

ALAMEDA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

# Countywide Taxi Study

Existing Conditions and Proposed Action Plan

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# INTRODUCTION

## Project Purpose

During the Winter of 2003/2004 ACTIA staff and the Nelson\Nygaard consulting team conducted extensive outreach throughout Alameda County to identify mobility service gaps experienced by older adults and residents with disabilities. Two of the key countywide service gaps identified in each of the county's four sub-areas were the lack of accessible taxis and barriers to inter-city taxi travel resulting from restrictive city taxi ordinances.

In response to these identified gaps, PAPCO determined the need to use countywide gap funds to conduct a Countywide Taxi Study that would identify the scope of the problem, develop a regional taxi ordinance, and present strategies for increasing the number of accessible taxis in the region. As part of this study, which was initiated in the summer of 2004, the following activities were conducted:

- Gathered data on taxi ordinances in each city in Alameda County
- Documented taxi contacts in each city
- Conducted research on incentives for accessible taxis in other cities
- Conducted research to identify examples of countywide taxi ordinances in other parts of the country
- Developed policies to encourage the purchase of accessible taxis
- Conducted a series of meetings with the taxi subcommittee, PAPCO, TAC and the taxi operators to share and solicit information

During the course of the study it became apparent that the original scope needed to be modified due to a variety of reasons. Firstly, research indicated that the procedures for changing the taxi ordinances in each of these cities are so complex and inconsistent that developing a single countywide ordinance would not be feasible as part of this study. Secondly, the concern with inter-jurisdictional barriers appeared to be less of an issue than the goal of achieving affordable, accessible same day service. Moreover, the experience in other cities suggests that the role of insurance, driver and company incentives, and enforcement is so critical that a more nuanced approach would be necessary to achieve these goals. This report presents the results of the extensive research of the team, and initial recommendations for achieving these goals. We conclude with an Action Plan to implement the project recommendations.

## Existing Conditions

Taxi services vary considerably in different parts of the county - both market-rate taxi services and those operated through the Measure B funded city-based paratransit programs.

In this section we provide an overview by city of the availability of market rate taxis; the service parameters of subsidized taxi programs and other related programs such as the Medical Return Trip Improvement Program and the Guaranteed Ride Home program; and the variations in taxi ordinances. This discussion is then summarized in a table illustrating the service gaps that emerge from the different levels of taxi and van availability in each city, given the primary benefit provided by taxi service – same day availability. A more detailed table of service parameters in those Alameda County cities that do provide taxi service may be found in Appendix A.

## Market Rate Taxi Availability

While taxi companies tend to be concentrated in the more densely developed northern sectors of the county, most cities do have some level of taxi availability. The table below shows the number of taxis licensed in each city.

City	Number of Licensed Taxis
Alameda	27
Albany	6
Berkeley	107
Dublin	37
Emeryville	19
Fremont	75
Hayward	63
Livermore	6
Newark	0
Oakland	314
Pleasanton	33
San Leandro	56
Union City	5

Note: These cannot be added up to the total number of taxis in the county because some vehicles are licensed in multiple cities.

In order to gain a true picture of taxi availability and the ability to cross jurisdictional boundaries, the table below shows the number of vehicles licensed in each city for the two largest taxi companies. The advantage of this concentration of taxis within a small number of companies is that patrons of these companies are able to cross jurisdictional lines without being restricted by local ordinances, since the company taxis are licensed in multiple jurisdictions.

**Figure 1 Companies with Multiple-licensed vehicles**

	<b>Friendly Cab</b>	<b>Veterans Cab</b>	<b>Yellow Cab</b>
Alameda	8	6	No
Albany	Shared with Berkeley	Shared with Berkeley	No
Berkeley	19	8	No
Dublin	license	Shared with Hayward	Contract in Dublin (Sent from Castro Valley)
Emeryville*	29	Shared with Berkeley	No
Fremont	license	8	15
Hayward	license	25	25
Livermore	no	Shared with Hayward	License
Newark	no	Shared with Hayward	Shared with Fremont
Oakland	184	42	No
Pleasanton*	no	NA	License
San Leandro	1	9 permits 6 vehicles	15
Union City*	license	Shared with Hayward	Shared with Fremont

Notes: (\*) denotes incomplete or unavailable information

Friendly has 5 non meter accessible vehicles

Veterans has 8 accessible vehicles

## Accessible non-metered vehicles

In addition to accessible taxis, a substantial number of accessible non-metered vehicles operate in the county. Typically licensed by the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC), these vehicles can operate anywhere in the state and the cost of licensing and insurance is considerably lower. However, they may not operate as metered taxis, but generally provide service on a contract basis through agreements with various cities or agencies, and also with individuals.

## Measure B-Funded Taxi and other related Programs

### Taxi Scrip/voucher programs

A number of the city-based paratransit programs, particularly in the North County cities, include the use of subsidized taxi services. The availability and eligibility requirements of these taxi subsidy programs is not standard countywide. The North County cities of Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, and Oakland all have taxi subsidy programs in the form of vouchers and/or scrip. South County cities, including Fremont, Hayward, Newark, Pleasanton, San Leandro, and Union City, do not currently have taxi subsidy programs.

A table is provided in Appendix A indicating the service characteristics of the different taxi programs throughout the county.

## **Medical Return Trip Improvement Program**

The North County Medical Return Transportation Improvement Program (MRTIP) provides an additional form of taxi scrip for paratransit registrants to use taxis for the return trip from medical appointments instead of scheduling a return trip by paratransit. This reduces wait time for riders, who typically must schedule a large cushion of time following their medical appointment, since they cannot reliably predict when their appointment will end. The MRTIP also reduces the number of expensive operator “go backs” resulting from paratransit riders who are not ready following their medical appointment at the scheduled pick-up time. The MRTIP scrip (“purple scrip”) is paid for and administered by ACTIA. A separate report on this program indicates that education and outreach are critical elements of a successful medical return trip program, in addition to limiting the amount of scrip available for this same day service.

