

HOGANUA Item 2. Handout  
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### Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab Demonstration Project

A partnership between King County Metro, King County's Licensing Division and the City of Seattle will coordinate a demonstration project to provide accessible taxicab service for people who use wheelchairs in King County. Through the demonstration project, King County will provide eight accessible taxicab vehicles to be operated within King County by an independent Taxicab Driver Group that will charge the same rates as non-accessible taxicabs. The service will prioritize use for people using wheelchairs but will also be available to the general public.

#### Why It Is Important

- Same-day accessible transportation service for people using wheelchairs and other mobility aids requiring a lift or ramp is not currently available at taxi rates. People using wheelchairs pay 200-300% more for a "for hire" trip than an ambulatory person.
- King County Metro's ADA paratransit service, Access Transportation, does not provide same day service, has defined service area boundaries that corresponds with the transit system and has limited hours of operation in many areas fixed route service.

#### Demonstration Project Goals

- To test the economic viability of privately owned and operated wheelchair accessible taxicabs that provide on-demand service to private-pay passengers at taximeter rates.
- To assess the need for accessible taxicabs and estimate how many may be necessary to provide responsive service.

### Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab Project Model

#### Accessible Taxicab Demo Project Service:

- The project will provide accessible taxicab service 24 hours a day.
- Service provides curb-to-curb service at regular taxicab rates. At the driver's discretion, door-to-door service may be provided for no additional charge.

#### Accessible Taxicab Demo Project Service Area Boundaries

- North boundary: King County border
- South boundary: King County border
- West boundary: Puget Sound
- East boundary: Eastern border of the following zip codes:
  - 98072 (Woodinville but not Duvall)
  - 98053 (Redmond but not Carnation)
  - 98074 (Sammamish but not Fall city)
  - 98075 (Sammamish but not Fall city)
  - 98029 (Issaquah but not Fall city)
  - 98027 (Preston but not Snoqualmie)
  - 98038 (Maple Valley/Hobart but not Ravensdale/Cedar Falls)
  - 98042 (Kent/Covington but not Black Diamond)
  - 98092 (Federal Way/Auburn/Pacific but not Enumclaw)

**Accessible Taxicab Licenses**

- Eight temporary Wheelchair Accessible Taxicab (WAT) dual taxi operating licenses for King County and City of Seattle will be issued to individuals who are part of the Driver Group chosen to provide service for the demonstration project. The eight drivers will own the licenses as long as they are part of the Driver Group. The Driver Group must also include at least eight additional drivers who will operate other shifts.
- WAT licenses will only be valid as long as the driver is part of the Driver Group and operates a wheelchair accessible vehicle that has been supplied or approved by the county for use during the demonstration project. If a driver with a WAT license leaves the Driver Group, the dual license will be re-assigned to another eligible driver (chosen by the Driver Group and approved by King County).
- Licenses are non-transferable. Licenses expire annually and will be renewed free-of-charge for the duration of the demonstration project, which is currently scheduled for one to two years.

**Vehicles**

- Eight American-made, side-loading, low-floor mini-vans that have been previously used:
  - Seats three passengers.
  - Vehicle holds one standard or power wheel chair.
  - Passengers who are ambulatory will enter the vehicle via the front passenger-sided door (the front passenger seat will be removed).
  - Passengers who use a wheel chair will enter the vehicle via the rear passenger-side door (a manual ramp adjacent to the rear door folds down).
- King County Metro will be responsible for the cost of major engine or transmission repair not related to operator negligence. In the event that a vehicle is totaled, the driver is responsible for replacement. King County will not be able to replace the vehicle.
- The cost of general maintenance and repairs will be the responsibility of the Driver Group that operates the vehicles.

**Driver Incentives**

- The acquisition of an Accessible taxicab licenses (WAT) valid for one year with one year extensions possible during demonstration project.
- The \$300 Licensing fee waived during demonstration project.
- The use of accessible vehicles purchased and owned by King County.
- The opportunity to operate as a taxicab providing service to both ambulatory passengers and people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices that require an accessible vehicle.

**Projected Timelines\***

November 2006	Program start date
February 2008	Summary report
December 2008	Projected end of demonstration project
February 2009	Final demonstration project report

\*Dates subject to change

**2006 WAT Ridership:**

Category	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
Yellow Cab Dispatch WAT Trips	18	59	88	165
Hailed WAT Trips	3	10	8	21
Access overflow WAT Trips	35	83	58	176
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>362</b>
Access overflow Ambulatory Trips	220	494	511	1,225
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>1,587</b>

**2007 WAT Ridership:**

Category	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Totals
Yellow Cab Dispatch WAT Trips	51	54	151	110	135	156	141	171	969
Hailed WAT Trips	7	7	13	37	50	74	127	124	315
Access overflow WAT Trips	141	216	329	416	446	503	496	470	2,547
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>3,831</b>
Access overflow Ambulatory Trips	369	648	667	753	868	1,008	1,220	1,165	6,698
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>1,160</b>	<b>1,316</b>	<b>1,499</b>	<b>1,741</b>	<b>1,984</b>	<b>1,930</b>	<b>10,529</b>
Average Response Time (min/per trip)*	63	40	39	33	39	34	38	36	40

\* Includes boarding time (about 10 minutes per trip)

**Successes:**

- Drivers continue to meet all requirements for the drug and alcohol testing, including required screenings after accidents and random tests.
- Drivers work as a team to accept ride requests in the broad service area (despite the fact that there are only eight accessible taxicabs in operation).
- Driver data show various income ranges which need to be substantiated over time. All drivers claim to be making a comparable income and none want to leave the program to drive elsewhere. Access overflow service helps supplement driver's incomes as well as provides regular practice on securing customers who use a wheelchair or scooter.
- Wheelchair Accessible Advisory committee meets quarterly, provides valuable feedback on the project, and will add their input towards a long-term plan for wheelchair accessible taxicabs in King County.

**Problems:**

- The driver group had a difficult time finding affordable insurance with rates three times higher than a standard taxicab. Rates have fallen to twice the cost of a standard taxicab.

- Response times in the City limits of Seattle are under 40 minutes (30 minutes not including boarding time). Average response times for standard taxicabs are under 10 minutes.

**Assessments:**

The demonstration project has proven the following:

- There is a demand for wheelchair accessible taxicabs from riders who are disabled.
- There are drivers who want to operate wheelchair accessible taxicabs.
- There are vehicles available that function as accessible taxicabs.
- Drivers who operate wheelchair accessible taxicabs can make a comparable income to drivers who operate standard taxicabs.

**Long-term goals:**

- The City of Seattle and King County will develop a long-term plan for wheelchair accessible taxicabs.
- Implement the long-term plan for wheelchair accessible taxicabs before the demonstration project ends in 2008 to avoid a gap in service.