

## TNC Equity Programs

### Background

Transportation network companies (TNCs) are a type of service that matches customers with drivers using personal or commercial vehicles. Uber and Lyft are two popular and well-known TNCs in the United States, although many other similar and specialized companies exist and continue to come on line. TNCs are sometimes hailed as a more efficient alternative to taxicab companies and public transit, they are also criticized for the lack of access for persons with disabilities and low-income customers. TNC vehicles are not required to be wheelchair accessible, which presents barriers to mobility for individuals with disabilities. For members of underserved communities, the dynamic pricing models of TNCs can also present challenges to affordability. In most major cities across the country, TNCs employ a strategy known as “surge pricing.” Surge pricing occurs when demand increases for the service, usually during morning and evening rush hour, during special events, or inclement weather. The price of requesting a vehicle increases 1.8 to 2.5 times the original estimated cost, according to Uber’s website. In many cases, surge pricing can differentiate depending on the location within the city; this is also according to Uber’s website. Ergo, an uptick in pricing leads to lower wait times for interested parties.

### Wheelchair Accessible TNC program

To combat inequities in ridesharing services, some cities have recommended changes in the regulatory practices concerning TNCs. In 2019, Lyft partnered with Cincinnati-based First Transit in developing an accessibility and mobility pilot program. The program, which features a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV), was unveiled in San Francisco and Los Angeles. First Transit operates a number of paratransit vehicles, and the WAV vehicles are provided by the company. Through the Lyft app, users are able to request accessible vehicles driven by certified staff. Currently, [36 states and the District of Columbia](#) offer WAV services through the Lyft app, as well as the Canadian cities of Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver. In Pennsylvania, the service is only offered in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, the latter of which is completed through SEPTA’s CCT paratransit service.

### Bike Share Equity

TNCs also provide bike sharing services in cities across the country, with focus on equity. Uber’s acquisition of dockless In January 2020, LeBron James and Lyft entered a partnership dedicated to providing young people with free year-long bike share memberships. The program, known as [LyftUp](#), provides membership for eligible 16-20 year olds through area YMCA institutions. The collaboration amongst the three entities seeks to provide students with access to job opportunities and school - all via bike share. The partnership with the YMCA organization also teaches students about the importance of bike safety, while also removing social and

economic barriers. The program began in New York City through Citi Bike, and will expand to Chicago (Divvy) and the Bay Area (Bay Wheels).

### **TNC Access to Voting**

In addition to the latter programs, Lyft has partnered with several non-profit organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, National Federation of the Blind, Student Veterans of America, the National Urban League, and the Voto Latino Foundation. Through these organizations, [Lyft provided free rides](#) to voting polls throughout the country leading up to the general election. The voting equity program is an expansion of a previous initiative undertaken in 2017. Launched in Canada, Lyft provided rides at 50% reduced cost to individuals in the capital city of Ottawa, the Greater Toronto Area, and the city Hamilton. Lyft also partnered with the United Way of Greater Toronto, which provided free rides on Election Day.

### **TNCs and Food Access**

The LyftUp Grocery Store Access Program provides healthy food access to individuals residing in a food desert. The program was spearheaded in Washington D.C. in 2019, and provided over 5,000 Lyft rides to families to grocery stores. Lyft partnered with Washington DC based nonprofit Martha's Table, which connects families to education, healthy food access, and other community organizations. Lyft and Martha's Table enrolled more than 400 families in the program, thereby providing them access to fresh and healthy food outside of their community. The success of the program in D.C. enabled further expansion to 13 other cities including Philadelphia, New York City, Toronto, and Los Angeles. The Lyft Grocery Store Access program charges individuals a \$2.50 flat fare. During the promotion of the program in D.C., participants could receive a total of 50 rides. In the city of Philadelphia, participants in the Grocery Store Access Program must be a resident of 10 Philadelphia Housing Authority properties.

