxi driver
3 after this as the Mayor signed legislation that
4 restricted the number of new FHV licenses, reduced
5 cost for drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles,
6 and helped beleaguered drivers in other ways, and we
7 thank you for your leadership in winning these
8 advances. But, as always, we're back because there
9 is much more that the Council can do, and we have few
10 proposals, and other people will talk about other
11 ideas, but here are a few proposals that we think the
12 Council can do, not shift responsibility to any other
13 agency. One, make the restriction on non-accessible
14 FHV vehicle licenses permanent. Right now the
15 Council set a market with its so-called capped
16 legislation by allowing new FHV licenses only for
17 drivers who choose to put accessible vehicles on the
18 road, but this restriction expires in less than a
19 year. So, one simple way to increase the number of
20 accessible vehicles on the road is to pass
21 legislation that wouldn't allow any new non-
22 accessible vehicles for the long-term. That way
23 companies like Uber and Lyft would either have to
24 start putting accessible vehicles on the road [bell]
25 or drastically reduce the number of vehicles they

2 operate. We—we think they'll choose the former. I
3 have other ideas and my testimony has them. We want
4 100% of all vehicles that are used in taxi or FHV
5 service to be accessible. That's the way to really
6 guarantee service for everyone including in Staten
7 Island and other parts of the city, and we want you
8 to find the resources for funding, and the TLC talked
9 about some of those that they are using. It needs to
10 be expanded to make sure that everyone can get a
11 ride. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Have you, Mr.
13 Rappaport—have you—have spoken with Christopher Lee?

14 JOE RAPPAPORT: Oh, once or twice.
15 [laughs] Yes, we—we are in touch, and—

16 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [interposing] All—all
17 those ideas that you have are you getting--?

18 JOE RAPPAPORT: Yes, we—we—we've talked
19 generally about these ideas, and well talk further
20 for sure.

21 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [interposing] Alright/

22 JOE RAPPAPORT: We really appreciate his—
23 the access.

24 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you.

2 RYAN PRICE: My name is Ryan Price. I'm
3 the Executive Director for the Independent Driver's
4 Guild, the IDG, the Independent Driving Guild is an
5 affiliate of app drivers. It's Uber, Lyft, Via and
6 Juno Drivers United for a Fair Industry. I'm not
7 going to read the entire thing, because it's way too
8 long, but what it comes down to we know that right
9 now there needs to be more wheelchair accessible
10 vehicles on the road, and the Taxi and Limousine
11 Commission has taken several steps in order to get
12 more-accessible vehicles on the road. A lot of them
13 haven't been able to take effect yet, but some
14 measures that they've taken is like you mentioned
15 temporarily capping vehicle ownership, which does
16 have its problems, but there is an exemption for if a
17 worker purchases a wheelchair accessible vehicle, you
18 know, the city waives the licensure fees for
19 wheelchair accessible vehicles, and something that
20 I'm surprised hasn't been mentioned yet is that Taxi
21 and Limousine Commission is, you know, it's
22 increasing drivers' pay and workers that are
23 operating wheelchair accessible vehicle are going to
24 be paid significantly more if they are operating-if
25 they're operating that wheelchair accessible vehicle.

2 So because of that, we're getting a lot of interest
3 from our members that are coming into our office and
4 asking how they can get a wheelchair accessible
5 vehicle. Some of them, you know, want to know if they
6 can access the Taxi Improvement Fund. Some of them
7 want to know how they can get a loan, but the fact is
8 right now they just don't have the access—access to
9 capital, but most people do. Because they are 90%
10 immigrants, they have little to no credit, they can't
11 get a loan at all in order to own their own vehicles
12 and in order to own a wheelchair accessible vehicle,
13 which is a problem that we want to fix, and the—the
14 Council might want to consider an improvement fund
15 for the for-hire vehicle industry so that we can get
16 them the same parity, the same access to resources
17 as, you know, their [bell] the taxi—the taxi workers
18 as well. But we're available for questions either
19 offline or now. [background comments, pause]

20 NICOLE EPSTEIN: [off mic] Hi, Chairman.
21 My name is Nicole Epstein. I'm with Gotham
22 Government Relations. [background comments] It's
23 loud. Okay, I'm with Gotham Government Relations,
24 NYETA, New Yorkers for Equal Transportation Access.
25 [coughs] So, today we've heard a lot of different

2 ideas from the Deputy Commissioner, thank you very
3 much. However, I'd like to actually discuss some
4 real solutions, and this all starts with a quote that
5 Jim Weisman the CEO of United Spinal Association
6 stated I believe over two years ago, but it contains
7 a solution. So, "Before Uber started luring away
8 tens of thousands of taxi driver New York lawmakers
9 pledged the support for the disability community by
10 increasing the number of accessible taxis, but Uber-
11 Uber's expansion has thwarted these efforts, and its
12 refusal to help fund accessibility programs has made
13 the problem even worse. So there is the problem and
14 the solution, the solution being we need to start to
15 (a) impose wheelchair accessibly-accessibility
16 requirements on Uber and the like or if not, they
17 need to start paying up. Whether-I'll actually use
18 Uber's quote of \$2.00 per ride is what they quoted
19 when they go the TLC to step back on their wheelchair
20 accessibility mandate, and actually delete for
21 another year until June 2019 for versus June 2018
22 making us even further in the hole. So, let's use
23 that \$2.00 figure that Uber threw out that Yellows
24 are now providing that same exact service and not
25 being compensated for. That is why I will assure you

2 Deputy Commissioner that we are not anywhere going to
3 reach a 50% mandate. I think we threw out a 1,200
4 Yellows out of what was expected to be 6,500 by 2020.
5 I'm more concerned. I can tell you right now we're
6 not reaching that mandate. So, unless New York City
7 wanted to step back and figure out what to do, we
8 need to impose a \$2.00 surcharge on every Uber trip.
9 [bell]

10 PETER MAZER: Good morning Chairman Diaz
11 and members of the committee. My name is Peter
12 Mazer, General Counsel to the Metropolitan Taxicab
13 Board of Trade. We represent the owners of about
14 5,700 licensed Medallion taxicabs. Our full service
15 driver's center has provided accessible vehicle
16 training for about 2,500 drivers and has assisted
17 more than a thousand drivers in signing up for Taxi
18 Improvement Fund. Like all services the center
19 provides, there is no cost whatsoever to our drivers.
20 The problem of accessibility in the for-hire sector
21 is not new. The TLC first attempted to tackle this
22 problem in the year 2000 when it mandated that each
23 for-hire base either provided accessible on-demand
24 transportation, or contract with another base to do
25 so. Eighteen years after the passage of that rule,

