

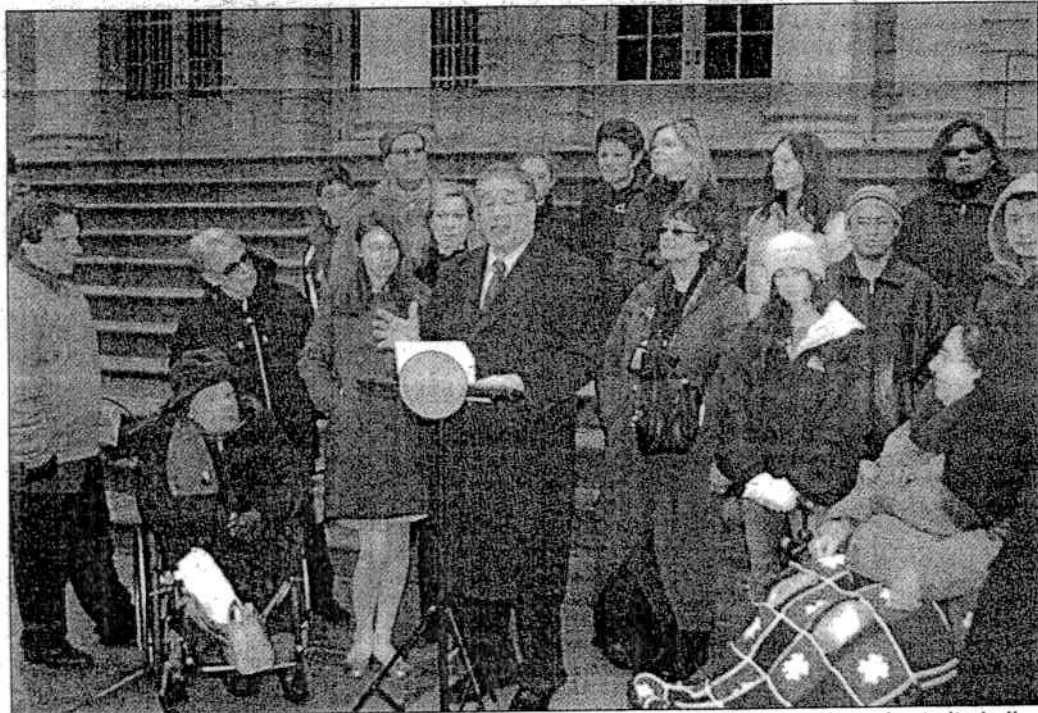
AWARD WINNING New York Able

THE NEWSPAPER *POSITIVELY* FOR, BY & ABOUT THE DISABLED



TAXI TECHNOLOGY

TLC's Planned Improvements Exclude Deaf Riders



Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer speaks about new technology in taxis at city hall.

Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer recently held a press conference on the steps of City Hall in Manhattan, urging the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) to stop turning its back on people with disabilities as it moves forward with plans to install new technology enhance-

ment systems in all of the city's 13,000 taxicabs.

Stringer was joined by Janice Shacter, executive director of the Deafness Research Foundation, and a number of New Yorkers with disabilities and advocates. Several people in attendance gave oral testimony, including Shacter, her daughter Arielle Schacter and Seena

Kraus, both age 12 with hearing loss.

TLC is installing personal information monitors in the back of its taxis, which are not accessible for people with hearing loss. The group urged the TLC to immediately install induction loop systems in all taxicabs so that people with hearing

Continued on page 26

IN THIS ISSUE

U.N. Surveys the World
Findings Reveal
Wide Variations

PAGE 3

CCD Shares Priorities
Students Must be
Included in NCLB

PAGE 3

Harkin Introduces Bills
Senator Advocates for
Choice and Captioning

PAGE 4

No Dogs Allowed
Judge Rules Against
Accommodation in Schools

PAGE 5

Bob Woodruff Partners
BIAA and Newsman Help
Military Families in Need

PAGE 7

Jonathan's Law
Assemblyman Introduces
Bill For Full Disclosure

PAGE 8

Sports
Veterans and
Paralympic Academy

PAGE 21

Classified Ads
Buy it, Sell it, Trade it

PAGE 27

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TAXI TECHNOLOGY

Continued from page 1

loss can more easily hear essential information from drivers and the new screens.

"The TLC and its policies are running over the basic needs of people with disabilities," said Stringer. "While the TLC brings futuristic technological advances to our cabs, they are leaving people with disabilities in the past. Taxis are a way of life for all New Yorkers and all New Yorkers should be able to benefit from these upgrades."

"No city agency should be permitted to negotiate a contract that precludes people with disabilities from participating," said Schacter, the mother of a 12-year-old girl who has hearing loss. "My daughter should be able to travel in a taxi and know that she can hear the driver so that she doesn't end up in Soho when she wanted Noho. How can she do this when the plexiglass divider between her and the driver inhibits sound, and the driver is facing for-

ward so she cannot read the driver's lips?"

Last year TLC signed a multi-million dollar contract with four vendors to implement a new technology enhancement system to the cabs that automates collection and submission of trip data, incorporates electronic message transmission capability, installs passenger information monitors in the back seat of the cab and adds equipment to enable the acceptance of credit and debit cards. With these modifications costing as much as \$7000 per cab, advocates consider the induction loop to be a relatively inexpensive addition, which would run about \$200 to \$300. It allows passengers with hearing aids equipped with a T-coil to hear the driver and utilize the new technology enhancement system that is being installed.

Stringer, other elected officials and advocacy groups have sent letters to the TLC urging them to act in the spirit

of the Americans with Disabilities Act by incorporating induction loop systems into their service improvement plans.

Many of them cite New York City as lagging behind other major municipalities, including London, where induction loops are already in place.

"Taxis should be accessible to everyone in our city, including those with hearing loss," said Edith Prentiss of the

Taxis for All Campaign and vice president of Disabled in Action. "The new passenger information monitors being installed in every yellow cab could very easily include induction loops and captioning. But the TLC chose not to include them. Why is the TLC putting all this energy and money into whiz-bang gadgets before addressing the basic needs of New Yorkers with disabilities?"

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