## **Guaranteed Ride Home**

While not a subsidy currently offered to paratransit users, the County’s Congestion Management Agency (CMA)’s Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program offers a useful model for a potential voucher program. The GRH program provides up to six vouchers to registered participants for use when they must leave work early or late, or for an emergency, and need an alternative ride. To register, one must use alternative transportation (i.e. not drive alone) to get to work and be employed by a participating employer (open to those with 100 or more employees). The voucher is good for a taxi ride to a destination up to 100 miles from the place of employment, or a rental car.

## **Variations in Taxi Regulations and Enforcement**

The consulting team conducted an extensive comparison of the city and county ordinances regulating taxis. While most cities have their own ordinances regulating taxi operations, the Alameda County Ordinance regulates taxis in unincorporated areas. The content of the various ordinance elements is generally similar, but there are differences in the level of detail, wording, and elements included. Appendix A provides a summary comparison of taxi ordinances for all the Measure B recipient cities in Alameda County.

The following are key areas for consideration in the development of recommendations that are intended to address inter-jurisdictional travel.

## **Inter-jurisdictional Issues**

Every city ordinance, except for the City of Dublin, contains a clause regulating how taxis that do not have a city license can operate within city boundaries. The most common requirement is that no taxi may pick up passengers within a city’s boundaries without a permit or license from that city, though taxis may travel through or drop off passengers without a permit or license. The main exception is a clause included in the City of

Livermore Ordinance that allows taxis from other jurisdictions that dropped off passengers in Livermore, to pick up passengers for their return trip. This element is only valid if the city that licensed the taxi has a similar provision in their ordinance. Since this clause may be a candidate for replication in other cities, it is quoted in full below:

*5.40.410 Taxicabs from other municipalities – Reciprocal privileges. The driver of a taxicab authorized to operate in any municipality other than this city may transport passengers from such municipality to a destination within or beyond the city limits of the city; provided, that the driver of such taxicab shall not seek or accept passengers within the city, except upon the return trip to such other municipality, and then only at a point designated by the chief of police, and shall accept only passengers whose destination is directed to a point beyond the limits of the city in the direction of the municipality from which such taxicab came. The requirements of this chapter shall not apply to the owner or driver of such taxicab while it is operated in compliance with the provisions of this section, and while similar privileges are granted by the municipality from which such taxicab came.”*

Berkeley is the only city that includes a clause that prohibits service denials to potential passengers based on trip distance or destination, provided the destination is within 50 miles of the municipal border.

### **Payment Mechanisms and Overcharging**

Every ordinance, except for the City of San Leandro, contains a clause that forbids drivers from charging over the amount on the taximeter, as set by city council, or as filed with their permit application. Furthermore, about half of the ordinances do not allow charging below the legal rate.

The Cities of Oakland and Pleasanton have included exceptions that may be useful in establishing the legality of subsidized payment mechanisms. The City of Oakland has two specific clauses that allow greater flexibility in payment for the elderly, disabled, and paratransit users. One provision allows the City Manager to approve fares lower than the regular fare if they are included in a contract between the taxi company and “programs benefiting persons over the age of sixty-five (65) or persons whose mobility is restricted as a result of a physical disability.” The other allows taxi operators to accept payment other than the amount on the taximeter if “for services rendered pursuant to the city of Oakland’s paratransit program.” Pleasanton’s ordinance is more general, allowing flat rates or long-term contractual arrangements providing that the charges are not greater than the equivalent fare as set by City Council. Each trip provided under such an agreement must be recorded on the manifest as such.

The Cities of Albany and Berkeley have provisions requiring the acceptance of taxi scrip payment. They also prevent denial of service to potential passengers based on payment with taxi scrip.

## Insurance Requirements

Insurance requirements are a significant cost to taxi operators, and may have a direct impact on the availability of accessible vehicles. The higher cost of accessible vehicles in addition to high insurance costs have discouraged companies from purchasing accessible vehicles; only the larger companies can afford both. Some taxi companies have created separate divisions for non-metered vehicles including accessible vans licensed by the California Public Utilities Commission, which has lower insurance requirements. Since these vehicles are not metered, they charge flat rates on a subscription, contract, or per-trip basis.

While all taxi ordinances in the County require insurance, only nine define specific coverage amounts. These vary, but generally include provisions for property damage (\$25,000 to \$100,000), injury or death of one person (\$100,000 to \$1,000,000), and injury or death of more than one person resulting from one incident (\$300,000 to \$1,000,000). Fremont and Livermore do not differentiate between the levels of coverage but both require insurance to cover up to \$1,000,000 per incident.

If operators are licensed in more than one municipality, they must be insured up to the highest required rates. In North County, Oakland is the only city that requires a \$1,000,000 policy. However, due to multiple licensing, it is likely that most North County taxis are licensed at this level. These differences in insurance level requirements also occur in other parts of the County.

## Other provisions

The following is a list of provisions not discussed above that may affect the type and quality of service provided to paratransit users:

Special Training or Testing Requirement: Berkeley, Oakland, Fremont, and Hayward require either a test or special training to receive a taxi driver permit. Berkeley's training specifically addresses sensitivity towards elderly and disabled passengers. The other cities' training requirements focus on the taxi ordinance, geography, and safety.