2 one-third of one percent of the 115,340 licensed
3 livery and black car vehicles are currently
4 accessible to persons with disability. More
5 recently, the industry rejected a plan by the TLC to
6 require each base provide a threshold number of trips
7 and replace it with a self-enforcement program that
8 which is not unlike the FAIL program 2000 except that
9 the new plan doesn't even purport to require service
10 equivalency. Just two months ago this Council passed
11 and the Mayor signed into law a partial vehicle
12 licensing cap for the hire-for-hire industry. Since
13 this cap took effect, the largest of the FHV app
14 companies has added 3,539 new hire-for-hire vehicles.
15 Of these, 10 are accessible. 152 of the 80,776
16 vehicles affiliated with Uber branded black cars
17 bases are currently accessible. I will leave it to
18 the committee to decide if this city has done enough
19 to provide accessible service to residents and
20 visitors using livery and for-hire services. On the
21 other hand, we have a successful program in the
22 Yellow industry and are marching towards 50%
23 accessibility. We want to address a couple of ideas
24 that would help that a little bit along the way. We
25 need to find new and creative ways to incentivize

2 drivers. One way we thought about is the MTA tax,
3 which goes into effect on January 1st that will
4 devastate this industry with a \$3.00 trip. [bell]
5 Maybe that--maybe we can exempt the for-hire--
6 accessible trips from that mandate that's not within
7 the purview of the Council, but as an expression of
8 support, it might go a long way up to Albany. We
9 have a couple of other ideas that are in our--my
10 testimony that would improve services, maybe waiving
11 licensing fees for drivers that do a threshold number
12 of accessible trips, expanding vehicle choice, which
13 right now is limited for the most part to the taxi of
14 tomorrow. I'd be happy to answer any questions that
15 you may--

16 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [interposing] Yes, I
17 would like to ask you. I would like to ask you one
18 question.

19 PETER MAZER: Sure.

20 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [coughs] You, if-if
21 you have to rate the city--

22 PETER MAZER: Uh-hm.

23 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: --the TLC, it's in the
24 program.

25 PETER MAZER: Uh-hm.

2 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: --the--from 1 to 10,
3 what number would you give it?

4 PETER MAZER: Which is the higher? Which
5 is best, 10 is best.

6 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Well, 10 is the
7 highest.

8 PETER MAZER: 10 is the best. When it
9 comes to enforcement on the taxicab side, I'd rate it
10 a 10 or maybe 9-1/2 because there's always room for
11 improvement on the FHV side, I'll give it a 3 on a
12 good day. I'm sorry. [laughter]

13 RICHARD LIPSKY: Good morning, Mr.
14 Chairman and the committee. My name is Richard
15 Lipsky. I represent medallion owners, and I'm
16 delighted to be here today. I want to thank the
17 Commissioner for actually staying, and setting a
18 precedent that I think Commission Joshi should follow
19 through on because it's always disappointing to have
20 the city testify, and then disappear when advocates
21 are here, and I appreciate that. I also want to make
22 mention the Chairman's question that was not answer
23 about Intro 830-A, and the slow pace in which the TLC
24 is moving to implement the laws that were passed.
25 Everything here is interrelated. If you don't cap

2 the number of for-hire vehicle in the right way, if
3 you don't limit the number of vehicles, you're
4 hurting the industry that is providing the accessible
5 service to the people with disabilities. You have to
6 address that because everything is interconnected.
7 The bogus rules that were put into place are Uber
8 rules for accessibility. What we need is the Council
9 to pass the same mandate. Everything the Council
10 does should be towards creating regulatory parity
11 between the sectors. If there's 50% mandate for
12 taxis, there should be 50% mandate for the Ubers and
13 to the IDG's excellent testimony, there need to be
14 parity on TIF funds, and the payment of 30 cents per
15 ride for all the vehicles, and everyone can
16 participated if they're providing the accessible
17 vehicles. So, what we have a slow walk on the bills
18 that were passed in August, and we need speed that
19 up, and we need to make sure that all of the FHV
20 vehicles are complying with the same rules that taxis
21 are forced to comply, and anything the Council can do
22 to advance that [bell] is greatly appreciated. Thank
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [off mic] Thank you,
25 [on mic] Mr. Lipsky. Thank you, Mr. Lipsky. I would

2 like to—Commissioner, I would like to join Mr. Lipsky
3 in praising you, and recognizing the courtesy the
4 respect that you are showing to say at least for a
5 while, and giving the respect to those people that
6 are here. Thank you. Maybe we could have you now
7 from now on. [laughter] We do better business like
8 that. [laughs] Thank you. I'm going to call another
9 five. [background comments, pause] Okay. [off mic]
10 Sergio Cabrera. Sergio Cabrera. [on mic] Sergio
11 Cabrera. Okay, Pedro Gonzalez. Hey, Jenny [speaking
12 Spanish] It's this one? [background comments] Ethan—
13 Ethan Prentiss, Ethan Prentiss. Okay. John Ryan,
14 John Ryan.

15 JEAN RYAN: Jean Ryan, Jean Ryan.

16 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Oh, Jean Ryan. Jean
17 Rayan. Jacob Policano, Jacob Policano. You Jacob?
18 Okay. [background comments, pause] We're going to
19 start here today now with you. Yes.

20 JEAN RYAN: I'm lucky I got here today.
21 Access-A-Ride didn't show up. I couldn't get a cab,
22 and finally, even though it said that there were no
23 cabs available after 45 minutes. I got one.
24 [coughs] This is so typical or Access-A-Ride gets me
25 some place an hour early or an hour and a half early.

2 I'm Jean Ryan. I'm President of Disabled in Action in
3 Metropolitan New York. Many of our members have
4 mobility impairments, which require the use of an
5 accessible for-hire vehicle, but where are the
6 vehicles? They're like an Elvis sighting. [coughs]
7 For many years the for-hire vehicles industry has
8 been required to provide the equivalent comparable
9 service to wheelchair and Scooter users, but they
10 have not done so. So, we have not been able to travel
11 spontaneously, and get a ride. The wildly popular
12 Access-A-Ride Curb Program shows that there is a need
13 and a demand. Our pent-up need to get places
14 spontaneously shows that the only way we can get
15 equivalent service is to make all for-hire vehicles
16 and all taxis wheelchair accessible 100%. Otherwise,
17 we're going to be waiting way longer than everybody
18 else. We don't want a piecemeal solution. Maybe you
19 have to start piecemeal, but you have to have it
20 written in that you're going to 100%. We have, but
21 there are tons of for-hire vehicles in my
22 neighborhood, but can I get one? Never. [coughs]
23 For-hire vehicles are in the boroughs. We're in the
24 boroughs. Why are the for-hire vehicles ignoring the
25 market of at 100,000 wheelchair users and rising, and

2 that's not counting the many visitors. So, [coughs]
3 we really need this. We would use it, and the MTA
4 would probably use it. [bell] It's not a matter of
5 money. For years the industry has been stalling and
6 doing nothing. It's not a matter of anything but
7 prejudice, and it's time to stop be prejudiced
8 against people with disabilities, and start making
9 all for-hire vehicles rides accessible rides. Some
10 of your featured customers are right here in this
11 room. [bell] Thank you.

