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**Cc:** [Myadze, Charles](#); [Lynch, Thomas](#)  
**Subject:** Background on "accessible cabs" amendment for Finance Committee meeting Sept 28  
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Dear Finance Committee Members -

I wanted to give you a bit more background on amendment #8, the accessible cabs amendment. I'm not a particularly great speaker, so I thought you'd get more out of a written version. I will ask Finance staff to attach this email to legistar.

Finance staff did a nice job in summarizing the idea that Alder Myadze, myself, Crystal Martin of Metro, Ben Lymann of the MPO, and others have been discussing, but by necessity had to leave out a lot of information from the very short space the amendment form provides for analysis.

First, I want to emphasize the incredible need in the community for more accessible cabs. As we heard in the Metro network redesign debate, scheduling accessible taxi rides often requires a week's notice. Union Cab once had a fleet of nine accessible cabs, they are now down to three, and those three are so old that some of their drivers won't drive them. Like many industries, the taxi companies in Madison are facing headwinds, but it absolutely is true that with more accessible cabs in their fleets, it would make it easier for wheelchair users in Madison to be able to get a cab when they need one.

We are intentionally not specifying the exact plan as part of the amendment for a couple of good reasons, but I did want to assure the committee that we do have a "default" plan in mind - a grant program to provide funding to licensed taxi providers who operate primarily in Madison and have staff with the necessary training and certifications operate wheelchair accessible cab to purchase vehicles. This is similar to other grant programs we already run in Madison, such as the Facade Improvement Grant.

One of the big reasons we did not specify an exact plan in the amendment is that we wanted to have more time to work with staff and other levels of government to see if there are ways to make these dollars go further. Ben Lymann from the MPO thinks there may be some County funding we could combine with. Or, perhaps we might want to delay until later into 2023 and combine this funding with federal 5310 funding (the "Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program") when it next opens. The key takeaway is that we think we have a good program, but we want to explore all avenues to see if we can make a good program a great program.

We also want to be cognizant of limited staff time, and have not asked staff to do the detailed design work until we're sure that the program will be funded. There are a lot of outstanding

questions - should this be a grant or a (forgivable) loan, should this be a differential “gap-funding” to upgrade a cab to an accessible cab, should the City own the vehicles and lease them out, can we find electric vehicles that could serve this purpose, what reporting metrics do we want to require as part of the grant, plus all of the possibilities of using this as matching funds to other funding opportunities. Before spending time on this, we wanted to make sure there was preliminary concurrence from the larger body to proceed. We will ask Transportation to lead a review, with staff expertise from the MPO, TE, Metro, and DCR, and eventually refer preliminary recommendations to at least the Transportation Commission and the Disability Rights Commission, before final sign-off from the Common Council.

I’d also like to mention that there may be some positive impact on Paratransit from this program. As you may know, Paratransit is required to provide all of its scheduled rides, which does mean that some days they have to scramble to figure out how to make a pickup if a disruption happens - something goes late or something breaks down. (Occasionally the Paratransit dispatchers have to do some ‘heroic’ measures, like dispatching an entire bus to make a single pickup.) Having a few more resources “on the board” and available to help should help make Paratransit’s life a bit easier. I don’t know that it will lead to a noticeable cost reduction, but it should at least help out with reducing some stress!

I hope this is helpful, and I look forward to discussing this with you more at the Finance committee. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

-Erik

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