



Checker Taxi

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June 4, 2019

Executive Summary

City of Toronto – Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

Proposal and Recommendations for Improvements to On-Demand Accessible / Inclusive Design Private Transportation–Taxi Service for the People of Toronto.

Overview:

Aligned with our sister company Wheelchair Accessible Transit (WAT), Checker Taxi is Toronto’s only fully Accessible / Inclusive Design taxi brokerage. Recognized by the Lieutenant Governor, and the International Association of Transportation Regulators with a Lifetime Achievement and Humanitarian award, Checkers Taxi and WAT have provided inclusive design / accessible vehicle services to the people of Ontario for over 30 years.

As part of that dedicated service and extensive research, and with consultations and newly developed working relationships with major stakeholder organizations and accessibility focused advocacy groups, we have responded to recent AODA legislation and recommendations with both a proactive and reactive plan for service improvements and cultural change. The proposal is a no cost solution that seeks to support operators, owners, brokerages and especially service users. The goal is to increase business, lower costs and increase ridership to promote and grow an effective and efficient inclusive design, private for-hire transportation system in Toronto.

Our Vision:

Safe, Reliable, Cost-Effective and Inclusive. To become leaders and proponents in the development of a world class system of ‘Inclusive Design Private Transportation’ (IDPT) Services for all Ontarians, that:

- *is economically viable for service users and providers;*
- *promotes economic growth and supports social programming initiatives;*
- *is a collaborative approach based on public-private partnerships and support from organizations and advocacy groups, service companies, government offices and agencies and community representatives;*
- *maintains high standards of safe, quality service; and*
- *adheres to government initiatives and legislation to ensure human rights and enhance lives...*

... to entrench a long-term sustainable solution that will promote a culture of inclusiveness in our communities.

The plan has a grassroots municipal focus with a provincial wide scope, and a strong Public-Private partnership solution-based approach to allow for burden reduction and efficiency of services. The proposal contains three main recommendations and several complimentary ideas for consideration.

The Proposal:

1.0 Taxicab 2.0: Inclusive Design Taxi Brokerage (IDTB): Create a new classification or designation of brokerage in the Vehicle-for-Hire By-Law in the City of Toronto: **100% Inclusive Design Taxicab Brokerage.**

An IDTB is a licensed taxicab broker that provides contract and on-demand metered transportation service with 100% inclusive design / accessible vehicles. Every vehicle will have the capacity of transporting any and all passengers regardless of accessibility needs. With one point of contact at the IDTB, riders will not have to self-identify any “special” transportation needs and will be provided with a properly equipped vehicle and trained and skilled operator who is able to transport the passenger safely to their destination.

2.0 Incentives and Promoting 100% Inclusive Design Service Business – Changing Culture: A new standard setting, economically viable model that can support inclusive design transportation at no cost; That is, without direct or new subsidies, or funding from the tax base. To encourage investment and provide inclusive design transportation options, the City of Toronto can support and promote inclusive design operators and business. This entails providing any private transportation business for staff or clients, from provincial or municipal organizations or building locations (e.g., taxi stands at hospitals or government offices, staff accounts), to these 100% inclusive design brokerages and vehicles.

3.0 AODA Decal: Municipal Collaboration to Expand Borders and Remove Barriers: To improve service and cost efficiencies, and to maintain equal rights in service, accessible vehicles from 100% Inclusive Design Brokerages can be marked with a government issued “AODA Decal” that bestows the ability to pick up and/or drop off customers beyond existing jurisdictional borders. Local and provincial governments and organizations can collaborate with newly established public-private partnerships and working groups to cohesively unify inclusive design transportation services in existing jurisdictions throughout Ontario.

Additional recommendations are detailed in the proposal, and include:

- AODA requirements, and reframing “equivalent service” standards – advancing the ideas of 13% of vehicles as accessible, and an 11-minute service standard, to meet legislative goals.
- Operator Training: Creating one official program that is distributed to and used by all providers.
- Technology: Building technology network links to work with the City of Toronto.
- Flexible ‘short life’ accessible permits for brokerages to meet service demands & AODA requirements.
- New TTC Wheel Trans contract requirements to support and promote on-demand metered service.
- Flexible streamlined licensing options and process – increase brokerage accountability for operators.
- Accessible Fund: Benefit of applying ‘accessible’ funds from PTCs to promoting ridership through discounted ride accounts and program vs. direct subsidies to vehicle purchases or ‘bonus’ for rides; to better promote inclusiveness, increase business and sustain long-term viability of the service.

After extensive research, legislative review and stakeholder consultations, we believe these proposed initiatives can be instrumental in burden reduction and barrier removal; to propel a business and a cultural shift that promotes inclusive design services in Toronto and beyond, to meet and exceed goals of AODA 2025.

On a local business and service provider level we have already undergone steps to improve our service for our clients. We are excited to play an active role to any ground-breaking and standard-setting solutions and look forward to discussing these and other ideas in greater detail with any interested stakeholder or representative.

Sincerely,

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Submitted by Alex Matrosov, Allen Matrosov and Emilio Leonardis, Checker Taxi



A world of possibility

April 29, 2019

Re: Improvements to inclusive design of transportation services

To whom it may concern,

I am pleased to write a letter of support for this initiative on improving inclusive design of transportation services. Although access to reliable transportation is an essential component of quality of life many people with disabilities encounter transportation related barriers, including using public or private transportation. Experiencing transportation challenges can influence health, social, educational and employment outcomes. Most research in this area focuses on seniors and older adults while less attention focuses on youth. Focusing on youth is important because transportation is a critical factor in assessing the level of independence and self-determination among people with disabilities. Therefore, more solutions and advocacy are urgently needed to enhance accessible and inclusive transportation among youth with disabilities.

I recently completed a research study that engaged key stakeholders (e.g., people with disabilities, their families, community service agencies and transportation policy) to co-design accessible and inclusive transportation solutions for young people with disabilities. They generated over 120 potential solutions and prioritized them into the following categories: training, funding, enhancing access and improved efficiency. Further efforts should be directed in these areas to help improve accessible transportation for people with disabilities. By improving transportation solutions, we can help to enhance youth's overall participation and social inclusion within the broader community.

Sincerely,

Sally Lindsay, PhD

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Submitted by Alex Matrosov, Allen Matrosov and Emilio Leonardis, Checker Taxi



A world of possibility

May 29, 2019

Re: Improvements to inclusive design of transportation services

To whom it may concern,

I am pleased to write a letter of support on behalf of the TRAIL lab (Transitions and inclusive environments) for this initiative on improving inclusive design of transportation services. Although access to reliable transportation is an essential component of quality of life, many people with disabilities encounter transportation related barriers, including using public or private transportation. Experiencing transportation challenges can influence health, social, educational and employment outcomes. Most research in this area focuses on seniors and older adults while less attention focuses on youth. Focusing on youth is important because transportation is a critical factor in assessing the level of independence and self-determination among people with disabilities. Therefore, more solutions and advocacy are urgently needed to enhance accessible and inclusive transportation among youth with disabilities.

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Recently I have had conversations with Allen Matrosov with Checker Taxi, to discuss the possibility of testing out the new 'Rider checker' app for Wheeltrans users. Based on some of our research to date I think this app could have potential value for youth with disabilities and their families. We would be pleased to engage in further discussions of helping to move this forward.

Sincerely,

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