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Vaughan ramping up accessible transportation options

Vaughan Citizen
By [Adam Martin-Robbins](#)

There's some long-awaited good news for wheelchair users who don't drive and thus rely on accessible modes of transportation to help them get around town.

The city, earlier this month, issued an accessible taxi licence to a cabbie with Concord-based Astro Taxi who has a vehicle with a rear ramp.

It's the first time such a licence has been handed out in more than a decade and a second one is expected to be issued next month, with plans for even more to be rolled out in the future, according to city officials.

Woodbridge resident Randy McNeil, who has been wheelchair-bound for almost 10 years, is pleased by the news.



Accessible taxi license

Photo/SUBMITTED

The city, on Aug. 6, issued its first accessible taxi cab license in more than a decade to an operator with Astro Taxi who drives this vehicle outfitted with a rear ramp. The city expects to issue additional licences in the near future, increasing the transportation options for wheelchair users.

He says the aging population has driven up demand for York Region's Mobility Plus service — the main provider of accessible transportation to people with disabilities — and it's become difficult to book a ride, especially on short notice.

“You can’t always schedule your rides and then get a ride because of the number of seniors populating our mobility buses now,” he said. “It’s just becoming increasingly more difficult to use the services. If you need a taxi, and you try to get one, you’re out of luck.”

Mobility Plus users typically have to book a ride at least a day before their trip.

There is a same-day service, known as Scrip Ride, for people with those who have to take a last-minute or unplanned trip, but only a limited number of vehicles are available.

Issuing accessible licences to private taxi operators gives wheelchair users greater flexibility when it comes to getting where they need to go, says Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua.

“We take pride in the excellent quality of life our residents enjoy and truly believe that an enlightened city is an inclusive city, where everyone is equally valued and appreciated,” he said. “Providing accessible taxis is part of our goal to create an accessible community by 2025 and demonstrated our commitment to moving this city forward without leaving anyone behind.”

Wheelchair accessible cabs differ from regular taxis in that they offer ramp or lift access from the passenger side or rear of the vehicle. Those operating accessible cabs must also undergo specialized training.

While Astro Taxi holds the new accessible licence, all other taxi brokerages operating in Vaughan can forward requests for an accessible cab to Astro.