Boston, Chicago, D.C., Las Vegas, Toronto, San Francisco and New York City are improving their paratransit options through an Uber initiative. Since Uber’s launch, the company has invested in ensuring that its features and technologies are accessible to all users. In November 2018, Uber, a CSG Associate member, announced plans to widely expand paratransit for individuals using wheelchairs and other motorized mobilization devices.

Wheelchair accessible rides are available through Uber WAV. These rides are priced at the same as an Uber X. Six of the eight cities listed above have a wait time of fifteen minutes or less, and Uber is working to achieve the same success in the other two cities over the next few months. Half of Uber’s business in the United States and Canada is represented by the eight cities that have launched this initiative. Uber plans to learn from these cities and expand this model across the country.

Lack of accessible transportation is a barrier for people with disabilities looking to enter the workforce. Remaining in the workforce is also difficult without reliable transportation. Uber’s initiative will help strengthen the workforce by providing an easy and dependable way to travel. CSG’s Work Matters Report highlights the importance of transportation in entering the labor market, “States are encouraged to ensure that transportation is widely available, reliable, affordable, and accessible to people with disabilities in order to support access to the workplace.”

During CSG’s National Task Force on the Future of the Workforce meeting in Boston, Malcom Glenn, head of Global Policy, Accessibility and Underserved Communities at Uber, spoke about Uber’s work in the disability employment field. Glenn stressed the importance of state governments, transportation services and vehicle providers partnering to ensure more robust access to transportation.

One of the largest obstacles in implementing the accessible transportation initiative is the lack of self-providers with wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) to meet the current demand. To overcome this hurdle, Uber has expanded beyond its traditional method of recruiting drivers by partnering with MV Transportation, a leading provider of paratransit services. Partnering with MV Transportation allows Uber to drastically expand the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles for consumers.

“[F]or more than 40 years, MV Transportation has been focused on providing safe and reliable transportation for people with disabilities or using mobility devices,” Kevin Jones, CEO of MV Transportation, said in a November 2018 Uber news release. “Today, we’re announcing an important step forward with Uber. Our fleet will support the first truly on-demand wheelchair accessible vehicles in six major markets, with more to come. As the nature of transportation changes, we will work with Uber to ensure people with disabilities aren’t left behind.”

“We have an opportunity to improve the transportation experience for a population whereby accessible transportation has been a barrier for such a long time,” Glenn said. “The conversations and the dialogue between us and the advocacy community has really helped impress upon us what we can do and how we can go about doing it.”
While the company recognizes there is still a lot of work to do, Uber has already made a drastic impact in the lives of people with disabilities in mobility and access to work.

Uber is also a member of the CSG Justice Center Business Advisory Council.

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