Resolution 2016-05

Regarding MetroAccess

WHEREAS, all mass transit systems are required to provide an auxiliary service to disabled people in order to fill gaps in the accessibility of their fixed-route services under the Americans with Disabilities Act; and

WHEREAS, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) provides MetroAccess as its paratransit service in the Washington DC area; and

WHEREAS, in recent years the demand for these services has increased as more people are using MetroAccess; and

WHEREAS, the cost per trip for providing these services has also increased substantially; and

WHEREAS, WMATA is seeking to reduce its costs and shorten waiting time for its MetroAccess passengers by using additional transportation options, including Uber and Lyft, which are based on the use of mobile applications; and

WHEREAS, blind and low vision individuals who do not have smartphones will not be able to take advantage of these additional transportation options; and

WHEREAS, WMATA has no proposal at present detailing how to offer this new service to riders who use only voice telephones; and

WHEREAS, some passengers (who do not use the Uber or Lyft apps) have raised the concern that they may not be able to determine when an Uber or Lyft driver arrives without the driver notifying the passenger; and

WHEREAS, blind people with service animals have also experienced discrimination by drivers who participate in "ride-sharing" services such as Uber and Lyft in that drivers often refuse to transport passengers with service animals; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland, in convention assembled this thirtieth day of October, 2016, in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, that this organization urge WMATA to provide a way for all disabled passengers to use this new service whether they make reservations by voice telephones or mobile devices and apps; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that training be provided to drivers who work for these ride-sharing services concerning the necessity to notify the passenger when they have arrived at the curb, and their legal obligation to transport passengers with service animals in their vehicles.