



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CITY INTRODUCES NEW CENTRALIZED DISPATCH CONTRACT FOR WHEELCHAIR
ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE TAXICABS**

*New operator plans to improve the level of service to disability community with a
technologically savvy, cost efficient plan of operation*

Today, Mayor Emanuel and The Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) introduced a new Centralized Dispatch operator for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Taxicabs to the City Council with plans for the chosen operator — Open Doors Organization — to be operational by the end of summer.

“With our new taxi ordinance in place, we’ve doubled the number of WAVs in the taxicab fleet operating in the City. This proposal for a new, 21st century WAV dispatch system is the next step to improving the quality of service by accessible taxis for Chicagoans,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

Currently, the Centralized Dispatch, operated by Flash Cab, provides a central telephone number for dispatch of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) taxicabs in Chicago in which all cab companies are mandated to participate. The City sought a new vendor to provide improved communications with the public, timely response for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle taxicab dispatch, an understanding of the needs of the disability community, and a solution that will increase participation by cabdrivers and people with disabilities. This service provides the City of Chicago with a demand response system that is imperative to serving the disability community.

The City issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new Centralized Dispatch operator in November 2012. An Evaluation Committee selected Open Doors Organization because of its 21st century approach to taxicab dispatch.

“Open Doors Organization combines the understanding of the problems faced by the disability community in obtaining a cab, and will be working with Driven Solutions, LLC to move taxi dispatch into the modern world with its SnagTechnology system, which takes full advantage of GPS in today’s taxicabs” said BACP Commissioner Rosemary Krimbel.

Open Doors Organization (ODO) is a disability advocacy 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization based in Chicago, which works in the travel and tourism industry to promote better accessibility for travelers with disabilities. Open Doors Organization will sub-contract to Chicago-based technology development company, Driven Solutions, LLC, to provide additional technological innovation necessary to create a progressive Dispatch system to supplement its operation of the traditional centralized dispatch phone system with which Chicagoans with disabilities are already familiar.

“The Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities looks forward to working with the new vendor to ensure that people with disabilities have access to high quality and reliable taxi service,” said Karen Tamley, Commissioner of MOPD

Experienced dispatch consultant and long-time cab company executive, Shoib Hasan, president and CEO of Globe Taxi Association, will support Open Doors Organization, along with Driven Solutions through the transition from the current operator.

In addition to serving the disability community, the new Centralized Dispatch generates revenue for the City. Each medallion licensee will pay \$215 per month to subscribe to the Centralized Dispatch service, a decrease from the \$275 per month they now pay to the current operator. The additional equipment costs that WAVs now must incur will be substantially reduced, making WAVs more economical for the taxicab industry to place into service. Previously, the City received no revenue from the Centralized Dispatch, but incurred operational costs of enforcement to assure compliance. Under the new contract, ODO will pay 5 percent of its gross revenue earned from operation of the CD to the City of Chicago.

Mayor Emanuel’s commitment to increase the number of WAVs on the street will also continue to drive down the cost of dispatching WAVs as more and more WAVs enter the taxicab fleet. To date, the number of WAVs has doubled under the new taxi ordinance, with more WAVs scheduled to enter the fleet in 2013.

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