

March 7, 2018

Good Morning Councilor's,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.



My name is Jack Smart and I am a long-time member of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and former member of the Taxi Limousine Advisory Committee (TLAC), the precursor to the recently defunct Livery Transport Advisory Committee.

I had worked on TLAC for over 3 years to help implement some of the current service standards and Accessible Taxi fleet penetration.

So quite a few things have happened since I was advising council through TLAC. The biggest impact on the taxi service has been Transportation Network Companies (TNC's). This has happened because customers were not satisfied with current taxi service levels and wanted more choice. Over much debate the City chose to allow TNC's to operate and give customers a choice of service provider for on demand transportation – TNC's or Taxis.

What the City Administration did not do is to mandate TNC's to provide accessible transportation service. Now I can on most days transfer to a car when needing a taxi or TNC. However, some days this is not possible requiring me to depend on an accessible taxi service.

The last time we met was in December when I advised the committee to not dissolve the Livery Transport Advisory Committee because I felt the industry views and priorities on accessible service do not hold true to the customer's needs for accessible service.

In my view, you have an industry that is significantly motivated by time and money. People with disabilities requiring accessible service have to settle for a standard far below regular taxi service. There are far less than the 11 % accessible fleet requirement that was established years ago. Regular taxi vs. Accessible taxi service vary on many levels.

Accessible Taxi Service has

- 1 Higher vehicle purchase cost
2. Higher operating costs
3. Higher deadheading time and cost
4. Longer load times for people in wheelchair chairs than able-bodied passengers
5. And I have been told that on average, people with disabilities tip far less than able-bodied customers.

Now, by dissolving LTAC, in my view you have left the accessible taxi service decision-making power in the hands of the Industry that is not motivated to improve accessible service.

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For me waiting for an accessible taxi in the suburbs, would be theoretically similar to restricting your taxi use to only Mayfair cabs in the city. Mayfair has less than 11% of the available fleet of regular taxi plates. Under these restrictions you would have wait for a Mayfair cab only, regardless of the number of Associated or Checker cabs that pass you by. This would increase your wait times, reduce your ability to flag the next available cab. Perhaps after a month or two of this type of service you either demand change or forfeit your decision to go out in the community. I offer this scenario, to try and give a different perspective and relevance on how the current accessible taxi service environment is stacked against people with disabilities. That is what is wrong with this process over the last few years, is Administration has been listening more to the complaints of the service providers vs the what is an important and vital service for the disabled community.

I don't expect the service to improve with Industry setting the priorities. In fact, I believe it is going to continue to erode and the number of accessible taxis will decline. People with disabilities will not use the service because the wait times are too unpredictable, so they will choose not to engage in more trips or activities within their community or city. Even today, I can't get a guarantee an accessible taxi will be available if I book it the day before.

I ask that you do start taking some action, towards solutions that focus on what's good for the customer. Centralized Dispatch has been talked about and the technology is there to make it happen, so let's move forward on something to improve accessible service wait times.

Consider:

1. Increasing the fleet to 100% accessible,
2. Develop efficiencies and incentives in procuring an accessible taxi that is beneficial to the driver and the customer.
3. Mandate that TNC's provide accessible service and increase the size of the accessible taxi fleet

Let's start working towards improving the service levels between regular and accessible taxi service. Spend some money to try some proven initiatives and create positive change.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts, it is becoming increasingly frustrating to see little to no positive change for accessible taxi customers, especially for those who do not have another travel option.

Thank You.

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