STATE OF NEW YORK

7611

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

April 23, 2025

Introduced by Sen. BYNOE -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Transportation

AN ACT to amend the transportation law, in relation to a study of the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles in New York state outside of the city of New York

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Legislative intent. This Legislature finds that no uniform regulations exist across New York state outside of New York city which defines a wheelchair accessible vehicle and, despite the need for mobility services for the disabled population, substantive information on wheelchair accessible vehicle standards and the number of such vehicles available does not exist in each county across New York state outside of New York City.

As such, this Legislature finds that defining what constitutes a wheelchair accessible vehicle, conducting a study on the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles, creating benchmarks and grant supports for the different counties across New York state other than New York City, would allow for local authorities to make informed policies to increase mobility transportation options for individuals who make use of a wheelchair.

§ 2. The transportation law is amended by adding a new section 14-o to read as follows:

§ 14-o. Wheelchair accessible vehicles. 1. For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Taxicab" shall mean any motor vehicle, other than a bus, used in the business of transporting passengers for compensation, and operated in such business under a license or permit issued by a local authority. Such term shall not include vehicles which are rented or leased without a driver.

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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(b) "County" shall mean a county in the state of New York, outside of the city of New York.

(c) "Wheelchair accessible vehicle" shall mean a vehicle, including a taxicab, that has been inspected and approved by the municipal or local authorizing body as possessing all of the following requirements:

(i) Mobility and accessibility

(A) The lift/ramp width shall be thirty inches minimum.

(B) The design load of the lift/ramp shall be at least six hundred pounds.

(C) Controls for the lift/ramp shall be interlocked with the vehicle to ensure that the vehicle cannot be moved while the lift/ramp is in operation.

(D) Controls for the lift/ramp shall be of the momentary contact type requiring continuous manual pressure to operate.

(E) The lift/ramp shall be equipped with an emergency deployment method in the event of power or mechanical failure.

(F) The installation of a lift/ramp shall include provisions to prevent the lift/ramp from falling or folding any faster than twelve inches/second in the event of any failure of the load-carrying component.

(G) The lift/ramp platform shall be equipped with handrails on two sides, a minimum of eight inches long and thirty inches above the platform and move in tandem with the lift/ramp.

(H) The lift/ramp platform shall have barriers at least two inches or higher to prevent mobility aid wheels from slipping off.

(I) Lift/platform surfaces shall be continuous and slip resistant and accommodate four-wheel and three-wheel mobility aids.

(J) The transition from roadway or sidewalk and the transition from vehicle floor to the ramp may be vertical without edge treatment up to one-quarter inch.

(K) Ramps shall have the least slope practical and may not exceed a one to four ratio when deployed to ground level.

(L) The lift/ramp attachment shall be firmly attached to the vehicle so that it is not subject to displacement when loading or unloading a heavy mobility aid and the gap between the vehicle and ramp may not exceed five-eighths of an inch.

(M) The lift/ramp shall be usable in all weather conditions.

(ii) Doors, steps and thresholds

(A) For vehicles twenty-two feet in length or less, the overhead clearance between the top of the door opening. The raised lift platform or highest point of the ramp shall be a minimum of fifty-nine inches.

(B) Vehicle doorways in which a lift/ramp is installed shall have a light above or beside each passenger access door to illuminate the loading equipment. Such light shall be constantly lit during the loading or unloading of passengers. The light shall be shielded to protect the eyes of entering and exiting passengers.

(iii) Interior compartment

(A) Floor areas where people walk and securement locations shall have slip-resistant surfaces.

(B) A minimum clear floor area of thirty inches by forty-eight inches shall be provided for each wheelchair position.

(C) Regarding seating configuration, vehicles twenty-two feet in length or less shall provide forward/rear seating only.

(D) Ramp stowage shall be accomplished in a manner as not to pose a hazard to passengers or impinge on a passenger's mobility aid.

(E) Interior handrails and stanchions shall permit sufficient turning and maneuvering space for mobility aids including wheelchairs to reach securement location from lift/ramp.

(F) Handrails and stanchions shall be provided in the entrance to the vehicle in a configuration which allows people to grasp the assists from outside the vehicle while starting to board, and to continue using the assists throughout the boarding process.

(iv) Secure systems

(A) A vehicle shall possess a wheelchair securement system that is able to securely anchor the wheelchair into the vehicle, or able to encompass both the occupant and the wheelchair to ensure they are securely anchored into the vehicle.

(B) For each mobility aid securement device, a passenger seat belt and shoulder harness shall be provided for use by mobility aid users. Such seat belts shall be in addition to a device which secures the mobility aid itself.

(C) Securement systems shall be stowed in a way so as not to pose a hazard to passengers when not in use.

2. The commissioner shall conduct a study relating to the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles in every county. Each county shall provide the department with relevant data which will allow the department to complete this study. The scope of such study shall include:

(a) A compilation of data from each county on the number of taxicab operators within their jurisdiction.

(b) The size of the fleet of each taxicab company or operator.

(c) The number of wheelchair accessible vehicles that comprise the fleet of each taxicab company or operator.

(d) The catchment areas of each taxicab company or operator.

(e) Any existing county policies or laws which set guidelines on the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles available in each county or policies regarding the licensing of wheelchair accessible vehicles by any taxicab company.

3. All information compiled by the wheelchair accessible vehicle study under subdivision two of this section shall be assembled and integrated into a statewide mapping platform in order to identify areas of the state which may have an accessibility desert and/or insufficient number of wheelchair accessible vehicles. Such map shall include:

(a) An overlay of the different existing county policies or laws which set guidelines on the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

(b) An overlay of existing programs which provide wheelchair accessible transportation services in each county.

(c) All other information as outlined under the wheelchair accessible vehicle study in subdivision two of this section.

(d) All information included in the study shall be made available digitally and be accessible to the public on the department's website.

4. Upon completion of the wheelchair accessible vehicle study pursuant to subdivision two of this section, the department, in conjunction with the office for people with developmental disabilities and the department of health, shall complete an assessment of each county's data to determine if there is an accessibility desert due to an insufficient number of wheelchair accessible vehicles, and create benchmarks developed through analysis of U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey data on the prevalence of ambulatory disabilities. This assessment shall suggest grant programs or tax incentives to increase the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

5. The department shall complete an assessment of all existing wheelchair accessible vehicle policies or plans and determine if such plans are insufficient. Upon determination that a county has an insufficient plan or is absent of a plan to meet the needs of its constituency, the department shall require such county to submit a plan that meets the department's benchmarks in order to increase wheelchair accessible vehicle transportation.

6. Within one hundred eighty days of the publication of the wheelchair accessible vehicle study map as set forth in subdivision three of this section, the commissioner shall deliver a copy of the findings of the study and the benchmarks established pursuant to subdivision four of this section to all stakeholders and post such findings on the department's website. Notification shall be provided to each county subject to this section. Within one hundred eighty days of the publication of the wheelchair accessible vehicle study map, each county shall create and submit a plan to the department pursuant to subdivision five of this section.

§ 3. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall have become a law.