12 EDITH PRENTISS: Hello. [coughs] Excuse
13 me. My name is Edith Prentiss, and I am the Chair of
14 the Taxis for All Campaign. I think it's important
15 to remember how we got into this. I'm sorry, TLC,
16 you do have to bear the responsibility. At the time
17 basically before 9/11, the date of Halloween that
18 year was to be the expansion of the previous for-hire
19 vehicles rule implementation in the for-hire
20 industry. After 9/11, nothing happened. It was
21 stepped aside for the industry, which had taken a
22 tremendous hit. That's why, but you have to come
23 back to it sometime. We're increasing, our numbers
24 are increasing. Many of us are in New York for all
25 the transportation options, et cetera and not to have

2 accessible taxis for-hire vehicles, et cetera. It's
3 very problematic. I believe it was Mayor Bloomberg
4 who did consider, who stated that taxis are part of
5 the continuum of transportation. He didn't make the
6 jump to and should be accessible, but that's where we
7 are. It's unfortunate that at this time, the for-
8 hire vehicles and taxis are becoming less accessible.
9 The number of Green vehicles that are no longer
10 running, and the huge increases in the for-hire
11 vehicles industry I couldn't—I tried to do the math,
12 but it just—it got beyond my—my little four-digit
13 calculator. [bell] I think it's really important
14 that as Jean said and Joe and Valerie said and it's
15 we—we need parity. We need equity. Unfortunately, a
16 lot of the cabs that are out there that are
17 accessible are getting a little tardy, a little not
18 the best for wear. I'm a little tired of having to
19 wait for a driver to have to move the tire and
20 everything out of the back seat, out of our space
21 into the back seat. It's also [bell] important to
22 realize that although drivers are trained, many of
23 them get lazy. I had a little wrangle with a driver
24 yesterday about securing my chair. He's going to be
25 going up the—up the highway. Yeah, I want to be

2 secured. I really don't care whether your front
3 restraint is working or not. Put it on. It's very
4 important to enforce all of these standards. I think
5 we also have to ask what has the Council done? We
6 have been to too many hearings to too many meetings
7 who testified endlessly over the life to the Taxis
8 for All Campaign. The very first bill, as you well
9 know, was introduced by Margarita Lopez. We went
10 from 3, we went to 8, we went to whatever, and we
11 still don't have an equivalent number. I think it's
12 time for the Council to step up as well. As I've
13 stated at the signing, we did not have that access
14 that the drivers had in meeting with the Council and
15 working with the Council. We have been shut out in
16 many instances. I think it's time that Council
17 realized its responsibility as well. Thank you.

18 [pause]

19 PEDRO GONZALEZ: Buenos Dias. I'm Pedro
20 Gonzalez. My testimonial-

21 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

22 TRANSLATOR: Good morning. My name is
23 Pedro Gonzalez. My testimony is I took-I took out a
24 vehicle from Quest Releasing.

25 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: We made a contract of 130
3 weeks.

4 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: I have made 120 payments.

6 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

7 TRANSLATOR: \$52,800 I have paid.

8 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

9 TRANSLATOR: On Thursday, September 22nd
10 of this year---

11 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

12 TRANSLATOR: --I made the last payment--

13 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

14 TRANSLATOR: --= on the 24th of September.

15 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

16 TRANSLATOR: --of this year.

17 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

18 TRANSLATOR: The marshal impounded my
19 vehicle.

20 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

21 TRANSLATOR: I was present when the
22 marshal was lifting my vehicle.

23 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: I questioned why was my
25 vehicle being towed.

2 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

3 TRANSLATOR: I was told that the company
4 owes--

5 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

6 TRANSLATOR: \$87,000.

7 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR: I-I call Christina Reggio.

9 (sic)

10 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

11 TRANSLATOR: And I was told that that was
12 a lie. It was \$8,000 that was owed and to pass by
13 the dealer.

14 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: I went to the dealer. It
16 wasn't a car to be working, but I took it.

17 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

18 TRANSLATOR: I haven't seen (sic) before
19 my vehicle will appear.

20 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

21 [bell]

22 TRANSLATOR: In one week I go to the
23 leasing company and she told that I had to pay \$400
24 not towards my account.

25 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: I told her that I wanted my
3 vehicle, and if not I was going to call Channel 47.

4 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: She got upset with me and
6 she removed me from the leasing company.

7 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR: I went to the Office of the
9 Reverend.

10 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

11 TRANSLATOR: I explained what had
12 happened. I took the paperwork.

13 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

14 TRANSLATOR: Then he calls Ascensia Radio
15 at the Leasing.

16 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: And was told that she wasn't
18 giving my vehicle to me because I owe \$9,000 in Easy
19 Pass. (sic)

20 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

21 TRANSLATOR: February 8 of 2018--

22 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

23 TRANSLATOR: --after I had two years with
24 the vehicle--

25 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: --the registration was
3 suspended to not being affiliated at base company.

4 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: I got to the leasing company
6 and then she rents me another vehicle-

7 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR: --from February 8th of this
9 year to April of this year--

10 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

11 TRANSLATOR: --I'm paying \$425 weekly.

12 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

13 TRANSLATOR: --not towards my account--

14 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: --but-but that was separate.

16 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: April 1st. [bell] she calls

18 me--

19 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

20 TRANSLATOR: --after my vehicle was

21 ready.

22 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

23 TRANSLATOR: --when I go she gives me the

24 vehicle.

25 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: --with a different plate
3 number.

4 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: She sends me to go have it
6 inspected at TLC.

7 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR: May 18-

9 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: --secretary calls me.

11 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

12 TRANSLATOR: --and tells me that I have
13 all these violations from E-Z Pass.

14 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: --from last year of 2017.

16 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: I explained to her that I
18 have one month and 18 days towards--

19 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

20 TRANSLATOR: --the plates that they gave
21 me.

22 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

23 TRANSLATOR: She tells me to go to the
24 Office up front.

25 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: I went there.

