

March 2, 2007

Letter addressed to chairs of the:

- Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
- Capitola City Council
- Santa Cruz City Council
- Scotts Valley City Council
- Watsonville City Council

**RE: Inconsistent Taxi Regulation in Santa Cruz County**

Dear (chair of local Jurisdiction):

Over the past year the Regional Transportation Commission's (RTC) Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D TAC) conducted an evaluation of the inconsistencies of taxi regulations in Santa Cruz County. These inconsistencies decrease opportunities for seniors, individuals with disabilities and able-bodied adults to receive quality transportation service. The multiple and inconsistent taxi ordinances also drive up operating costs of local providers and create duplicative regulatory efforts by the five local jurisdictions.

Taxi ordinances with uniform fare structure, consistent standards and special attention given to the needs of the elderly and disabled (which could include wheelchair accessibility, discounts, 24-hour availability, etc.) would continue to support the use of private services to expand the network of specialized transportation services to the community. Specific issues brought to the E/D TAC's attention include: availability and operating hours of wheelchair accessible vehicles; lack of uniformity in taxi regulation among the five separate jurisdictions of countywide government (the four cities and the county); different meter rates; different discounts to seniors; and a licensing process confusing to everyone.

Cities and counties have traditionally regulated taxi service within their jurisdictions for the primary purpose of protecting the general welfare of their residents. Taxi regulations are generally contained in city/county ordinances. Typically, local governments concern themselves with vehicle safety, driver reliability, and fair business practices.

Confusion occurs when a taxi company's services are inter-jurisdictional. This very common event as drivers often pick up a fare in one jurisdiction

and deliver that fare to another city or part of the county. A single taxi ride could easily involve three different jurisdictions. Upon delivering a passenger to one city, the taxi operator may be unable to pick up a new passenger because of licensing restrictions, creating potential confusion for the customer (who may be elderly or disabled, and unable to secure other transport).

Matrices comparing the taxi regulations rates of the various jurisdictions are attached as Attachments A and B. As shown in Attachment B, fare restrictions vary among the cities (from \$1.75 to \$3.00 per mile; \$12.00 to \$40.00 per hour of wait time). No fare structure is imposed by the county. Only two jurisdictions (Santa Cruz and Capitola) mandate senior discount rates, and none mandate discounts for disabled individuals. These same two cities categorically exclude non-profit and public service transportation agents from taxi regulation, but the remainder do not address this sector in their taxi ordinances. An example of this situation would be when taxi services are used as an extension of Lift Line a non-profit or by ParaCruz specialized transportation services mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Innovative practices to encourage wheelchair accessible vehicles are compromised by being in effect in one area, but not in another. For example in Santa Cruz, taxi companies are permitted to run an unlimited number of accessible vehicles, making this a direct incentive for increasing the number of accessible taxis available to disabled residents of Santa Cruz County.

Please consider actions to taxicab ordinances that would correct the inconsistencies, minimize the confusion and benefit seniors and people with disabilities living in your jurisdiction. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Senior Transportation Planner Karena Pushnik at 831-460-3210.

Sincerely,

Tony Campos, Chair

Attachments:

Attachment A – Taxicab Regulation  
Attachment B – Commercial Taxi Rates