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CONTACT:

Elisa Sledzinska

312.744.1973

Elisa.Sledzinska@cityofchicago.org

CHICAGO TAXICAB DRIVERS AWARDED WITH FREE MEDALLION FOR EXEMPLARY SERVICE TO THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

The Taxicab Driver Excellence Award rewards taxicab chauffeurs for outstanding service and offers financial freedom; Ride Smart Chicago public awareness campaign to inform riders

CHICAGO – Today, the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), along with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), presented the Taxicab Driver Excellence Award to 10 local taxicab drivers in recognition of their premier customer service and dedication to riders with disabilities. The recipients each also received a free taxicab medallion license. The award highlights the City’s effort to expand access to Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) taxicabs and serves as an incentive for taxicabs drivers to lease WAV taxicabs to serve people with disabilities. During the past decade, Chicago has more than quintupled the number of WAV taxicabs and currently more than 500 taxicabs are designated as wheelchair accessible.

"In order for us to accomplish our mission of becoming the most accessible city in the country, it is vital for us to ensure that all aspects of city life—including transportation—can be utilized by individuals with disabilities," said Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "I congratulate and commend each and every one of taxicab drivers who have demonstrated their commitment to advancing this important mission, and encourage others to follow after their example."

"The award acknowledges the dedication to service of WAV taxicabs chauffeurs while also giving them the opportunity to become small business owners," said BACP Commissioner Kenneth J. Meyer. "I’m proud to honor WAV taxicabs chauffeurs who provide a necessary service to our Chicago residents who rely on wheelchair accessible taxicabs."

"Our City's WAV drivers that go above and beyond play a key role in providing this important accessible transportation option for Chicagoans with disabilities. We applaud this year's awardees for their dedication and commitment in providing exemplary services," said MOPD Commissioner Rachel Arfa.

This year marks a decade of presenting the Taxicab Driver Excellence Award. The award is designed to reward the individuals that drive the growth of Chicago’s accessibility program. For the recipients, a free taxicab medallion license symbolizes independence and freedom from lease payments, allowing taxicabs chauffeurs to transition from lease cab driver to small business owner. The recipients must place the awarded medallion license onto a wheelchair accessible vehicle for ten years. Medallion owners are also eligible for \$25,000 towards the expense of converting a minivan into a WAV taxicab and \$9,000 annually towards the maintenance and repair expenses associated with a WAV taxicab.

These 10 taxicab chauffeurs responded to and completed over 3,500 WAV trips in 2020 and over 2,800 WAV trips in 2021 requested through the Centralized WAV Taxicab Dispatch Service.

This year's Taxicab Driver Excellence Award recipients are:

- Abdirahman J. Elmi, Taxicab chauffeur for 15 years
- Andre T. Moore, Taxicab chauffeur for 6 years
- Bakri K. Mohamed, Taxicab chauffeur for 25 years
- Charles G. Martin, Taxicab chauffeur for 8 years
- Julius J. Osunde, Taxicab chauffeur for 24 years
- Michael E. Peavy, Taxicab chauffeur for 10 years
- Olanrewaju O. Olorunfunmi, Taxicab chauffeur for 27 years
- Richard A. Essien, Taxicab chauffeur for 13 years
- Salah J. Askar, Taxicab chauffeur for 40 years
- Taabit G. Hersi, Taxicab chauffeur for 14 years

The awards ceremony took place on Wednesday, November 2nd, 2022, at the Central West Community Center, located at 2102 W. Ogden Avenue. The recipients are chosen by the Taxicab Driver Excellence Award Committee, made up of BACP, MOPD, and representatives from Shirley Ryan Ability Lab, Equip for Equality, the Selfhelp Home, Gridiron Alliance, and LiveEquipd. The committee reviews nominations by the public and carefully considers each of them before selecting a recipient of the award.

Under Mayor Lightfoot's leadership, the City remains committed to increasing transportation access for people with disabilities. Chicago remains one of the few cities in the country in which passengers using a wheelchair can request a WAV taxicab or a WAV ride-hail. Chicago was one of the first cities to create a Centralized Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Taxicab Dispatch Service. The Centralized WAV Taxicab Dispatch Service allows the public to contact one phone number or use a single smart phone app to request a WAV taxicab.

Chicago residents and visitors can request a WAV taxicab ride by calling 1-888-WAV-CABS (1-888-928-2227) or by downloading the CURB app. Passengers will also be able to make in-app electronic payments for their rides via the CURB app. For more information, including steps on how to download the CURB app, visit [GoCurb.com](https://www.GoCurb.com).

BACP ensures Chicago's public vehicles are safe, reliable and provide residents and visitors a positive transportation experience. As a resource for consumers, BACP's comprehensive [Ride Smart Chicago](#) public awareness campaign was rebranded to provide Chicagoans with simplified tips and resources most relevant to public vehicle passengers. The Ride Smart Chicago campaign provides safety and consumer awareness information for passengers of taxicabs, ride-hail, and other public passenger vehicles. The campaign helps BACP carry out its mission to ensure a safe and vibrant marketplace for consumers. Visit [Chicago.gov/RideSmart](https://www.Chicago.gov/RideSmart) for tips, including how to spot licensed versus unlicensed taxicabs.

BACP oversees the licensing of Chicago's public chauffeurs and public vehicles including taxicabs, transportation network providers, liveries, charter and site seeing buses, ambulances, water taxicabs and tour boats. Learn more about BACP's Public Vehicle Operations by visiting [Chicago.gov/PublicVehicles](https://www.Chicago.gov/PublicVehicles).

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