

September 19, 2023

To: New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission

Subject: Written Comments in Response to the New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission's Green Rides Initiative - Hearing To Be Held on Wednesday, September 20, 2023.

Dear Commissioner Do;

My name is Kathleen Collins, I am a native New Yorker, an environmentalist, and a congenital quadruple amputee who uses a wheelchair. I am on the Board of Disabled In Action of Metropolitan New York, and a Co-Coordinator for Downstate New York ADAPT, two grassroots organizations. These two organizations mission is to eliminate discrimination against people with all types of disabilities and advocate for the civil rights of people with all types of disabilities, including, but not limited to, the right to live and fully participate in the larger community.

It is quite disturbing that the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission is forcing New Yorkers with disabilities to choose between breathing cleaner air and having the ability to use an accessible high-volume for-hire services vehicle. This is untenable.

More than thirty years after the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 was enacted, today, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission issues a rule that as it is presently written does not require that any new high-volume for-hire services (HVFHSs) be accessible. By having an “or” requirement, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission is allowing for HVFHSs to not be required to have any accessible vehicles.

Significantly, the Americans with Disabilities Act specifically requires that all public agencies, including the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, make their programs, services and facilities accessible to people with disabilities, this includes New Yorkers with disabilities. However, under the proposed rule none of the vehicles need to be an accessible vehicle but there is an incentive to make them zero emission. Thus, for example in 2024, if 5% of the vehicles dispatched by each high volume for hire service were zero emission vehicles, the HVFHS would have met this rule and NOT one vehicle would be accessible. Thus, there is no provision in this law that will guarantee that any of these vehicles will be accessible vehicles. Thus, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission is saying to its citizens with disabilities is that we do not matter.

Additionally, the statement in the material included with the proposed rule that "this proposed rule furthers the City's dual goals of improving air quality within the City and ensuring that accessible transportation service remains amply available within the high-volume for-hire vehicle fleets", Notice with Proposed Rule, p. 8, is not correct since not one accessible high volume for hire vehicle is required to be put into service under this proposed rule. If accessibility is Not specifically required by the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission no vehicles will be made accessible. Case in point is the fact that the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission's approved the licensing of as many as 1,000 electric Revel for-hire vehicles this year without any accessibility requirement whatsoever. And the results were Not one Revel vehicle already in service here is accessible.

Further, the chart that is included with the proposed rule notes that a certain number of vehicles will be retired and replaced by electronic vehicles but significantly this same chart does not discuss the number of accessible vehicles that will be retired and possibly replaced by zero emission vehicles nor does it address the question of how the demand for wheelchair accessible vehicles will be met in the future.

Significantly, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission specifically states that "adoption of the Green Rides Initiative will allow for the rapid adoption of modern vehicle technology and will help spur private and public investment in charging infrastructure, with significant environmental benefits for the City." Notice with Proposed Rule, pp. 2-3. Thus, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission acknowledges the fact that if it demands zero emission vehicles this will spur private and public investment in charging infrastructure. So too, requiring that such vehicles also be accessible will spur private and public investment in accessible zero emission vehicles. We have seen this occur with public buses in New York City. Fifty years ago, no public buses were accessible, now all are accessible in New York City because New York City and other states, cities and counties needed accessible buses and manufacturers made them to meet the demand for them.

Now, it is time for the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission to amend the proposed rule to "the Green and Accessible Rides Initiative" and require that all new high-volume for-hire services vehicles be accessible and zero emission. We support cleaner air AND accessible vehicles, thus, please make these changes before a final rule is issued.

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We agree with and incorporate the letter written by Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled.

In sum, it is time that we make all transportation provided in New York City truly accessible, green and safe for everyone. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit these comments.

Sincerely,

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