3 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

4 TRANSLATOR: I give this paper to Mr.
5 Loren.

6 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

7 TRANSLATOR: Loren puts on the paper it's
8 Uber (sic)--

9 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: --and that's when that
11 vehicle with that plate number was given to me.

12 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

13 TRANSLATOR: I go back to the office and
14 saw the lay.

15 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

16 TRANSLATOR: That plate that was put on
17 my vehicle--

18 PEDRO GONZALEZ: [speaking Spanish]

19 TRANSLATOR: --was signed April 1st so
20 please don't bother me.

21 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [interposing] Okay,
22 okay, okay. [speaking Spanish] I extended the time
23 because I want people to understand that I saw the
24 problem that drivers are facing by everyone. So,
25 thank you. I'm submitting bill. [speaking Spanish]

2 Thank you for your participation. Okay? So, I want
3 to progress here.

4 SERGIO CABRERA: Good morning. My name
5 is Sergio Cabrera. The AAR program, the Access-A-
6 Ride has provided a lifeline to New Yorkers wit
7 special transportation requirements. As a WAV driver
8 and someone who engages with the passenger that
9 require special transportation, their response has
10 been overwhelming—overwhelmingly positive, definitely
11 an incredible program that needs to be sustained,
12 improved and expanded. Not only have AAR participants
13 but also wheelchair constrained New Yorkers have
14 expressed the appreciation in finally have a service
15 that can actually help them achieve transportation
16 independence. It's not a perfect system and may not
17 ever be a perfect system, but it's definitely
18 provided a service that was not available at all.
19 How do we sustain this program? The TLC WAV program
20 depends on the number of trips on the number of trips
21 on a daily basis by Yellow and Green taxis. The 30
22 cent surcharge added to every taxi trip is the
23 financial blood that makes this program possible. As
24 we all know and have heard, Yellow Taxis have lost
25 50% of their trips that this particular

2 transportation, public transportation segment was
3 completing four years ago. The Green Taxi Program or
4 SHL created to provide metered taxi service to the
5 outer boroughs has dwindled from 9,000 to 2,500 cars.
6 The—the AAR Program, which has provided a small
7 financial supplement to the Yellow and Green
8 operators, but the popularity of the AAR program has
9 strained the finances of the MTA. Public
10 transportation in this segment has to be protected.
11 This should be a priority. If the taxis are not
12 around, you're not going to get a taxi at all. If
13 this program goes down the hill, you're not going to
14 get a taxi at all. How—the 800-pound gorilla in the
15 room is the congestion pricing that's coming in
16 January. Yellow taxis are going to be a thing of the
17 past. The TLC WAV Program will be a thing of the
18 past. The MTA Access-A-Ride program will need to go
19 back to their past providers. The solutions are
20 crystal clear, the solutions are crystal clear,
21 please let's stop making new rules and get to work.
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Okay, alright thank
24 you.

2 JACOB POLICANO: Good morning Chairman
3 Diaz, and the member of the For-Hire Committee. My
4 name is Jacob Policano. I'm here on behalf of David
5 Byer who is the President of the Committee for Taxi
6 Safety. We in the taxicab drivers industrywide thank
7 you for the opportunity to speak today on New York
8 City's accessibility standards. We support the
9 city's efforts to ensure equal service in the taxi
10 for hire sectors. However, be we believe that the
11 city's current policies while appearing favorable on
12 paper, have ultimately hut taxicab drivers
13 financially, and continue to halt progress as it
14 pertains to their sensibility. As medallion owners
15 have become incapable of securing income due to an
16 abundance of drivers fleeing onerous accessibility
17 requirements, many have resorted to selling their
18 medallions for a loss. To date, there are
19 approximately a thousand medallions sitting on the
20 shelves of the larger financial institutions rather
21 than being used to provide accessible rides today.
22 While the 50% settlement was a laudable goal, it was
23 not implemented in a manner that would allow it to
24 succeed. Assessing Yellow Taxis based on the number
25 of vehicles while assessing FHV's based on total trips

1 have created a regulatory environment that encourages
2 drivers to migrate away from Yellow cabs. In order
3 to reach the 25% bench mark that the city has called
4 for, only 7.5% of for-hire vehicles need to be
5 accessible. In contrast, the taxi industry is once
6 again enforcing stricter requirements and asked to
7 make 50% of its cars wheelchair accessible. This is
8 a policy disaster that devastated an already dying
9 taxi industry, and the results are glaringly
10 obviously. More than two-thirds of the city's
11 medallions mandated as accessible are either resting
12 in storage or sitting idle as drivers opt for more
13 loosely regulated for-hire sector. This is a problem
14 we have seen time and time again, and if I may draw
15 an analogy to the Taxi of Tomorrow Program, now 7
16 years into the 10-year program the Taxi of Tomorrow
17 Initiative has already been terminated. This is due
18 to the fact that drivers realize they could easily
19 avoid the Taxi of Tomorrow, a vehicle which many
20 oppose because of its inefficiency, by switching over
21 to any number of fuel-efficient vehicles offered in
22 the for-hire sector. While the city was overly
23 fixated on pushing its gas guzzling Nissan Minivan,
24 the Yellow Cab industry was struggling bitterly
25

2 against an onslaught of unequal regulation. Drivers
3 have proven over and over that they want what is best
4 for the environment and what is most fuel efficient.
5 In a similar fashion, drivers want to be accessible
6 and want to be accessible, and want to offer the best
7 quality of labor for the most people possible.
8 Simply mandating that a certain number of vehicles
9 meet these accessibility standards, and neglecting to
10 consider whether or not these vehicles actually end
11 up on the road is a mistake, one which has dire
12 consequences for taxi drivers. The city needs to be
13 diligent in addressing this problem and avoid the
14 paper victory of a 50% settlement that will
15 ultimately take thousands of cars off the road.

16 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you. Thank you.
17 Thank you to all of you. If any—if anyone in a
18 wheelchair are here to testify, I will take you
19 first. Anybody in a wheelchair? You please come,
20 any—anyone in a wheelchair, please come. I'm going
21 to jump this. I'm going to take you first.
22 [background comments, pause] Okay, officer Martinez.
23 Okay, they're coming up here. Okay, I'm also going
24 to call Arley—it's Alvar? What's that? Leveres,
25 Beverly Maddick (sp?), Hector Herman, Hector Herman.

2 Hector Herman, Fareck Malak (sp?) Robert Ascevedo,
3 Robert Ascevedo. (sp?)

4 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: ROBERT ASCEVEDO: I'm
5 Robert Ascevedo. You are. Okay, good and Justin
6 Wong, Justin Wong. Okay. Mr. Ascevedo.

