STATE OF NEW YORK

7611--B

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

April 23, 2025

Introduced by Sens. BYNOE, MARTINS, RHOADS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Transportation -- reported favorably from said committee and committed to the Committee on Finance -- committee discharged and said bill committed to the Committee on Rules -- ordered to a third reading, amended and ordered reprinted, retaining its place in the order of third reading -- recommitted to the Committee on Transportation in accordance with Senate Rule 6, sec. 8 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the vehicle and traffic law and the transportation law, in relation to creating a plan to increase 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 define wheelchair accessible vehicles. 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 a wheelchair accessible vehicle, creating a plan for wheelchair accessible vehicles, creating benchmarks and granting support for 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 are reliant on the use of a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

§ 2. The vehicle and traffic law is amended by adding a new section 159-b to read as follows:

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

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§ 159-b. "Wheelchair accessible vehicle". 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:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

§ 3. The vehicle and traffic law is amended by adding a new section 224-b to read as follows:

§ 224-b. Wheelchair accessible vehicle availability plan. 1. The commissioner shall create a plan relating to the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles in every county of the state outside the city of New York. Each such county shall provide the department with relevant data necessary to complete such plan. The scope of the plan shall include:

(a) the number of for-hire operators within each county;

(b) the size of the fleet of each for-hire company or operator;

(c) the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles in each fleet;

(d) the catchment areas of such for-hire companies or operators; and

(e) any county policies or laws governing the availability or licensing of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

2. All information compiled pursuant to this section shall be assembled and integrated into a statewide mapping platform to identify areas with insufficient availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles. Such information shall be made publicly available on the department's website.

3. Upon completion of the plan, the department, in consultation with the office for people with developmental disabilities and the department of health, shall assess county-level data and establish benchmarks based on United States census bureau American community survey data on ambulatory disabilities. Such benchmarks shall be included in the plan, along with recommendations for grant programs and tax incentives to encourage engagement in an effort to provide transportation options to expand the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles. The plan should also include identification of pre-existing fiscal resources which are available to transportation network companies, other for-hire entities, and individuals who possess qualifying wheelchair accessible vehicles.

4. If the department determines that a county lacks adequate resources to meet the needs of individuals requiring wheelchair accessible vehicles, the department shall, in consultation with: (a) the county or any other relevant governmental entity, (b) transportation network companies, (c) other for-hire entities, and (d) individuals who possess wheelchair accessible vehicles, create a plan to meet the benchmarks established pursuant to subdivision three of this section. The commissioner shall then publish the findings, and subsequent plan, on the department's website and provide notice to each affected county.

§ 4. The closing paragraph of section 151 of the transportation law, as amended by section 8 of part G of chapter 58 of the laws of 2012, is amended and a new subdivision 13 is added to read as follows:

13. As a for-hire or livery service, except as specified for wheelchair accessible vehicles pursuant to section two hundred twenty-four-b of the vehicle and traffic law, which is pursuant to the jurisdiction or regulatory control of a municipality, other than a city with a population over one million, authorized to adopt an ordinance relating to both registration and licensing pursuant to subdivision one of section one hundred eighty-one of the general municipal law, when such service is available to the general public on a prearranged or demand-response basis over a non-specified or irregular route with the point or points of pick-up and discharge determined by the passenger. For the purpose of this subdivision, wheelchair accessible vehicles shall be defined pursuant to section one hundred fifty-nine-b of the vehicle and traffic law.

For the purposes of this article, the term "sedan" or "sedans" as used [~~herein~~] **in this section** shall include private passenger automobiles, but shall not include commercial motor vehicles with a seating capacity of eleven persons or more including the driver**, or commercially operated wheelchair accessible vehicles pursuant to subdivision thirteen of this section**.

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