Service Animals: Berkeley requires that drivers allow service animals in the taxi. The City's ordinance also allows them to ask whether the animal is a service animal, but not require documentation. Drivers are also allowed to require that service animals remain on the floor of the vehicle.

Contract for Use of Vehicle: Albany forbids drivers from leasing vehicles from taxi companies. It states that "[it] shall be unlawful for the owner or any driver of any such vehicle to enter into any contract, agreement or understanding between themselves by the terms of which such driver pays to, or for the account of, such owner a fixed or determinable sum for the use of such vehicle."

Enforcement: Anecdotal evidence suggests that those ordinance elements that are not administratively enforceable are rarely enforced. On-street enforcement of taxis is costly

and often a low priority for police officers. In its place, an informal code of conduct has developed in the taxi industry that is generally more flexible than the municipal codes, and governs inter-jurisdictional trips and driver conduct at taxi stands, where self-enforcement is most possible. Violation of this informal code is typically enforced immediately and often physically; thus, there have been reports of fistfights when out-of-jurisdiction taxis attempt to pick up passengers, or a driver cuts in line at a taxi stand.

## Service Gaps that need to be addressed

The variations in the different programs and taxi ordinances have resulted in a patchwork of service availability that can range from same day accessible taxi service in one city to limited service without a subsidy or accessible taxis in another. Addressing these inequities to the extent that is operationally and financially feasible is a prime objective of this study. The complexity of service gaps is illustrated in the following table, and discussed in more detail below:

	North County					Central County		South County			East County		
	Alameda	Albany	Berkeley	Emeryville	Oakland	San Leandro	Hayward	Fremont	Newark	Union City	Pleasanton	Dublin	Livermore
Lack of programs providing same-day service.						x			x	x		x	
Cities that provide same-day service for medical trips only.							x	x			x		x
Lack of taxis									x				
Lack of accessible taxis.	x					x	x	x				x	
Lack of voucher/discounted taxi programs.						x			x	x	x	x	x
Waiting lists for voucher programs.					x								
Limit on the number of trips/vouchers available to each participant.					x								
Voucher availability limited to only the lowest-income registrants			x										
Market rate taxis avoid short and cross-jurisdictional trips (jurisdictions for which they do not have licenses).			x										

## **Limited Same day service availability**

At least nine cities do not have subsidized same day service available for any trip purpose – some do not have the service available at all while others limit the service to medical trips. In addition, participation in some programs is subject to a variety of capacity constraints, such as waiting lists, limits on the number of trips per month, and income-based eligibility requirements.

## **Limited number of Accessible taxis**

In contrast to many urban areas, Alameda County has a very limited number of accessible taxis. There are known to be three accessible metered taxis in Alameda County, all operated by Friendly Cab. In addition, Metro Yellow and Veterans Cab Company, both operated under the same ownership, are believed to have an additional seven accessible taxis, although this has not been verified. Friendly Cab accessible taxis are licensed to operate in Berkeley, Oakland and a number of other North County cities. These taxis were recently placed into operation when the City of Berkeley, which controls the number of taxi medallions, offered an additional five medallions to be used for accessible taxis only. As mentioned previously, currently only three of the five have been issued. It should be pointed out that this discussion of accessible taxis specifically refers to those that can operate on a meter rate, rather than the accessible vans licensed through the PUC, of which there are a far greater number.

According to representatives from Friendly Taxi, these vehicles have not yet become financially viable, despite the incentives provided by the City of Berkeley. One reason for this is that drivers have avoided leasing the accessible vehicles, since they perceive a number of disincentives, such as the additional time to transport wheelchair users when they may only be taking short trips. Increasing the reimbursement for these trips will be a key determinant in the successful use of those vehicles, particularly from the driver's perspective. Taxi drivers depend on maximizing the number of trips and the trip length, because these variables provide the greatest payback. Financial incentives to encourage use of accessible taxis must consider the driver of the leased vehicle in addition to the taxi companies.

## **Accessible taxis are relatively expensive**

The cost of accessible taxis can represent a considerable barrier. Friendly taxi reports that refurbished accessible taxis (even those that are not completely new) can cost four or more times as much as the typical used sedan operated by taxi companies, which can be purchased for a low as \$4,000. Taxi operators indicated that this cost would not represent a barrier if trips provided on accessible taxis could be priced in such a way as to compensate for this initial investment.

## **Cross-jurisdictional issues**

Taxis are not permitted to pick up passengers in cities for which they do not have licenses. Drivers avoid taking passengers to these cities because they cannot pick up a passenger for the return trip. However, subsequent interviews with taxi representatives suggest that informally drivers do often traverse jurisdictional boundaries.

## **Long wait times for paratransit trips after medical appointments**

Passengers must build in a substantial cushion time for their return trip on paratransit to avoid missing their trip. The MRTIP was specifically established to address this problem, but currently operates in North County, thus leaving many residents in the rest of the County with the problem of return trips.

## **High number of medical return trip go-backs**

Paratransit vehicles must return to medical providers to pick up passengers who missed their scheduled trips due to long appointments. As mentioned above, MRTIP only addresses this issue in a part of the County.

## **Complex variations in fare media, rules, and providers for paratransit users**

Each city has its own set of paratransit services and transportation subsidies, each with its own eligibility requirements, fare media and use regulations. This can be confusing to paratransit and taxi riders.

## **Varied taxi regulations and levels of enforcement**

Taxis are regulated by the cities; each city has its own licensing system and requirements, and enforces the regulations differently. This issue has been addressed extensively earlier in this report.