7 ROBERT ASCEVEDO: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: We're starting with
9 you.

10 ROBERT ASCEVEDO: Yes. Okay. I am Robert
11 Ascevedo from Disabled in Action. For-hire access is
12 important to my independence as a wheelchair user. I
13 am also with an independent care system, and they
14 have helped with my independence also. It's
15 frustrating that I am forced to use a walker instead
16 of my wheelchair in order to use FHV's like Uber. A
17 personal experience with this issue took place this
18 summer when I went to a forum in Westchester. To use
19 Uber I needed to use a walker, which can now fold to
20 fit in a standard size vehicle. Now, I'm aware that
21 Uber has a WAV option, but usually this option is the
22 more expensive one. Why can't I use the more
23 inexpensive option, the pull like other able-bodied
24 people use? I see that taxies use their own Uber
25 style app called the WAV app W-A-A-V-E. I tried

2 using that app with no success. I have found no
3 driver of an accessible vehicle. Very disappointing.
4 I do, however, like the—the fact that the price of an
5 accessible vehicle and a non-accessible vehicle is
6 the same. That's nice. The curb app with via-via
7 the MTA were tight. It's a great system, but I can't
8 use it. I'm on the waiting list. So, it needs to be
9 extended. [bell] I don't know if they're going to do
10 that, and all this, and all this is in Manhattan.
11 Accessible taxis are even more limited in other
12 boroughs. So we need a spontaneous, accessible ride
13 we can count on. Oh, and also by the way, you were
14 talking about when we had to wake up in the morning
15 to get ready to come here. Well, I—I woke up at 5:30
16 in the morning just to come to this meeting, and I
17 live in Manhattan.

18 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Uh-hm, uh-hm, okay,
19 thank you.

20 ROBERT ASCEVEDO: Thank you, very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Will you please convey
22 that to the Commission? Next one.

23 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: Good morning. My name is
25 Hector Herman and the industry known as 1 to 2.

2 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

3 TRANSLATOR: First, I want to say thanks-

4 -

5 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

6 TRANSLATOR: --mainly on my behalf and
7 the community of Inwood (sic)

8 HECTOR HERMAN: [interposing] [speaking
9 Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: And I want to give thanks to
11 Reverend Diaz--

12 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

13 TRANSLATOR: --and his tire--

14 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: --including our sister Jenny
16 Mejia.

17 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

18 TRANSLATOR: --for their support on
19 conditional cooperation and what we already know,

20 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

21 TRANSLATOR: I want to take advantage of
22 this beautiful day God has given us.

23 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: We have--we have heard about
25 the--[speaking Spanish]

2 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

3 TRANSLATOR: --about the subject of
4 handicap--

5 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

6 TRANSLATOR: --where we have heard that
7 they have a lot to be done--

8 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

9 TRANSLATOR: --to establish an equality
10 of service--

11 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

12 TRANSLATOR: --but also we have heard the
13 Committee--

14 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: --and the Council--

16 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: --will do everything on
18 their hands to do--to do for the handicapped as
19 inequality--

20 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

21 TRANSLATOR: --but also the community of
22 the industry has been at us on every point.

23 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: We have to put a lot of
25 attention to them --[bell]

2 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

3 TRANSLATOR: --and for us--on the side of
4 us the cab drivers.

5 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

6 TRANSLATOR: Suicide in a car. (sic)--

7 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR: --is totally different from
9 suicide that are deliberate.

10 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

11 TRANSLATOR: When a suicide is induced,
12 there is a--someone that's--

13 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

14 TRANSLATOR: --seven drivers that have
15 taken the path to commit suicide.

16 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: --and today we add our Mayor
18 Bill de Blasio--

19 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

20 TRANSLATOR: --the Speaker Corey Johnson--

21 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

22 TRANSLATOR: --all the Council Members--

23 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: --the new committee--

25 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: Chaired by our Reverend
3 Ruben Diaz.

4 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: We, the community of our
6 taxi drivers--

7 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR: --demand immediately--

9 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: --the dismissal of the
11 Commissioner Meera Joshi.

12 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

13 TRANSLATOR: Because in the last time--

14 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: --we have noticed--

16 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: --many of the activities
18 they have--

19 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

20 TRANSLATOR: --behind the backs of the
21 City Council's--

22 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

23 TRANSLATOR: --hearing. As a result--

24 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

25 TRANSLATOR: --making our industry--

2 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

3 TRANSLATOR: --to be suicide because of
4 the money--

5 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

6 TRANSLATOR: --and because of their
7 family.

8 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

9 TRANSLATOR: To conclude, I want to add
10 that on behalf of our Council Leaders--

11 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

12 TRANSLATOR: --all the Council Members--

13 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

14 TRANSLATOR: --to support unconditionally
15 of the Committee and--

16 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: --on behalf of Jenny Mejia
18 and all our--

19 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

20 TRANSLATOR: --the community of the taxi
21 drivers we feel it's an industry--

22 HECTOR HERMAN: [speaking Spanish]

23 TRANSLATOR: --in which we didn't have
24 any say. [cheers/applause]

2 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

3 TRANSLATOR: Good morning.

4 RAJAMES LINATI: [speaking foreign -
5 language]

6 TRANSLATOR: Council Members--

7 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR: Jenny.

9 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: Ruben Diaz.

11 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

12 TRANSLATOR: Thank you for the support
13 you have give us. My name Rajames Linati.

14 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: I pertain to the Union of
16 Taxis of New York.

17 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

18 TRANSLATOR: I am here to say that we are
19 concerned--

20 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

21 TRANSLATOR: --because of the
22 persecutions, entrapments, and the testifying really--
23 especially this week.

24 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

25

2 TRANSLATOR: --and it seems like it was
3 the last time our drivers commit suicide.

4 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: Yes, it was against us
6 excessively.

7 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR:

9 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: It was stopping at a fire
11 hydrant and having everything. TLC gives us
12 summonses.

13 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

14 TRANSLATOR: And we think that that
15 Commission should stop once and for all.

16 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: Because if not, more drivers
18 are going to commit suicide.

19 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

20 TRANSLATOR: It seems that if us the taxi
21 drivers are delinquent or we're out here selling
22 drugs--

23 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: --that TLC follows us and
25 persecutes us on a daily basis.