### **TNCs and Healthcare**

Transportation barriers to healthcare access also exist for low-income individuals and individuals with physical impairments. Common transportation barriers to healthcare appointments include inferior infrastructure (sidewalks), poor public transit, or long travel distances, and can lead to delayed healthcare and missed appointments. In an effort to mitigate these impediments, Uber and Lyft have developed programs that support non-emergency medical transportation to healthcare appointments. In January 2020, Lyft signed a partnership deal with CommonSpirit Healthcare, a large non-profit health system operating in 21 states. Prior to this agreement, Lyft had had a 3-year partnership with healthcare provider LogistiCare. The new [Lyft Healthcare](#) program provides individuals with non-emergency transportation to healthcare appointments. Through the new system, patients are able to request a ride, or service providers can schedule one in advance. In 2019, Lyft became the first ridesharing company to provide services as an enrolled Medicaid provider. To date, Medicaid patients in

Georgia, Michigan, Tennessee, Virginia, and Missouri are eligible for the service. Concurrently, Uber launched its own non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) service.

[Uber Health](#) was launched in 2020 with the same premise as Lyft Healthcare: to provide seamless transportation services for those that are in most need. The service targets low-income and elderly populations that may not have access to Uber's mobile application, or a smartphone. Uber Health permits healthcare organizations and individual providers to request Uber's services. Through the service, healthcare providers can select designated pickup locations around larger medical campuses and directly message Uber drivers, thereby streamlining the pickup process. Providers can also message drivers pickup instructions in 44 languages. For individuals that do not own a mobile phone, the details of the ride can be shared via landline phones.

### TNCs and Job Access

Following a 2018 test run in Chicago, Uber officially launched [Uber Works](#) for temporary employees. The new service connects individuals with potential employers through third-party staffing agencies, such as TrueBlue. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Uber Works would provide temporary employment connections for events and corporate functions. Similarly, [Lyft launched a new program](#) for job seekers that provides rides to and from job interviews and job training programs. Lyft also offers free transportation to and from jobs during the first three weeks of employment. Once individuals receive their first paycheck, the free service terminates. Lyft partnered with several nonprofit organizations that specialize in improving community social welfare; organizations include the United Way, National Down Syndrome Society, Goodwill, and Upwardly Mobile. The program also capitalizes on existing partnerships with transportation agencies across the country.

In 2018, Lyft partnered with the Detroit Department of Transportation and Detroit Cab to offer \$7 credits to non-traditional commuters. Known as [NightShift](#), the on-demand service allows late-night commuters on the city's Connect 10 bus line to request Lyft rides from designated stops along the route. Riders can text a number to request a Lyft or taxi, or a wheelchair-accessible vehicle. The NightShift service is only available to customers between 11 P.M. and 5 A.M., during which time public transportation coverage is limited. The program is limited to 2,000 rides; after the 2,000 rides are exhausted, DDOT has the propensity to make recommendations to service based on NightShift.

In 2019, a similar project was commenced in Washington D.C. as a partnership between the Washington Metro and Lyft. [The After-Hours Commuter Service](#) supports late-night workers who utilize the Metro during non-traditional hours - midnight to 4 A.M. Qualified workers are eligible to receive a \$3 credit toward a shared Lyft service between their home and place of employment. The program offers up to 10 discounted rides per week in areas within Metro's service area, which straddles two states and a variety of major employment centers. Interested customers are required to apply online, and will receive a monthly pass through the Lyft app.

The program is scheduled to end in June 2020, or until the allotted \$1 million budget is expanded beyond the 1-year schedule.

### **New York City's TNC Accessibility Task Force**

In 2017, the [New York State Transportation Network Company Accessibility Task Force](#) was established to assess the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities on TNCs. The Task Force concluded five "listening sessions" in December 2018, which offered the general public the opportunity to discuss barriers to transportation they encountered. Over 150 concerns were compiled and distributed into categories; the most common concerns included ADA accessibility, safety concerns, service animals, service affordability, and the lack of transit in rural communities. Respondents represented a wide consortium of disability advocates, service providers, policy analysts, and individuals with various disabilities. In 2019, the Task Force released a comprehensive report outlining strategies for improving TNC accessibility, based on feedback from the listening sessions. In their report, the Task Force outlined several proposed "solutions" for improving TNC operations in the state. Proposals included allowing service providers to schedule rides for beneficiaries, establishing accessible vehicle targets for TNC vehicles, and requiring disability training for TNC drivers. Other pitches include the development of a legislative oversight committee, or establishing tax credits for TNC drivers to modify their vehicles.