## ACTION PLAN

In order to address the service gaps described in this report, the team, in consultation with ACTIA staff, has developed a series of recommendations. They are presented in three phases, with a long-term vision for taxi service that would include the following elements:

- Taxis available for all users within a reasonable amount of time from initial request (30-45 minutes), regardless of location in the county or vehicle type needs.
- Subsidy programs for taxi service based on income, age or disability.
- Unified fare payment mechanism, for taxis, paratransit, and other transportation subsidy programs, that can be integrated with fixed-route payment mechanisms.

One of the key impediments to achieving these goals is that accessible vehicles reportedly cannot be cost-effectively operated by the taxi companies due to the current pricing structure. Trips for non-ambulatory and other passengers with disabilities take longer than trips of similar distance for other riders because of extra boarding and deboarding times. Since this time is not compensated, drivers reportedly avoid leasing accessible vehicles, which in turn results in the companies not receiving sufficient return on the cost of the vehicle. Added to this, the cost of purchasing accessible taxis is considerably greater than regular sedans.

Veterans and Friendly, the two largest taxi companies, and possibly others, have affiliated companies that provide accessible van service on a subscription basis and often contract to paratransit providers. These vans are licensed by the PUC (a less expensive alternative due to lower insurance requirements), typically have employee drivers, and are not metered. Creating a guaranteed income for accessible service through agency contracts may be an important way of enabling taxi companies to purchase accessible taxis that will also be available on the open market.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following steps are recommended to achieve the project goals:

- Create a regional taxi ordinance to require/encourage the purchase of accessible taxis that can be incorporated in each jurisdiction's local taxi ordinance
- Develop incentives for taxi companies and drivers to operate accessible taxis
- Establish a countywide taxi scrip program that will benefit low-income residents who are elderly or have a disability

### Phase One

The main goals of Phase One are to:

- Expand the number of accessible taxis available in Alameda County
- Ensure that accessible vehicles are well-utilized and available when needed by a person with a disability to the extent that capacity allows
- Lower financial barriers to taxi usage by low-income County residents

In order to accomplish these objectives, the following actions are recommended:

### **Create Accessible Taxi Ordinance**

Since almost all jurisdictions in the County have taxi ordinances, rather than attempting to gain their consensus on a countywide ordinance, it would be politically more feasible to propose a clause requiring the inclusion of accessible taxis that can be incorporated in existing taxi ordinances. Appendix C provides proposed language that could be vetted by key stakeholders in each community.

While a standard ordinance would be the simplest approach, the variation in fleet sizes in each city suggests that the language will need to be customized by jurisdiction. For example, requiring the purchase of an accessible vehicle in a city that only has three taxis would not be realistic. On the other hand, for cities such as Oakland and Berkeley where permits are at a premium and there are large numbers of taxis, requiring only one accessible taxi per fleet would fail to meet the project goals. For this reason, we recommend that the requirement for accessible vehicles be tied to the number of vehicles in each fleet. For example, for large taxi companies, all new purchases of vehicles should be accessible sedans until a ratio of one accessible vehicle for every 15 vehicles is achieved. For those cities with small or no fleets, taxi companies will be required to enter into a sub-contracting arrangement with larger companies to ensure that a wheelchair user will be guaranteed a response time of no more than 45 minutes from time of request to the arrival of an accessible vehicle.

In all instances, taxi companies should be required to conduct driver training that addresses issues such as nondiscrimination and the requirement to allow service animals to ride. It should also be pointed out that this recommendation is largely intended to address the needs of wheelchair users. In order to address the full range of people with disabilities, ACTIA and its working groups should consider steps that will need to be taken to address the needs of those who do not need accessible vehicles but whose disabilities necessitate other accommodations in order to use taxis. For example, those with visual impairments may not be aware of the arrival of a taxi or may resist traveling by taxis for fear of being cheated on the fare or the route driven. Similarly some taxi drivers pass up riders who are accompanied by a service animal. Others who are able to transfer from their wheelchair may also be hesitant to use taxis for fear of being charged a premium fare for excess baggage. These and other issues should be addressed simultaneous with the broader goals of expanding accessible taxi options.

Following are the steps that should be adopted to increase the number of accessible taxis:

- Present draft ordinance language to the Taxi Sub-Committee and other relevant ACTIA stakeholders.
- Incorporate comments and distribute to City staff at each of the cities throughout the County.
- Hold two meetings at the ACTIA office (to ensure wide participation) of City staff in order to solicit input and strategize about how to gain inclusion of the clauses in the City's taxi ordinance.
- Conduct follow-up phone calls or in-person meetings to ensure that the language can be readily customized for each city without losing the regional intent of the clause, which would create a broad pool of accessible taxis throughout the County.
- Once a critical mass of cities have adopted the ordinance language, conduct a media campaign to ensure widespread awareness of the requirements.
- Implement a monitoring system to determine progress in acquisition of accessible vehicles by taxi companies.

<b>Estimated Cost:</b> <b>\$10,000 for initial administrative costs and outreach to the cities, \$5,000 annually to monitor compliance with the requirements.</b>
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### **Create Incentives for Taxi Companies and Drivers to Operate Accessible Vehicles**

Expanding the number of accessible taxis is only the first step to ensuring that those who need these vehicles will be able to rely on their availability. In Chicago, one year after the city spent a million dollars to assist in the purchase of accessible taxis, the majority of these vehicles had not transported even one wheelchair user.

Besides the mandates cited in the recommended ordinance language, taxi companies and drivers should also be encouraged through the use of incentives to operate these vehicles. Incentives should address issues that may create resistance to driving these vehicles, whether real or perceived. These issues include greater time and effort required to board riders with disabilities, shorter trips, less tips, and the possibility of traveling with a service animal. Based on the experience of other cities that have addressed these issues, we recommend the following actions be taken.

