

Friday November 29, 2019

Hon. Shane Simpson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Government of British Columbia
P.O. Box 9058
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Submitted via email: engageaccessibility@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Simpson,

Lyft is pleased to see the Provincial government moving forward with accessibility legislation for B.C. Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. At Lyft, we are always looking at ways to expand transportation opportunity and equity to the communities that need it most. We look forward to further engagement with the Province on the new legislation and how it relates to transportation.

Ridehailing allows people in our communities to get around conveniently and affordably, expanding transportation access for a wide range of people with different needs, including seniors, those who are part of the low-vision community, those who are hard of hearing, and those who use a foldable wheelchair or a walker. Lyft was built with accessibility in mind in order to provide a ride to anyone who might need one. Some features of the app include:

- You can request a ride from wherever you are. Real-time arrival estimates and alerts mean no difficult street hailing or uncertain wait times.
- Voiceover capability in the app makes it easy for those who are low vision to request a Lyft ride.
- Cashless payments and ride summary emails eliminate the possibility of passengers with low vision or cognitive disabilities receiving incorrect change or unknowingly being charged.
- All Lyft vehicles are accessible to individuals who can enter a standard vehicle with assistance, and those using foldable wheelchairs who can transfer to a standard seat while drivers stow their devices in the back seat or trunk. Lyft drivers are more than happy to provide this assistance.

In 2017, we announced a partnership with the U.S. National Association of the Deaf to improve ride access for deaf and hard of hearing people to better connect our drivers and passengers. Our innovative Amp device replaces the audible “ping” that alerts drivers to a new ride with text that reads “NEW RIDE.” Drivers can also tap ‘Settings’ and ‘Accessibility’ on their smartphones to have the screen and flashlight flash when they receive an incoming ride request. Additionally, passengers riding with deaf or hard-of-hearing drivers will receive an SMS notification to contact their driver by text rather than through a voice call. These passengers are also encouraged to let the driver lead the communication process.

It is also important to note that all passengers are charged the same rates regardless of their physical condition. Lyft takes pride in being an all-inclusive community, where everyone in the car deserves a 5-star experience, including service animals. Discrimination of any kind may result in the offender’s immediate deactivation.

Accessibility Standards

Within the *Framework for Accessibility Legislation*, it is proposed that the Government of British Columbia seeks to expedite the development of accessibility standards by adopting or building on existing standards, policies and practices developed elsewhere in Canada or around the world. Lyft operates in nearly 650 cities in North America. We thought it would be helpful to share what we are doing in other jurisdictions.

Each market in which Lyft operates has unique regulatory requirements, ranging from referring passengers to local accessibility services to requiring complete 24/7 wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) coverage and mandated 'estimated time of arrival'. We have WAV coverage in eight cities, including Toronto, and two pilot programs in California. In these jurisdictions, Lyft provides 600 to 700 WAV rides per week. In some other cities like Ottawa, Lyft pays a WAV fee, similar to what will be required in B.C.

In July, we announced our WAV pilot programs in San Francisco and Los Angeles. All drivers will be certified by First Transit and operate 2019 Toyota Sienna vans, which include a folding ramp for side entry. Pricing for the WAV service is the same as standard rides and can be used by turning on "Access Mode" in the Lyft app.

In order to make this program a reality, Lyft supported the passage of Senate Bill 1376, which created the "TNS Access for All Act" that allowed for the increase in WAV service specifically on Transportation Network Service (TNS) platforms. Through the bill, the State mandated that TNSs are required to collect a 10-cent per ride fee for all rides originating in California, to go into an "accessibility fund" (similar to what we will have in B.C.). The fund can be accessed by TNSs and other access providers in order to increase and improve WAV services.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide our thoughts on coming accessibility legislation in B.C. We look forward to working with the Provincial government and other stakeholders to develop inclusive policies and programs, which will support people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Sophia Cote
Public Policy Manager, Western Canada
Lyft