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CITY OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES OPEN DOORS ORGANIZATION TO PROVIDE CENTRALIZED TAXICAB DISPATCH SERVICE FOR WHEELCHAIR-ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

Move will ensure more reliable and dependable taxi service for Chicago's disability community

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection today announced the Open Doors Organization has won the competitive bidding process to provide centralized wheelchair-accessible taxicab dispatch service to passengers across Chicago. The move further improves services for people with disabilities increasing safe and reliable transportation options for people who use wheelchairs.

"Reliable transportation options for our residents, especially for residents with disabilities, is not only a priority, it's our responsibility," Mayor Emanuel said. "Having dependable service is a benefit to our residents and to the millions of visitors that make Chicago the great city it is today."

The Open Doors Organization was selected from a group of five vendors through a competitive bidding process initiated in May 2015. The evaluation committee gave the company the highest score for its ability to connect passengers with wheelchair-accessible taxicabs with a smartphone app that will include key features such as estimated wait time and an estimated fare quote. The Open Taxis app is available to download from both the Apple App Store for IOS users and Google Play App Store for Android users.

Mayor Emanuel's taxi reforms have nearly doubled the number of wheelchair-accessible vehicles on the road today. The reforms will add 100 more wheelchair-accessible taxicabs by the end of 2016, which supplements and expedites a mandate that requires nearly 400 wheelchair-accessible taxicabs in Chicago by January 1, 2018. To support the mandate, the city has created an accessibility fund that is supported by regular payments for rides offered by non-wheelchair-accessible taxicabs and transportation network vehicles (a.k.a. rideshares) to create accessible transportation options.

"The centralized dispatch of WAVs is the most efficient and reliable way to get accessible taxi vehicles to serve people who use wheelchairs," said BACP Commissioner Maria Guerra Lapacek. "We will work closely with Open Doors to maximize services to residents with disabilities."

Open Doors Organization is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Chicago that was founded in 2000 for the purpose of creating a society in which all persons with disabilities have the same consumer opportunities as everyone, whether it involves access to businesses or accessible transportation. The company is committed to providing educational seminars and diversity

programs on accessibility and disability to the taxicab industry. The company's services are designed improve quality-of-life for individuals with disabilities while opening doors to businesses and society.

"Open Taxis is extremely proud to represent the city of Chicago and contribute to the advancement in technology and customer service in accessible transportation. It is our goal to continue to strive in making Chicago an example for the world on how to supply sufficient and cost effective accessible transportation," Eric Lipp, Founder and Executive Director of the Open Doors Organization said. "Open Taxis is committed to continuing to provide wheelchair accessible taxis while offer the entire city safe, reliable and timely accessible transportation."

"Accessible taxis are critical to the transportation network for Chicagoans with disabilities," said Karen Tamley, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

"The Central WAV Taxicab Dispatch is a great thing for Chicago and the disability community. It will improve taxi service and make it easier to hail a cab, or reserve one for a later time. It will be wonderful to be able to select the cab from the map on your cell, with no need to call or text, and know which taxi cab will be coming," said Maureen Reagan, President of MRA Architects and frequent user of WAVs."

All wheelchair-accessible taxicab drivers can be requested via the Open Taxis app or by calling #855-WAV-1010. The Open Doors Organization will operate in conjunction with the City of Chicago CHICABS program, which houses all approved universal taxi app providers. Learn more about the CHICABS program at www.chicabs.org.

BACP oversees the licensing of Chicago's public chauffeurs and public vehicles including taxicabs, liveries, charter and site seeing buses, horse drawn carriages, ambulances, water taxis and tour boats. The department also oversees the purchasing of taxicab medallions, vehicle inspections and rates of fare. Learn more about BACP's Public Vehicle Operations at www.cityofchicago.org/BACP.

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