- Convene a meeting with representatives of the large taxi companies to discuss a pilot project that will incorporate premiums to be paid to drivers and also incentives for these companies to utilize the accessible vehicles that have been purchased under the local ordinance mandates.
- Establish a working group (possibly including members of the taxi sub-committee, city and industry representatives) that will determine which incentives are most likely to be effective in Alameda County. This could include phone interviews with drivers from some of the leading companies to solicit their input. Choices could include establishing a mechanism for reimbursing drivers \$3 - \$5 above the meter

rate for trips to people with disabilities or building this premium into the scrip program that will be described below. Incentives that are directed at the companies themselves could include possible reductions on the franchise fees paid to the cities or facilitating greater linkage with the ADA paratransit programs in order to guarantee vehicle utilization. Providing a \$25 guaranteed reimbursement for all trips up to ten miles has been suggested by the taxi companies, but this appears to be higher than industry standards.

- Develop the preferred incentive mechanism to be tested as part of this pilot project. Ideally this will be fully fleshed out before additional accessible taxis are brought into service, but the working group could decide to test the incentives with the existing accessible vehicles that were recently purchased by Friendly Cab. It will be important to establish baseline data for usage of these vehicles by people with disabilities before the incentive program is implemented.
- Expand the use of incentives beyond the initial pilot test and closely monitor the results. Performance could be measured by the amount of usage by people with disabilities (as reflected in amount of premiums disbursed) and by the length of time for a vehicle to arrive for these trips compared to expected response times for the general public.

**Estimated Cost:** \$5,000 administrative costs, Driver stipends \$6K - \$12K (Assumptions: 200 to 400 trips/month, six month pilot), Franchise deduction for companies in \$5K - \$10K range, \$5K post pilot evaluation

### **Establish a Subsidized Taxi Scrip Program**

In Phase One of this Action Plan, the taxi scrip program described in the following pages should be refined and reviewed by the Taxi Sub-Committee. Sufficient time should be available to complete this task before the passage of the previously mentioned ordinances in the majority of cities would be accomplished.

A simple model is proposed in which city-based program registrants will receive a limited number of discounted vouchers that can be used with designated taxi companies, each of which will commit to making accessible vehicles available upon request. In the first phase of the program, ACTIA will provide the financial incentives previously described to ensure that companies and drivers will be willing to operate accessible vehicles.

Following is the proposed model that can be modified by the Taxi Sub-Committee:

- Measure B participants who meet specified income requirements can register for the program
- Scrip can be purchased either via mail or through the offices of the Program Manager in each participating city
- Taxi scrip booklets of \$10 value can be purchased for \$5

- Participants may purchase up to \$60 in scrip per month
- All participants will be provided a list of participating taxi companies and their contact information, and they will call the companies directly to reserve their trip
- At the end of the trip, participants provide taxi scrip instead of money to pay their fare
- Taxi drivers will redeem the scrip either through their companies or through a yet to be determined alternative mechanism

### **Program Administration**

- In order to address service gaps related to geographic inequities, ACTIA should serve in an administrative role with county-wide oversight. There are two possible approaches that could be adopted. Either ACTIA could contract with one entity that will serve as a broker - receiving calls and assigning them to the appropriate taxi company – while holding separate contracts with a small number of individual taxi companies that will provide the service. Alternatively, as described in the model above, ACTIA could hold contracts or agreements with multiple providers and the consumers can choose their preferred taxi company.
- As program administrator, ACTIA (or an entity under contract to ACTIA) will also be responsible for driver education and for monitoring the quality of service provided.
- Program participants will have a single telephone number to call, and will be referred to a taxi company in their area.
- Contracts should initially be entered into with those taxi companies that hold licenses in multiple cities, since this will partially address the barriers associated with inter-jurisdictional travel.

### **Incentives for Providing Accessible Service**

Besides the incentives to the drivers and taxi companies already mentioned, other issues should be considered when structuring the reimbursement mechanism for this program:

- Guaranteeing a market to make it financially viable for the taxi companies to participate
- Determining additional coverage required for added vehicle capital, operating, and maintenance costs
- Developing a mechanism to cover the costs paid by the driver to the taxi company for redeeming vouchers

In order to address some of these concerns, steps can be taken such as:

- Contracting with companies that are already using accessible vehicles for other contracts
- Guaranteeing a fixed overall revenue with additional reimbursement for each trip

- Allowing drivers to redeem their coupons at designated gas stations or other locations without having to go through the taxi company.

## Funding

In the initial phase of this pilot program funding will be largely derived from county-wide gap funds. However, cities that wish to expand the availability of taxi coupons for their registrants can allocate a portion of their Measure B funding for this purpose. Measure B funding may also be used to create a revolving loan fund to assist companies in the purchase of accessible vehicles.

Since a relatively high portion of the riders may well be low-income, MTC's Lifeline funding should be explored as one of the potential funding sources. This will require solicitation of input from organizations representing low-income individuals consistent with the recently completed Lifeline guidelines.

If AC Transit/ BART should choose to become involved in this pilot program, additional funding may be available through the New Freedom Program that has received relatively generous funding under the new SAFETEA-LU that was recently passed. This funding is intended for programs that exceed the requirements under the ADA, but is generally targeted towards transit agencies. In addition, FTA Section 5310 funding may be used to purchase accessible vehicles for this program, although the lag time between the application for funds and the actual vehicle delivery makes this option less desirable in the short term.

## Other Applications of the Scrip Program

In order to encourage both older adults and people with disabilities who are ADA-eligible to enroll in a travel training program, a Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) benefit should be made available using the scrip program. Under this program, all travel training participants will be provided a limited amount of taxi scrip in the event that a bus/train is unavailable for their return trip.

