

Cindi Laws, Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Association of Seattle King County Remarks to Port Commission Meeting

April 26, 2016

I'd like to thank each of you Port of Seattle Commissioners for helping create a more accessible airport experience for those needing accessible ground transportation. I had pushed to allow Wheelchair Accessible Taxicabs to provide curbside access on the baggage claim level of the airport terminal.

The City of Seattle Consumer Protection Unit, which regulates taxis, approved our new vehicle decals, which clearly identify these purposeful taxis. Those decals include a wheelchair hail symbol and, to overcome widespread perception that WAT vehicles are more expensive, our WAT Association slogan "Equal Access, Equal Fare, 24/6 anywhere".

Working closely with the Airport Ground Transportation staff, we have made substantive progress. Ramps and striping has been added at two locations, and new signage indicating the wheelchair accessible taxi stands are being installed at any moment.

I am pleased that we are using the language "Special Needs". The word "handicapped" is no longer appropriate. It is imperative that WAT vans can pick up all those with Special Needs. As the Port itself defines it:

"Special Needs shall refer to passengers with a disability recognized under the Americans with Disability Act, passengers that are elderly and have health problems, passengers that are mobility impaired, or single passengers traveling with infant children and excessive possessions, including baby seat and luggage."

I am personally honored to be a member of the reconvened Airport Customer Accessibility Advisory Board and welcome making continuing improvements as you renovate and expand the airport terminal.

It is imperative that you work with members of disability organizations, including the Open Doors Organization, which works specifically on travel and tourism. The director of Open Doors is Eric Lipp, who was the guest speaker at our Accessibility Advisory meeting a few weeks ago. We must add in Hearing Loop technology, as used from Heathrow to Green Bay.

I further congratulate you all for your continuing excellence in achieving having the greenest airport. As I've noted before, we have the opportunity to make SeaTac the most accessible airport as well. Disability travel spending is \$17.8 BILLION each year. That is reason enough to pursue dramatic changes. But in a region that is so forward thinking, so innovative, we must do more than meet the minimum standards.

