

Mayor Soglin and Alders,

As the City continues to work through the regulatory and licensure challenges created by the emergence of transportation network companies, many citizens throughout the community are concerned with how the City's response to these issues will impact the availability of accessible taxi cab service.

As you know, the City Council voted to accept a report presented by the Commission on People with Disabilities on March 31, 2015 that shared serious concerns about the lack of accessible taxi cab service. We greatly appreciate the positive response this report received as well as your support for our efforts in gathering information via listening sessions, meal sites, and questionnaires.

While the report highlighted several issues the most alarming was the evidence that disabled citizens had unequal access to cab service in the City of Madison. Throughout the listening sessions and community outreach done by the Commission in developing the report, the Commission heard numerous stories from disabled citizens who stated problems such as: they were forced to wait many hours for cab service, they called late at night and were told there was no accessible service available, or they called during the day and were told they would not be able to receive same day service. These are not the experiences of citizens who are not disabled.

Despite concerns about the reliability of service and the fact that many disabled citizens are unaware that one company, Union Cab, provides accessible cab service, the number of accessible cab rides provided by Union Cab doubled from 2012 to 2013, while the size of Union's fleet stayed the same. This increased demand will further be challenged by the fact the grant funding Union Cab has relied on to secure funding for new accessible taxi cabs will no longer be available, meaning the size of their fleet may actually decrease in the face of increasing demand.

The situation could be made worse by the emergence of transportation network companies in Madison. These companies have no requirement to provide accessible cab service and their presence will undoubtedly stress the existing cab company's willingness and ability to enhance their accessible services. While transportation network companies have embraced accessibility in other communities around the nation, they must have employees that own accessible vehicles in order to provide accessible rides.

For all of these reasons, we strongly urge the Council and the Mayor to make sure any discussion or action on taxi cab or ride-sharing regulation for Transportation Network Companies includes increased accessibility for disabled citizens.

As Mayor Soglin pointed out in his remarks regarding the Council's acceptance of this report, the Council's vote to accept this report also commits them to take action on the issues raised in the report. We hope you will honor that commitment and make accessible taxi cab service a priority as you move forward.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.