<b>Estimated Costs: Staff time for refinement of Scrip Program model: \$5,000</b>
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## Phase Two Implementation

Once the scrip program has been refined and is ready for implementation, ACTIA staff will need to develop informational materials explaining how the program works, and design and print the vouchers that will be redeemed by the taxi companies. In addition, agreements with participating taxi companies will need to be signed before program implementation. These should address issues such as driver training, drug and alcohol testing, and insurance. ACTIA may also wish to work with the City of Oakland to develop medallion incentives due to pent-up demand and value of medallions

The taxi scrip program should be implemented gradually, possibly starting in those areas of the county that do not have same day paratransit service or that have severe restrictions on same day service (such as income, trip caps) – this poses a particular challenge due to the location of taxi companies with multiple-city licenses primarily in the northern sector of the county. Further exploration with East County’s taxi pilot proposal may result in those cities being suitable candidates for initiation of the taxi scrip program. Other factors that will need to be addressed before final implementation of the taxi scrip program include:

- Determining the income threshold for scrip eligibility
- Establishing the level of trip limits for participants
- Allowing cities to create their own vouchers in order to maintain separate identities under county-wide umbrella
- Considering one year expiration dates on all vouchers
- Developing performance standards to measure the success of the pilot program – these should focus on the increased ability of low-income residents to obtain same day service.

**Estimated Annual Costs: \$411,000, based on the following assumptions:**

Pilot Program Term: One Year

Number of Low-Income Participants: 1,000

Voucher Limit: Up to \$60 per month face value (\$30 cost to project)

Percentage of Vouchers redeemed: 80%

Discounted Rate: 50%

Average trip length: 8 miles

Number of trips: 13, 585

Premiums offered to drivers: \$5 per trip on accessible vehicle

Incentives offered to Operators: Not included in this calculation

Administrative Costs: \$40,000

Printing/Communication Costs: \$15,000

## Phase Three Implementation

In the final phase, the focus would be on implementing the required technological improvements to achieve the goal of an integrated user-friendly taxi system. Following are the steps that should be adopted:

**A) Conduct a pilot study of the use of electronic fare media.** The two largest taxi operators in the County have credit/debit card payment capabilities in all their vehicles. ACTIA should work with these companies to identify what barriers could exist to using the cards as part of the Measure B programs, and how trip reimbursement should occur in such a way as to ensure that drivers are paid expeditiously, and to prevent fraud. Use of the debit/credit payment system should also allow for more reliable information on trip patterns and actual service costs.

**B) Make a final determination of the most appropriate technology for Phase 3 implementation, based on a needs assessment that includes an evaluation of the pilot study findings.** Two technological possibilities that should be considered include use of a debit/credit card system (such as the system being developed in San Francisco), and expansion of the TransLink system. While both of these are extremely expensive options (likely on the order of millions of dollars), expansion of TransLink to include all Alameda County taxis and transportation subsidy programs would likely be more expensive and take longer to implement than a debit/credit card system. However the end product would create maximum flexibility for program participants, and possibly encourage greater use of fixed-route alternatives. According to a TransLink representative, the cost of a smart-card reader unit for installation in each taxicab would exceed \$1,000. In addition, software development could exceed a million dollars. Transit agencies would also be reluctant to expand the program for a number of years, pending implementation of the program on participating fixed-route transit systems.

**C) Work with either MTC or San Francisco Muni to identify the scope of services required for the development of the preferred technology.** Conduct the solicitation process to hire the appropriate vendor to assist in this process. Actual implementation of this project could take three to five years, based on the experience of the parallel programs at the other two agencies.

## Conclusion

In order to ensure the successful implementation of these recommendations, it is important that all parties involved, including paratransit providers and users, taxi companies and PUC-licensed accessible vehicle providers, and medical providers, understand the ultimate program goals and are actively involved in the process of achieving these goals.

## Appendix A:

### Measure B Taxi Programs in Alameda County: Service Characteristics, Fares and Eligibility

#### City of Alameda

Type of Service	Service Available? (Y/N)	Same Day? (Y/N)	Wheelchair Accessible? (Y/N)	Days of Service	Hours of Service	Area Served	Fares
Van/ Sedan	N	N	N				
Taxi*	Y	Y	Y	7 days/ week	flexible	City of Alameda	
Shuttle	N	N	N				
Group Trips	Y	N	Y	scheduled in advance	scheduled in advance		
Other:							

\*Taxi service currently limited to Bay Farm Island residents. City of Alameda is currently developing a more extensive taxi program that will provide service to other City of Alameda residence.

Eligibility Requirements: Per Access Alameda, residents who are ADA certified

#### City of Albany

Type of Service	Service Available? (Y/N)	Same Day? (Y/N)	Wheelchair Accessible? (Y/N)	Days of Service	Hours of Service	Area Served	Fares
Van/ Sedan	Y	N	Y	Wed. & Thurs.	2-3/ day	Albany	\$2.00
Taxi	Y	Y	Y	7	24/day	Bay Area	2.40/ mile
Shuttle	N						
Group Trips	Y	N	Y	2 per month	8:00am-6:00pm	Northern Ca.	Varies
Other:	Y	N	Y	7	5am-12 midnight	Albany	\$3.00

Eligibility Requirements: Taxi and Van/Sedan program - ADA certification or medical form or seniors awaiting ADA certification, Group trips for seniors and disabled (not specified).

