



New York City Comptroller  
John C. Liu

STATEMENT

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## LIU TESTIMONY ON TAXI OF TOMORROW

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NEW YORK, NY – City Comptroller John C. Liu submitted the following testimony to the Taxi and Limousine Commission against the current Taxi of Tomorrow agreement because it does not require all yellow cabs to be wheelchair accessible.

In a 2009 report, Mayor Bloomberg recommended that the Taxi of Tomorrow “provide universal accessibility for all passengers, including passengers in wheelchairs.” The report, “Age Friendly NYC: Enhancing Our City’s Livability for Older New Yorkers” called for the creation of a model accessible yellow cab. The full report is available here: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/pdf/2009/pr386-09\\_report.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/pdf/2009/pr386-09_report.pdf)

“City Hall seems to have forgotten the recommendation it made just three years ago to provide wheelchair accessibility to all,” Comptroller Liu said. “The TLC should take immediate steps to change this contract so that the entire Taxi of Tomorrow fleet is wheelchair accessible.”

### TESTIMONY OF NEW YORK CITY COMPTROLLER JOHN C. LIU TO THE NEW YORK CITY TAXI AND LIMOUSINE COMMISSION September 6, 2012

The Taxi of Tomorrow presents the City of New York with an historic opportunity to achieve a right that New Yorkers with disabilities have been waging a war to win for nearly two decades: the simple right to hail a cab. If the TLC wants to design and build a taxi for New York City, it must require that these new vehicles be 100% wheelchair accessible.

Almost everyone agrees that the current status quo of 1.7% of the fleet, or 231 wheelchair-accessible taxis, is shameful. Even though the City controls the sale of taxi medallions, it has failed to require that all taxis be made accessible to wheelchairs. The City now wants to modestly increase the number of accessible vehicles by adding 2,000 medallions to the fleet, although pending litigation may jeopardize even these additional accessible medallions.

As the City looks to the future, accessibility for cabs will no longer be a luxury, it will be a necessity. Currently, 60,000 City wheelchair-users are denied meaningful access to taxis, and

with an aging population, the situation will only worsen. According to the Department of City Planning, the number of people age 65 and over is projected to rise to 1.35 million in 2030.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the fact that anyone can become disabled at any point in their life, without an accessible taxi fleet, the City's aging baby boomers will likely be forced to rely on the current separate and much more costly paratransit system, known as Access-A-Ride. An audit published by our office in February detailed that in 2010, the cost to operate Access-A-Ride was \$462.3 million dollars. Total trips via Access-A-Ride rose from 5.4 million to 6.7 million from 2008 to 2010.<sup>2</sup> A rough estimate calculates that the cost of a trip in calendar year 2010 was as high as \$69.00 a ride.

The TLC's plan to moderately increase accessibility appears impractical at best and relies on an unnecessarily expensive supply chain. We understand that the TLC is directing Nissan to build the Taxi of Tomorrow as an inaccessible vehicle in Mexico<sup>3</sup> and then ship it to Indiana, where it will be "hacked-up"<sup>4</sup> and remade into an accessible vehicle by Indiana-based BraunAbility.<sup>5</sup> The modified vehicle will then be shipped to New York, where disabled individuals will be able to use a rear-mounted ramp to ride in the trunk of the Taxi of Tomorrow.<sup>6</sup>

This is a critical moment. In 1989, London made all of its taxis wheelchair-accessible. More recently, Nissan unveiled a plan for a fully accessible Taxi of Tomorrow. I once again call on the Mayor to take immediate steps to modify the contract so that the entire "Taxi of Tomorrow" fleet is wheelchair accessible. New York City's iconic yellow cab should be a symbol of inclusion, not another obstacle for the people with disabilities to overcome. New York City ought to be a leader, not a follower, on this important civil-rights issue. If London can do it, so can we.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/projections\\_briefing\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/projections_briefing_booklet.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/audit/PDF\\_FILES\\_2012/7S11\\_129F.pdf](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/audit/PDF_FILES_2012/7S11_129F.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://mexicotoday.org/article/new-and-improved-nyc-taxi-%E2%8E%AF-%E2%80%98taxi-tomorrow%E2%80%99-%E2%8E%AF-made-mexico>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.nyc.gov/html/tlc/downloads/pdf/taxi\\_of\\_tomorrow\\_rules\\_09\\_06\\_12.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/tlc/downloads/pdf/taxi_of_tomorrow_rules_09_06_12.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nwibq.com/news/regional-news/braun-to-provide-taxis-for-new-york-city/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://autoconceptcar.com/the-taxi-of-tomorrow-nissan-nv-200.html>