2 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

3 TRANSLATOR: On another hand, in respect
4 to Uber--

5 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

6 TRANSLATOR: --I think Uber should put a
7 stop.

8 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

9 TRANSLATOR: --because no one fines Uber.

10 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

11 TRANSLATOR: They don't have vehicles.

12 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

13 TRANSLATOR: They have stated that the
14 Commission--

15 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

16 TRANSLATOR: --should reunite with them.

17 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

18 [bell]

19 TRANSLATOR: On Sunday I was five hours
20 at Kennedy Airport. I answered at 7:10 in the
21 morning.

22 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

23 TRANSLATOR: And I just worked 30 hours,
24 and this patch they call. (sic)

25 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: It wasn't a passenger. It
3 was an employee from the airport.

4 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: When I went to pick up the
6 passenger--

7 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

8 TRANSLATOR: --the passenger never showed
9 up.

10 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

11 TRANSLATOR: And Uber tells me to cancel.

12 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

13 TRANSLATOR: I cancelled. I just went
14 right to the parking lot.

15 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

16 TRANSLATOR: When I went back, I was
17 given a clear sign that I was there initially.

18 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

19 TRANSLATOR: And when I called, I asked
20 if I was going to commence again--

21 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

22 TRANSLATOR: --and they told me that the
23 cancellation was charged--

24 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

25

2 TRANSLATOR: --but I told them then who
3 is going to pay for my five hours that I lost here?

4 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: But I was told that they
6 were going to me consideration, and put their expense
7 on their--

8 RAJAMES LINATI: [interposing] [Speaking
9 Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: It's always against our
11 drivers.

12 RAJAMES LINATI: [Speaking Spanish]

13 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Gracias, gracias.

14 [speaking Spanish]

15 RAJAMES LINATI: Gracias.

16 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you.

17 TAREK MALLAH: Good morning, Chairman.
18 Good morning Council. Thank you very much for the
19 opportunity to testify today in front of you. My
20 name is Tarek Mallah. I'm the Global Head of Channel
21 Development for Curb Mobility. I'm here representing
22 on behalf of Jason Gross our VP of Curb Mobility.
23 He's unfortunately out of the country, and was not
24 aware of the hearing beforehand. Over the past
25 several years, Cur has evolved from really a provided

2 of TPAP and ALCAP (sic) to a true mobility platform
3 making transportation more efficient, cost-effective
4 and inclusive to all New Yorkers. More than simply
5 matching passengers and drives through technology,
6 Curb is providing an ever-expanding array of tools to
7 riders, regulators, agencies and drivers to improve
8 the transportation outcome for all stakeholders.
9 Especially with respect to accessibility, Curb has
10 improved on improving the service options for e-hail
11 trips via three primary channels of passenger demand
12 through which we collectively power-empower more than
13 12,000 wheelchair accessible trips per month. In the
14 fall of 2016, Curb launched WAV availability in our
15 consumer facing app and we have—we have since
16 enhanced our app allowing users to set WAV as a
17 default accessible preference. We currently complete
18 approximately 1,000 WAV trips per month through the
19 app. When TLC selected a new vendor for the
20 accessibility of—I'm sorry, the Accessible Dispatch
21 Program, Curt led an initiative to leverage its
22 existing TPAP, and it's open APIs to obviate the need
23 for a second dispatch terminal in the wheelchair
24 accessible vehicle cutting down on both incremental
25 expanse and potential distraction for the drivers

2 monitor—monitoring [bell] dual—drivers monitoring
3 dual systems in their vehicles. We have supported
4 the program by conducting outreach, and training for
5 the drives, and we fulfill and additional WAV trips
6 per month for passengers through this program.
7 Perhaps our product—our proudest achievements in this
8 area is one we have been able to bring to the full
9 power of our platform to bear—to bear the MTA Access-
10 A-Ride program for the past two years—for the past
11 two years plus, Curb has been working to close
12 partnership with the New York City Transportation—the
13 New York City Transit and the MTA to leverage more
14 than 10,000 yellow and green taxis connected to the
15 curb platform to improve mobility option for
16 accessible—for Access-A-Ride customers. To service
17 this program, Curb realizes a full stack of
18 technology including a sophisticated algorithms, web
19 based dispatching and trip monitoring systems, APIs
20 and the Curb Smart App platform, but on top of all of
21 this, Curb utilizes its 24/7 Call Center to manage
22 and monitor all trips and to provide better
23 communication options to those who are without Smart
24 Phone or technology savvy.

25 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Okay.

2 TAREK MALLAH: Under this program we have
3 provided well over one million trips to paratransit
4 customers to date through advanced reservations and
5 on-demand booking. We currently service close to
6 200,000 trips [bell] per month--one more sentence--and
7 especially with respect to the wheelchair users we
8 service up to 6,000 or more monthly trips. We look
9 forward to continued support efforts improving their
10 accessibility across the taxi and for-hire vehicle
11 space, and thank you very much for your time.

12 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you, sir.
13 [coughs]

14 JUSTIN WOOD: Good afternoon. It just
15 turned afternoon. My name is Justin Wood. I'm the
16 Director of Research and Organizing at New York
17 Lawyers for the Public Interest, and a member of the
18 Access-A-Ride Reform Group. Thank you, Chair for
19 holding this really important hearing today and the
20 chance to testify. I don't want to read all of my
21 testimony, but I just want to emphasize a few points
22 that we've looked at that I think others--others have
23 touched on this morning. First of all, as we've
24 heard from the TLC, there is an enormous disparity
25 where the for-hire vehicle huge fleet has virtually

2 zero accessible vehicles, and that's really not a
3 surprise to people--New Yorkers with disabilities.
4 We actually tested the apps advertised by Uber and
5 Lyft just a few months ago that Mr. Ascevedo
6 referenced, and we found that 70% of times, 7 times
7 out of 10 an Uber or a Lyft hail for a WAV would
8 produce no response. No vehicle would respond. We
9 also found that the waiting times and the few times
10 that they did respond were three or four times higher
11 than for inaccessible vehicles. So, there's a gross
12 disparity there, and refusal to serve New Yorkers
13 with disabilities by these very profitable and large
14 corporations. Another point that's been made, but
15 this is--this is part of what's holding back the
16 Access-A-Ride On-Demand Program is the lack of
17 wheelchair accessible vehicles particularly in the
18 outer boroughs. Places like the Bronx, you borough,
19 have the highest percentage of New Yorkers with
20 disabilities living in--in the Bronx, and yet that's
21 where we have the fewest WAVs.

22 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Would you please
23 repeat that again?

24 JUSTIN WOOD: Absolutely. The Bronx has
25 the highest percentage of residents of that borough

2 who—who lived with disabilities, but the lowest
3 number of wheelchair accessible taxis and there's a
4 very—most of those are still in Manhattan. So, we
5 need to find ways working with the Council to make
6 sure that WAVs are increasing particularly in the
7 outer boroughs.

8 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you.