### City of Berkeley

Type of Service	Service Available? (Y/N)	Same Day? (Y/N)	Wheelchair Accessible? (Y/N)	Days of Service	Hours of Service	Area Served	Fares
Van/ Sedan	Y	N	Y	up to 7	6:00 to 24:00	Not to Marin	\$25.00
Taxi	Y	Y	Y	7	24 hrs.	50 miles	varies
Shuttle	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Group Trips	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other:	Y (Easy Does It)	Y	Y	7	7am to 12 pm	w/i one mile of Berkeley City Limit	\$12.00

Eligibility Requirements: Residents of Berkeley with income not more than 30% of the Area Median Income and 70 or older, or ADA-certified.

### City of Oakland

Type of Service	Service Available? (Y/N)	Same Day? (Y/N)	Wheelchair Accessible? (Y/N)	Days of Service	Hours of Service	Area Served	Fares
Van/ Sedan	Y	Y	Y	7	24	Oakland/ Piedmont	\$3.00 for up to 10 miles
Taxi	Y	Y	Y	7	24	Oakland/ Piedmont	\$3.00 for \$10.00 of taxi scrip
Shuttle	Y	Y	Y	5	4	Oakland	Free
Group Trips	Y	N	Y			Oakland/ Piedmont	\$1.00 each way
Other:							

Eligibility Requirements: Residents of Oakland and Piedmont who are unable to use public transportation and age 70 years and older, or 18 years and older with a mobility disability. Group trips open to seniors (age and mobility not specified).

**City of Emeryville**

Type of Service	Service Available? (Y/N)	Same Day? (Y/N)	Wheelchair Accessible? (Y/N)	Days of Service	Hours of Service	Area Served	Fares
Van/ Sedan	Y	N	Y	M-F	9-4	Within 10 mi. of Emeryville	5 vouchers
Taxi	Y	Y	Y	Mon-Sun	24	Emeryville, Oakland, Berkeley	Depends on trip distance
Shuttle							
Group Trips	Y	N	N	Mon-Fi	9-4		
Other:							

Eligibility Requirements: Residents age 62 and older or residents certified as ADA-eligible who are also registered with the City of Emeryville

## Appendix B: Comparison of Taxi Ordinances in Alameda County Cities

	Alameda Co.	Alameda	Albany	Berkeley	Emeryville	Oakland	San Leandro	Hayward	Fremont	Newark	Union City	Pleasanton	Dublin	Livermore
Definition of terms	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■		■	■
<b>Owner/Business Permits</b>														
Owner Permit Required	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Term/validity		■	■	■	■	■		■	■		■	■		■
Fee	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■	■
Application Requirements	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■		■	■
Investigation for issuance of permit	■							■			■	■		
Grounds for Denial	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	
Grounds for Revocation/Suspension	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Temporary Permit		■	■			■								
Transferability	■		■	■	■			■				■		■
Posting in vehicle	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■		■	
Change of Address				■	■	■								■
Appeals	■				■			■	■	■	■	■		■
<b>Vehicle Permits</b>														
Vehicle Permit Required				■		■								
Term/validity				■	■	■								
Fee				■		■								
Application Requirements				■		■								
Grounds for Denial				■										
Grounds for Revocation/Suspension				■		■								
Temporary Permit														
Transferability				■		■								
Posting in vehicle				■		■								
Substitution of Vehicles	■	■	■		■	■		■	■					
Change of Address				■		■								
<b>Driver Permits</b>														
Driver Permit Required	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Fees	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Term/validity	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■
Application Requirements	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Investigation/issuance of permit	■										■	■		■
Minimum Driver Age	21	21		21	18		21	21	18				18	18
Grounds for Denial	■	■		■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Grounds for Revocation/Suspension	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Temporary Permit (purpose-other info)			■			■		■		■	■	■		
Term of Temp permit (# days)			30			90		30		90	90	30		
Transferability	■	■		■				■						

	Alameda Co.	Alameda	Albany	Berkeley	Emeryville	Oakland	San Leandro	Hayward	Fremont	Newark	Union City	Pleasanton	Dublin	Livermore
Posting in vehicle		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■
Change of Address			■	■	■	■		■					■	
Appeals	■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■	■			■
<b>Permits: City Wide Regulations</b>														
Limitation on number of permits in jurisdiction				■	■	■							■	
Limitation on number of permits per owner				■		■								
Permit waiting list (veh/owner permit)				■										
<b>Insurance</b>														
Amounts defined	■						■		■				■	■
Insurance provider		■	■	■	■	■						■	■	■
Insurance for (ie. Veh, owner, driver)		■	■	■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■	■
<b>Vehicle Maintenance</b>														
Inspection: at permit issuance		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■			■
Inspection: on street				■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■		■
External Vehicle Markings (incl. Color scheme, insignia, business identification, etc)		■	■	■	■	■		■	■		■	■		■
Illumination of passenger compartment			■	■	■							■		
Operation while unsafe/unsanitary	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■
Accessible signage/posting				■										
Safety shields between driver and passenger compartment						■								
<b>Service</b>														
Exclusive Ride		■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■
Taxis from other jurisdictions	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■
Taxis leaving jurisdiction	■			■										
Direct Route			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■
Passengers only in Passenger Compartment				■										
Baggage (w/ or w/o driver assistance)				■				■						
Daily operation of veh.		■		■		■				■	■			■
Safe boarding & alighting				■										
Overloading vehicles		■								■	■	■		■
<b>Rates &amp; Payment</b>														
Max/min set by jurisdiction				■		■		■	■			■		■
Reporting	■	■	■		■			■	■	■	■		■	■
Posting of Rates	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■		■	■	■	■
Scrip Payment			■	■		■								

