



City of Minneapolis

**Senior Services
Ombudsman**
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Public Safety & Regulatory Services Committee

**RE: Minneapolis Taxicab Licenses Convenience and
Necessity**

June 21, 2006

Dear Chairperson Samuels,

The Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities offers this testimony on behalf of people with disabilities who use taxicab service in the City of Minneapolis.

The Committee is concerned that increasing taxicab licenses in the City may not benefit its citizens with disabilities. The support for this concern originates from the fact that 32 out of the 45 licenses dedicated to wheelchair taxicab service currently are not in use. Further, one provider, Rainbow Taxi, which has one wheelchair vehicle has stated that it will have to cease providing wheelchair service if the rules governing the length of time a wheelchair van can remain in service are not changed.

The Committee understands providers may feel that providing wheelchair service is too costly and there isn't enough business to warrant additional wheelchair vehicles on the street. We do not support this perception. The truth is, the current level of taxicab service to the disability community is inadequate. There are too few alternative transportation options for the disability community; therefore, wheelchair users will most likely not call a taxi service that is unreliable. One bad experience is likely to turn off a return customer. Other options and taxicab companies need to be available to increase the level of service to the disability community.

To remedy this situation, the Committee proposes the following:

- 1. The cap on licenses in Minneapolis be lifted in phases over a two year period. This should be done through a lottery to determine which suburban companies enter the market first. During this period, the level of business for all taxicab providers should be monitored. If the providers can**

demonstrate they are unable to make a living, the cap should be reinstated at the level where it stands at the time of determination.

2. Each company entering the Minneapolis market commits to a minimum of 20 percent of their fleet be wheelchair accessible vehicles. These vehicles should have side entrances with ramps, not lifts; this will help reduce the cost of the vehicles. Each current Minneapolis provider may earn a monetary incentive from the City for adding a minimum of one taxi to its fleet every other year while replacing retired vehicles.
3. Vehicles can be used vehicles purchased or leased from van companies like Complete Mobility that sell or lease vans for use by people with disabilities; leasing the vehicles will help to further reduce the cost to the owners. A list of additional companies will be provided to the City upon policy induction. The City will establish safety standards for used, accessible vehicles.
4. Incentives are offered to providers who enter the accessible taxi market. Such incentives may include but not be limited to; free advertising on the City's web site and some initial monetary support from the City for the first six months of service to provide a wheelchair accessible service.
5. Each company that adds accessible vehicles to their fleet will commit to marketing their wheelchair services actively within the disability community. This includes the residents of Minneapolis and to the hospitality industry for visitors to Minneapolis who are wheelchair users.

If these suggestions are adopted, the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities feels that the disability community will begin to receive the kind of taxicab service it deserves. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Committee Staff person Stacy Schmidt at 612-673-3757.

Sincerely,



**Margot Imdieke Cross, Chairperson
Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities**

Cc: Ricardo Cervantes, Deputy Director, Licensing and Consumer Services