9 JUSTIN WOOD: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: See, see Commissioner
11 Tavis, I really—I do really appreciate you staying
12 here today.

13 JUSTIN WOOD: Absolutely. Just one
14 other—

15 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [interposing] Okay.

16 JUSTIN WOOD: --brief thing. We haven't
17 been talking about the subway here, but that's at the
18 root of a lot of the issues is the inaccessibility of
19 the subway system. We only have one and four
20 stations have elevators, and those are often out of
21 service. So, we also really want to work with the
22 Council to make sure that the for-hire vehicle
23 industry is doing its fair share to fund the MTA and
24 the accessibility we so desperately need in the
25 subway and bus system. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you. See,
3 Commissioner, again I-I really appreciate you staying
4 here today because you could see that when we get
5 frustrated, there are reasons. There are reasons to
6 get frustrated. Now, I-I guess a new information,
7 the Bronx is the highest on handicapped Access-what
8 was the whole-what was that again?

9 JUSTIN WOOD: The most people-the most
10 New Yorkers with disabilities live in outer boroughs
11 just as most New Yorkers live in the outer boroughs,
12 but I believe the percentage is highest in the Bronx,
13 and this is, of course, the issue with--

14 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [interposing] By here
15 or the county?

16 JUSTIN WOOD: Taxis are still heavily
17 concentrated in Manhattan.

18 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Thank you, sir. Thank
19 you, thank you. [coughs] Okay, thank you. We're
20 going to end this meeting-this hearing with three
21 more. This is the last three. I appreciate the
22 commissioner is staying for the whole hearing today
23 and, you know, you were right. We're going to have--
24 we're going to come to-we're going to have a good
25 relationship. Okay, you seem to understand our

2 frustration. You see to understand our need. Thank
3 you. Bridgett Felix, Scott Roland, and Deborah
4 Dellio (sic) Deborah. Okay, these three are the last
5 three and we're finished. [background comments,
6 pause]

7 BRIDGETT FELIX: Good morning, everyone.
8 Good morning, Council Member Jenny. Good morning. I
9 have a statement or a testimony. I still have not
10 received my car. I still have not received—from the
11 car leasing that they took my car.

12 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Whoa, whoa what are
13 you talking about?

14 BRIDGETT FELIX: Okay, they—they—ways
15 back I got hit by an SUV. I had this statement in
16 the last hearing. I still haven't received my car.
17 I haven't received a list.

18 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [off mic] [interposing]
19 What was the promise?

20 BRIDGETT FELIX: I'm sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: You paid the promise
22 so the commissioner could understand what—what we're
23 going through? (sic)

24 BRIDGETT FELIX: Hello. Thank you for
25 staying. Tower Auto Leasing. They've taken my car

2 because I wasn't able to pay because I got hit, my
3 body got hit by an SUV. So, I wasn't able to work.
4 They've taken my car. I haven't gotten my car back.
5 I haven't gotten any options to get my car back and
6 on top of that, I cannot get a listing of what is
7 owed, any thing on E-ZPass on tickets. Nothing and
8 it just keeps growing and growing, and I don't have
9 any answers. No answers. No emails back. No
10 telephone calls. I'd like to know how can I get
11 answers on the amounts that needs to get paid. How
12 do I get my car back? I am—I'm—I'm in a contract.
13 If they say that they can give me another car with
14 the year of the car, and also maybe the around about
15 mileage that they took the car with, that would be—
16 that would be great. But I also need to know what is
17 the end result. I know that I've paid about \$30,000
18 [bell] about \$30,000, but I really don't know. At
19 the end of it all, is it going to be 57 or is going
20 to be like my other co-workers that it ends up being
21 \$1,000. I would like to know. I don't want any other
22 surprises. I also have a statement. [laughs] On
23 behalf of the organizations New York Independent Taxi
24 Driver and Taxi Driver Defense Group, we are asking
25 the City Councilmen for the TLC Commissioner's

2 dismissal, dismissal. Did you hear that? Dismissal
3 for violating the United States Constitution nor the
4 Governor nor the Mayor or some of the City Council
5 members with the exception, of course, the President
6 of the Transportation and Councilman Ruben Diaz can
7 continue to allow the violation, the violation of the
8 Constitution of the United States in the name of our
9 seven brothers that have committed suicide, a
10 dismissal is in order. Thank you for listening, and
11 I would like to translate. Can I do that, please?
12 Thank you. [speaking Spanish] New York Independent
13 Taxi Driver, the Taxi Driver Defense Group [speaking
14 Spanish]

15 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Gracias. [applause]

16 BRIDGETT FELIX: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Gracias.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Keep it down.

19 DEBORAH ELLIA BLEMMAN: Is it on? Good
20 morning, everybody. This is my first time here.
21 Thank you, Ms. Jenny. My name is Mrs. Deborah Ellia
22 Blemman. I'm really like a self advocate for myself,
23 and my other seniors who are disabled. Many did not
24 come here today or come on a regular basis because
25 they have no faith in the system that when they make

2 a complaint that they will not be retaliated upon.
3 I'm here complaining about e-Hail services.
4 Unfortunately, I've been receiving e-Hail for about
5 over a year now, and most of the drivers are rude.
6 They are lazy. I'm going to give you a recent
7 example. Last night they picked me up from church.
8 My church is Times Square Church. It's located at
9 237 West 51st between 8th and Broadway. They have
10 Access-A-Ride that works there. That means they
11 volunteer their time. There was two vans parked in
12 front of the church. My driver, if I-if I did not go
13 between these two vans, Access-A-Ride van I would not
14 have been picked up last night. Instead of he
15 bringing the car closer to the curb or getting out of
16 the car and letting the staff know that I'm looking
17 for him, Mrs. Blemman because they were going to look
18 for us, and he did not even do that. So, if I didn't
19 get off the sidewalk, walk between two Access-A-Ride
20 vans, and go looking for my cab driver, I would have
21 not been taken home last night, and normally we have
22 to run them down from where they passed the church
23 from to 8th Avenue. Staff literally runs them down,
24 begs them to come back, and pick me up. They don't
25 even stop to pick me up. They automatically put no

2 show. My other concern is when we do get a cab
3 driver that stops and pick us up at the right
4 address, they ride around the city, get off the
5 highway, ride through the streets, get back on the
6 highway, ride through the streets, and do this about
7 two or three times. So, I mean it could nice and
8 large for whatever they started with (sic) which is
9 very sad for me because I'm disabled, and it's very
10 painful sitting a long time. The other concern is
11 last night—I know this is the second time I had a
12 flat rate. The meter was already started before I
13 even got in the cab. So, when I got in there I
14 looked, you know, I usually greet my driver, you
15 know, how you doing and so forth, and I look at the
16 meter and it was already \$18.87. I have the receipt
17 for you Jenny, and I'm shocked. I'm going why is the
18 meter already set? He said, My boss does it. He
19 said it's a flat rate. I don't know if you're aware
20 of that because a lot of my colleagues are concerned
21 about that as well.