	Alameda Co.	Alameda	Albany	Berkeley	Emeryville	Oakland	San Leandro	Hayward	Fremont	Newark	Union City	Pleasanton	Dublin	Livermore
Over-charging	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Non-payment by passenger			■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Deduction for time veh.disabled				■										
Receipt of payment when req.	■	■	■	■		■				■	■	■	■	■
<b>Taximeter</b>										■	■			
Inspection	■			■	■	■	■	■	■			■	■	■
Flag use			■	■	■	■		■	■			■		■
Manipulation of taximeter				■										■
<b>Driver Conduct</b>														
Misrepresentation		■	■	■						■	■	■		
Interference with passengers seeking transportation				■										
Obstruction of Public ROW		■	■	■	■	■		■		■	■			■
Lost Property				■										
Denial of Service				■		■		■	■	■	■			■
Drug Testing				■		■		■	■			■		■
Service Animals				■										
Special Training/demonstrate specific knowledge				■		■		■	■					
<b>Record Keeping</b>														
Waybills-info req'd	■			■		■		■	■			■		■
Waybills-how long to keep them	■			■		■						■		■
Waybills-who/when can examine them	■			■		■						■		■
Vehicles				■		■			■					
Employees				■		■			■					
<b>Taxi Stands</b>														
Joint Use		■		■	■	■				■	■			
Use regulation		■		■		■		■		■	■			■
Emergency stands				■										
application for taxi stand						■		■		■	■			■

## Appendix C: Sample Accessible Taxi Ordinance

"An ordinance requiring taxicab providers doing business in the City of XXXXX to provide wheelchair accessible vehicles to service those needing such transportation at a rate no higher than that charged non-disabled passengers. Financial incentives may be negotiated with taxi companies for wheelchair trips. Alternately, taxi companies may enter into an arrangement with another company to meet response time requirements from riders who require an accessible vehicle.

"Whereas, there are a number of taxi cab companies providing transportation services to the general public within the City of XXXXX; and

"Whereas, there are a number of residents with disabilities in the City of XXXXX who require accessible transportation including, but not limited to vehicles capable of transporting individuals in wheelchairs, including motorized wheelchairs and scooters.

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF XXXXX, AND IT IS HEREBY ENACTED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAME, as follows:

"Section 1. All taxicab companies providing transportation within the City of XXXXX shall provide vehicles readily accessible to and useable by individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use wheelchairs and scooters at a rate no higher than that charged non-disabled passengers, at the rate of at least one accessible vehicle for every fifteen vehicles in the company's fleet. All vehicles shall comply with the standards required under the Americans with Disabilities Act. For those companies that are not able to meet this requirement, arrangements may be made with another company to ensure that individuals who call to request an accessible ride will be transported in an accessible vehicle within forty-five minutes of their initial request.

"Section 2. All vehicles accessible by individuals with disabilities that are clearly marked as such and are in the service of providing transportation to a person with a disability may utilize those parking spaces reserved for disabled individuals.

"Section 3. Each taxi cab company operating within the City of XXXXX shall provide a level of service, including but not limited to, response time and fee, which is comparable to the level of services provided to individuals without disabilities such taxi cab service. Financial incentives may be negotiated with taxi companies for wheelchair trips.

"Section 4. Any person seeking to operate a vehicle for hire as a driver shall set forth a certificate that within the previous 12 months the driver has successfully completed a sensitivity training course approved by the Director of XXXXX for drivers who work with seniors and/or persons with disabilities. In the event the Director of XXXXX has not approved any sensitivity training course by January 1 of any year, that subparagraph shall not apply."

"Section 5. The provisions of this ordinance shall be enforced by the YYYYYY or his/her designee. It shall be the duty of the YYYYYY to develop a complaint procedure, keep a

record of all such complaints and to investigate any and all complaints. The YYYYYY will make a determination of said complaint and issue a written report and order outlining his/her findings and corrective measures, if any to be taken by the taxi cab company. Said report and order shall be mailed to the subject taxicab company and complainant within thirty (30) days of receipt of the complaint.

“Section 6. Any taxicab company which is unable to comply with the requirements with this ordinance due to financial hardship may file a request for a one (1) year waiver from the ZZZZZ. The YYYYY will review the waiver request at its next scheduled meeting, but in no case later than forty-five (45) days from the date of the written request of a waiver, unless the aggrieved party waives this time requirement in writing. The Commission may vote to grant or deny the waiver.

“Section 7. Any person(s) aggrieved by a determination of the YYYYYY or his/her designee may file with the YYYYYY or his/her designee a written request for a hearing within fifteen (15) days after the date of issuance of the YYYYYY’s determination. The written request for a hearing shall be filed on a form that shall be provided by the YYYYYY or designee and shall be signed by the person so aggrieved. The YYYYYY or designee shall fix a time for hearing of the alleged violations before the XXXXX Commission, said hearing to be held at the next scheduled XXXXX Commission meeting, but in no case later than forty-five (45) days from the date of the written request for a hearing, unless the aggrieved party waives this time requirement in writing. The XXXXX Commission shall have all powers enumerated in Section 4-301.8 to address any violations of this Ordinance.

“Section 8. Delegation. Appropriate City officials are authorized and directed to take such actions as are necessary to effectuate this ordinance.

“Section 9. Severability. If any provision, sentence, clause, section, or part of this ordinance or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is for any reason found to be unconstitutional, illegal or invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality, illegality or invalidity shall not affect or impair any of the remaining provisions, sentences, clauses, sections or parts of this ordinance. It is hereby declared as the intent of the Council of the City of XXXXX that this ordinance would have been adopted had such unconstitutional, illegal or invalid provision, sentence, clause, section or part not been included herein.

“Section 10. Repealer. All ordinances or part of ordinances in conflict herewith be and the same are hereby repealed.”