

## PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING

### DEVELOPING REGULATIONS FOR THE WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXICAB PROVISIONS OF PA ACT 119

DATE: October 3, 2012

PLACE: PA Convention Center, Room 108

TIME: 10:00 AM

#### Philadelphia Parking Authority Staff:

James R. Ney, Director, Taxicab and Limousine Division

Charles Milstein, Esq., Assistant to Director

#### Industry Attendees:

Jeff Hornstein, GPHLTA

Alex Friedman, PTA

Mohammad Chughtai, Philadelphia Taxi Cab

Patrick Anamah, U.T.W.A.

Satnam Singh, U.T.W.A.

Michael Henry, Attorney

David Ellis, Ellis & Co. of PA

Matt Hall, MV 1

Thomas Earle, Liberty Resources, Inc.

Ron Blount, U.T.W.A.

James Walker, Money Max Funding

Mark Longo, NMCDA-GPHLTA

Mohammad Shukur, Driver

James Ney, Director: He explained the purpose of the hearing and the history of Act 119 (HB 2390) signed by Governor Corbett on July 5, 2012. The TLD would like comments on the following:

1. Driver incentives
2. Dispatching of accessible vehicles
3. Vehicle guidelines
4. Channeling para-transit funds to the accessible taxicabs
5. Method of sale

## COMMENTS:

**Jeff Hornstein, GPHLTA** - Mr. Hornstein reviewed the written comments that he submitted previously regarding this matter which are posted on the TLD website. He wants the accessible medallions to be auctioned. He would like more than \$50 to be allocated for the training of each driver.

The drivers and owners will need incentives to make the program successful. The public will have to be informed about the new vehicles etc. The disabled community must have a role in making the new regulations. If para-transit funds can be obtained, more low income disabled riders will be able to use the accessible cabs, making the base of ridership larger.

**Alex Freidman, PA Taxi Association**- PTA has about 1000 members. Revenue is needed to assure the success of this program. The money from the public auction of the accessible vehicles should be used for training and enforcement. He feels that various dispatchers should be used rather than one dispatcher for all the accessible vehicles. These dispatchers should be able to transfer a job to another dispatcher if they are unable to accommodate the request in a reasonable time. This has worked well in other cities in which their membership is involved. Chicago and Miami were mentioned.

**Mohammad Chughtai, Philadelphia Taxi Cab** – Mr. Chughtai was most concerned about how the drivers will be affected. He did not want to see one dispatch company get all the accessible medallions. He would like to see them offered only to people who could not get a medallion in the past due when the more powerful fleets purchased all of them. He asked how the drivers will be paid for the time spent in training. He expects them to receive \$20.00 to \$30.00 per hour. Insurance for accessible vehicles will be expensive. Will the liability limits be the same for accessible cabs as for the standard cabs? If the vehicle is under insured and a loss occurs, the owner of the cab will have nothing.

**Patrick Anamah, U.T.W.A.** - He does not want the new medallions to be available to fleet owners. The U.T.W.A. wants some of the sales proceeds to be given to the Driver Relief Fund. They also want a serious training program for drivers of accessible vehicles. More insurance will be needed.

**Michael Henry, Attorney** - There should be a plan to help drivers own accessible vehicles. The auction should only be open to the drivers who will operate the vehicles. Some of the proceeds of the sale should be designated for training, equipment and for driver incentives. They will need extra time to complete a trip. That means they will make fewer trips in a day and will make less money. They can subsidize this by creating an entrepreneurial program to educate the vehicle owners to understand what must be done to use these vehicles successfully.

**Thomas Earle, CEO, Liberty Resources, Inc.** - Liberty Resources, Inc. is also known as The Philadelphia Center for Independent Living. They advocate for greater access for people with disabilities. Within the past year, about one half dozen accessible cabs have entered the Philadelphia taxicab fleet. One of their board members had called for an accessible cab, only to be told none were available and that he should have called 24 hours in advance. This shows that there are not enough of the vehicles in Philadelphia. He wants the market to control the number of accessible cabs rather than the legislature simply declaring that a specific number will be sufficient. He wants to be sure the same methods of payment will be available to accessible cab passengers as are available to everyone else. He would like to have all fare payment transactions audibly described for those who are vision impaired. More accessible cabs should be at the airport and on the street so that calls for service would not always be necessary. Many people with disabilities are on low fixed incomes. SEPTA rides cost about \$30.00 per person. These trips are heavily subsidized so passengers pay very little of the cost. If the PPA can have some of those funds made available for accessible taxi trips in cabs it would be a great benefit to the disabled community. This would also benefit the drivers as the number of trips would increase greatly. The disabled community should be part of drafting new rules and regulations. The drivers work hard and should have workers' compensation. They also need a larger relief fund. He is aware of the federal lawsuit and would like to see it settled.

**Ron Blount, U.T.W.A.** - He was pleased by all the comments that have been made. He suggested a working group to develop new regulations for the drivers of the accessible vehicles. The training should be more than 12 hours. He feels that a central phone number for dispatching all the accessible vehicles would be best. He likes the deadhead rule that NY City has established.

**Mark Longo, National Mobility Association** - Mr. Longo said he is a trainer in NY for accessible vehicles. He is concerned that there are loopholes in our rules. Crash test results should be required. The original manufacturer should approve the companies that will make the vehicle accessible. Otherwise unsafe vehicles may be built. Currently NY has 232 accessible vehicles and it is not enough. The PPA should offer more than 15 new licenses annually.

**Jeff Hornstein, GPHLTA** - Mr. Hornstein suggested that these comment hearings be video taped so others unable to attend the meeting may have benefit of the comments.

The meeting was closed by Director Ney at 11:05 AM after all those wishing to speak had done so.