22 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Okay. I seem to have
23 your problem. (sic) That's—that program is run by
24 TLC. So--

2 DEBORAH ELLIA BLEMMAN: They're
3 listening, right?

4 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: They're listening.

5 DEBORAH ELLIA BLEMMAN: Okay.

6 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: I mean I—I hope so or
7 the Commissioner did, the Commissioner Tavis is here
8 today, but that's a problem—that's a program that's
9 run by the TLC.

10 DEBORAH ELLIA BLEMMAN: Department of
11 traffic?

12 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: That's—that's the--

13 DEBORAH ELLIA BLEMMAN: Well, they're
14 listening. Okay.

15 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: That they are doing.

16 DEBORAH ELLIA BLEMMAN: Yeah, because
17 it's not only me that's experienced this. It's other
18 senior colleague that's disabled as well, and again,
19 it's very painful when you're riding us around the
20 city and we have to get to our destination in time
21 and we're already in pain. We just want to get to
22 our destination at the proper time so we could be
23 nice and refreshed. That is—that is my main concern.

24 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [interposing] So, it
25 is—it is very interesting to hear you complaining

2 about a program and drivers under the supervision of
3 TLC. Meanwhile, TLC is chasing driver that have no
4 business with the TLC instead of being—fixing their
5 own before taking care of other business.

6 DEBORAH ELLIA BLEMMAN: Yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: So, I—I say again at
8 the TLC do you come to those drivers and those
9 programs that are run by TLC, and these are the
10 drivers—the drivers in the Bronx and the other part
11 of the—thank you, thank you for that.

12 DEBORAH ELLIA BLEMMAN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: The last one.

14 SCOTT RUDDER: Yes. Good afternoon.

15 Thank you. My name is Scott Rudder. I'm the Vice
16 President of the Limo Association of New York. We
17 represent operators within the luxury limousine base
18 classification here in New York City. I very much
19 appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today.
20 Let me begin by saying that we fully support finding
21 ways of increasing WAV service to those who need and
22 depend on this service. However, we're very
23 concerned over the fact that all oversight
24 initiatives regarding this very important topic do
25 not address the significant operational differences

2 that exist between the various different based
3 license segment here in the city within the FHV
4 industry here in the city. Unlike black car and
5 livery bases and TNCs, the high majority of luxury
6 limousine bases do not provide on-demand service.
7 The large majority of our business is all pre-
8 arranged, usually hours and/or days ahead of time and
9 not immediately as in the case of the majority of
10 street hail app based companies that we hear about in
11 the news today. Additionally, most of our luxury
12 limousine bases provide prearranged services to
13 established customer accounts through established
14 relationships also with other limousine companies
15 within the city. Another significant difference in
16 the luxury limousine segment is that the high
17 majority of our pre-arranged trip reservations are
18 packaged before and throughout the day that ensures
19 chauffeur's days are full and productive without
20 cruising streets looking for street hails and/or
21 accepting or responding to a electronic street hails.
22 When our chauffeurs are finished with the work that
23 they've been assigned for the day, they return to our
24 bases. They park the car. So we are not contributing
25 to the congestion issue either by driving around

2 looking for work. So, I'm here today to request that
3 the different based designations are taken into
4 consideration committee considers oversight and
5 regulation regarding WAV service. There are no one
6 size fits all solutions here and by placing on-demand
7 requirements on operators who don't provide on-demand
8 service does not advance WAV initiatives.
9 Conversely, such requirements would have a
10 devastating cost impact without have any impact issue
11 on the accessibility issue itself. The objective of
12 increasing the availability of WAV rolling stock,
13 which is often articulated by the—rightly so by the
14 various advocacy groups, will not increase
15 availability at all with operators who don't provide
16 on-demand service. So we ask the committee give
17 serious attention to these issues and we're happy to
18 provide any further information that we could provide
19 to help answer some of these questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Sir, I would like you
21 to get in contact with my counsel.

22 SCOTT RUDDER: Great

23 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: --Christopher Lynn.

24 Okay.

25 SCOTT RUDDER: Fantastic. Thank you

2 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: Jenny, would you
3 please translate what--translate what I want to say.

4 [coughs] [speaking Spanish]

5 JENNY MEJIA: [off mic] Ladies and
6 Gentlemen. [on mic] Ladies and gentlemen--

7 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

8 JENNY MEJIA: This meeting today--

9 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

10 JENNY MEJIA: We are very pleased--

11 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

12 JENNY MEJIA: --and very privileged--

13 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

14 JENNY MEJIA: --that the assistance of
15 the Commissioner--

16 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

17 JENNY MEJIA: --that Commissioner Tavis--

18 (sic)

19 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

20 JENNY MEJIA: --has 30 years bring us all
21 this time--

22 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

23 JENNY MEJIA: --that shows respect

24 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

25 JENNY MEJIA: It also shows humanitism.

2 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

3 JENNY MEJIA: Towards the people that
4 have--

5 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

6 JENNY MEJIA: --we have a numerous amount
7 of people with disabilities in wheelchairs--

8 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

9 JENNY MEJIA: --and she also presented
10 respect to the FHV drivers.

11 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

12 JENNY MEJIA: I recognize--

13 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

14 JENNY MEJIA: --and I have also--

15 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

16 JENNY MEJIA: --that in this place--

17 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

18 JENNY MEJIA: --we cannot applaud--

19 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

20 JENNY MEJIA: --but with all respect--

21 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

22 JENNY MEJIA: --excuse me for breaking
23 the rules--

24 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

25

2 JENNY MEJIA: --and I want before we
3 leave--

4 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

5 JENNY MEJIA: --to applaud the
6 Commissioner. [applause]

7 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

8 JENNY MEJIA: We conclude.

9 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

10 JENNY MEJIA: Please tell the
11 Commissioner--

12 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

13 JENNY MEJIA: --if the people on
14 wheelchairs can come to this meeting--

15 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

16 JENNY MEJIA: There's no reason--

17 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

18 JENNY MEJIA: --for us either to come
19 here.

20 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

21 JENNY MEJIA: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DIAZ: [speaking Spanish]

23 JENNY MEJIA: [gavel] This meeting has
24 been concluded.

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1 COMMITTEE ON FOR-HIRE VEHICLES

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date November 2, 2018