

Hi, my name is Cal Schuler, I'm here today wearing several different hats in support of the goals of the Accessible Taxi Review. I am the Diversity and Accessibility Consultant with CAES, I sit on numerous corporate and non-profit committees, and operate my own company Spectra, all of which work towards dismantling the barriers faced by people with disabilities.

First, I would like to start off by saying that just last month I celebrated my 43 anniversary from my SCI that I suffered at the age of 17 in 1975. The reason why I mention that, is that as a native Calgarian, and over the past four decades I been witness to, and a user of all of the transportation systems the City has gone through to date.

From having my injury when the City was virtually inaccessible. I hate to say this but buses were still the old trolley style, schools, office buildings, churches, etc. were all inaccessible. Calgary Handibus which was the only option of accessible transportation, had anywhere from 6 – 9 old style cargo vans. In any case, not to take you through the overall history of accessibility in the City, and how transportation services and options have evolved, I will focus on the issue at hand.

While significant efforts have been made to improve the accessibility and affordability of Calgary's transit services, much more needs to be done. It should be noted that many people with disabilities make major life decisions according to the availability of accessible transportation.



Access to appropriate transportation based on an accurate representation of an individual's physical, sensory, mental, and financial abilities, needs, and choice is critical for Calgarians with disabilities to participate fully in basic activities such as medical, emergencies, education, employment, worship, job training, commerce, recreation, family, unforeseen events and weather, and/or any other activities of community life that most people take for granted.

Travel can be quite a challenge and without an accessible and affordable transportation system, which includes access to 24 hour taxi service, many people with disabilities are deprived of their freedom to move beyond their immediate environment.

For example, accessible taxi's fill the gaps:

- where there may be a limited supply of full-sized buses through Access Calgary or other vendors
- where there may be limited transportation options as in a limited amount of rides available by the Access Calgary, or ability to make a short-notice bookings
- where there maybe limited service in the evening, overnight or early morning hours, or where other options are not available
- where transportation maybe needed in the case of an emergency, but yet where the situation does not require emergency services like an ambulance
- or where someone who is fairly independent, is not a user of Access Calgary, and because of inclement weather needs the services of an accessible taxi. Note: (this could also apply to an Access Calgary subscriber)

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that the concerns and examples previously mentioned, should not be viewed in isolation. Often it is the combination of these concerns and barriers that creates major obstacles for persons with disabilities to access and indeed afford alternative transportation services.

These barriers whether in isolation or in combination, restrict people with disabilities in their opportunities to a fraction of what they should be or can do. People with disabilities look forward to the day when our city has a comprehensive, seamless, safe, accessible, equal and inclusive transportation system which includes access to a 24 hour accessible taxi service.