

Wheelchair Users Can Now Call 311 for an Accessible Taxi in New York City

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The New York City-based United Spinal Association encourages wheelchair users in the metropolitan area, and any individual who uses a wheelchair or scooter while visiting the city, to call 311 to request a wheelchair-accessible taxi via a new central dispatch system.

United Spinal Association President and CEO Paul J. Tobin stated, "our organization has been advocating for wheelchair-accessible taxis in New York since our members discovered them in other U.S. cities in the 1990s. As one of the lead groups in the New York City "Taxis For All Campaign," our advocacy helped to achieve the language in the 2003 and 2006 City laws that required the 231 wheelchair-accessible taxis operating here."

Tobin continued, "what we hope to accomplish now is to spread the word to wheelchair users everywhere on the planet that they can call for an accessible yellow taxi in New York City."

As part of this program, the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission selected United Spinal Association to train taxi drivers in proper use of wheelchair securement devices and disability etiquette.

United Spinal Association and the Taxis For All Campaign continue to press for a mandated, gradual conversion to accessible vehicles for the entire yellow taxi fleet.

The new "Accessible Dispatch System" was developed by the New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission as a two-year pilot program that tests dispatching technology, measures demand for wheelchair-accessible vehicles, and helps New York City determine how to best provide accessible taxi and livery service in the future.

The Accessible Dispatch System is for passengers who use wheelchairs or scooters only. The wheelchair-using passenger calls 311 and asks to be connected to the Accessible Dispatch System. The dispatcher collects the passenger's pick-up location and communicates electronically with the driver of the wheelchair-accessible taxi closest to the location to pick up the passenger. The fare for an accessible cab trip is the same as the metered rates for all New York City yellow taxis.

The wheelchair-accessible taxis operating in New York City are minivans that are equipped with a ramp that can be easily deployed by the driver. On some models, the ramp and wheelchair location is reached through a side sliding door; on other models, the wheelchair access space is in the back of the taxi.

About United Spinal Association

United Spinal is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit membership organization formed in 1946 by paralyzed veterans and is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all Americans with spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, ALS and post polio. It has played a significant role in writing the Americans with Disabilities Act, made important contributions to the Fair Housing Amendments Act and the Air Carrier Access Act. Membership is free and is open to all individuals with spinal cord disorders.