



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 275: Taxi Operation in Disabled Parking Spaces

October 28, 2015

Good morning, members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on Senate Bill 275, regarding the operation of taxis in parking spaces reserved for persons with physical disabilities.

Under current law, a taxi cab may unload an individual who is disabled and issued a disability placard from the Department of Transportation (DOT) using a disabled parking space. However, a taxi cab is not permitted to pull into a disabled parking space to wait for and then load an individual who is disabled and issued a disability placard from the DOT.

SB 275 would fix state law to allow a taxi cab to pull into a disabled parking space and load a person with disability who has been issued a disability placard. This issue was raised by a disabled constituent of Representative Subeck, the bill's co-author, for whom a taxi cab driver was unable to find a suitable loading area other than a parking space designated for disabled individuals. However, the driver could not legally stop in the disabled parking space to load the passenger.

We worked closely with the Council on Physical Disabilities Transportation and Parking Committee, a coalition of organizations and individuals impacted by and providing advocacy around disabled transportation and parking matters to ensure this bill addresses the needs of disabled individuals without any unintended consequences that would make parking more difficult for those who need and regularly utilize disabled parking.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

29TH SENATE DISTRICT

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Lisa Subeck

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

To: Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs
From: Representative Lisa Subeck
Date: October 28, 2015
Subject: Testimony in support of Senate Bill 275, relating to parking spaces reserved for persons with physical disabilities.

Chairman Petrowski, and members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs:

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony on Senate Bill 275, which would allow taxi cabs to pull into a disabled parking space in order to load a disabled individual.

Under current law, a taxi cab may unload an individual who is disabled and issued a disability placard from the Department of Transportation (DOT) using a parking space reserved for disabled individuals. However, a taxi cab is not permitted to pull into a disabled parking space to load an individual who is disabled.

This issue came to my attention after a constituent had contacted city officials to inquire about the law. The individual had requested a taxi pick him up in a parking spot designated for disabled individuals because it was the most accessible place available for him to load. The taxi driver refused because state law did not allow him to do so.

SB 275 would fix state law to allow a taxi cab to pull into a disabled parking space and load a person with disability who has been issued a disability placard. Under current law, there are a handful of other circumstances under which a vehicle may utilize a disabled parking spot temporarily, and this addition is a logical accommodation for individuals with disabilities.

I worked closely with the Council on Physical Disabilities' Transportation and Parking Committee, a coalition of organizations and individuals impacted by and providing advocacy around disabled transportation and parking matters, to ensure this bill addresses the needs of disabled individuals without any unintended consequences that would make parking more difficult for those who need and regularly utilize parking spaces designated for individuals with disabilities.

Thank you again for your time and attention to SB 275. Feel free to contact my office with any questions you might have.

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October 28, 2015

Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs
300 Southeast
State Capitol
Madison Wisconsin

Dear Representatives:

The Council on Physical Disabilities was established in 1990 to represent the needs of people with physical disabilities in Wisconsin. I am here today representing the Councils' enthusiastic support for the passage of Senate Bill 275. This bill when adopted and signed into law will allow a taxicab operator to stop the taxicab in a disabled parking space to load a passenger who has been issued a disabled parking card if:

- The passenger provides the disabled parking card number to the taxicab service when the passenger arranges for transportation,
- The passenger presents the disabled parking card and the letter from DOT issued with the disabled parking card to the taxicab operator when the passenger gets into the taxicab, and
- There is no suitable, available loading zone for loading the passenger.

Since the inception of the Council on Physical Disabilities in 1990 people with physical disabilities have consistently identified access to safe, accessible, affordable and reliable transportation as one of their single greatest needs, in response the Council has identified access to accessible and affordable transportation as one of our four priorities in the State Plan for People with Physical Disabilities. As a Council we believe that improving access to taxicab services will help address this high-priority need for transportation services required by people with physical disabilities. Every option to improve access to transportation services is critical and that is why we are as a Council supporting Senate Bill 275.

However, our Council on Physical Disabilities is also aware that there is a significant problem when it comes to the use and enforcement of accessible parking spaces that have been designated for parking of vehicles that display the accessible parking plate or can be accessed by the authorized use of hang tags. Therefore, it was important for our Council that we work with Representative Subeck and others to ensure that the individuals requesting taxicab rides requiring taxicab companies to stop and pick up individuals with physical disabilities in parking spots designated for vehicles with license plates or hang tags are actually qualified to use those designated parking spaces.

Our Council is pleased that we were able to work with Representative Subeck to incorporate the statutory language that allows the taxicab company to identify an individual as having a hangtag when arranging for a taxi ride by providing the number that is visible on the hangtag and used to identify individuals as the owners of the hangtag by law enforcement officers when hung in the vehicle. In addition, at point of pick up the Council members wanted to ensure that the individual would actually be the individual that would be riding in the taxicab. Therefore, the Council is pleased that the legislation includes the requirement to show the hangtag

and the letter authorizing the hangtag received from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and required to accompany the hangtag at all times. This regulation requiring both the hangtag with a designated number and the letter authorizing its use is to ensure that the individual when approached by law enforcement for documentation is able to identify themselves as the recipient of the hangtag and or license plates on the vehicle.

The Council on Physical Disabilities believes that this legislation offers another benefit for qualified individual with a physical disability by improving accessibility. Allowing the taxicab to pick up an individual in a designated parking space improves the accessibility for individuals who have mobility impairments which restrict them from walking more than 200 feet. Allowing taxicab companies the opportunity to pick up people in the designated parking space provides the added benefit for the individual who has limited mobility to access the taxicab without worrying about negotiating Wisconsin's ice and snow.

The Council on Physical Disabilities enthusiastically supports Senate Bill 275 however this legislation is not the total answer to improving access to taxicab service for people with physical disabilities who require the use of wheelchairs or scooters, but it is the beginning. The Council on Physical Disabilities believes the real improvement in accessing taxicab service for individuals with physical disabilities will be when the taxicab companies recognize the need for them to purchase low floor and ramp equipped minivans in response to an ever-growing market of individuals with physical disabilities. A market that is growing due to the ability of new medical procedures and medical technologies which are keeping more people alive who were injured or diagnosed with life-threatening disabilities and the aging of our population which combined with the desire of these individuals to live in their own homes in their own communities is increasing the market need for more accessible transportation for which the taxi industry should be planning. If the taxicab companies don't voluntarily recognize the business opportunity, then our Council will need to come back to you and ask for legislation that will help improve access to taxicab service that responds to the needs of people with physical disabilities that require the use of wheelchairs and scooters that cannot be accommodated by the current taxicab fleet.

Thank you for the opportunity to allow our Council to show our support for Senate Bill 275 a very important piece of legislation.

Respectfully,

Dr. Noah Hershkowitz, Member
Transportation and Parking Committee