



**National Federation of the Blind**  
**Lyft Testing—Year One**  
3/26/18

**I. Introduction**

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) has conducted compliance testing of Lyft's implementation of its service animal policy as required by section 2(d) of the Settlement Agreement. The purpose of the testing program is for NFB to gather feedback from riders traveling with their service animals about their experiences using Lyft. This information enables the parties to determine the effectiveness of Lyft's implementation of the service animal policy so as to address instances of discrimination experienced by riders traveling with service animals. This report highlights the feedback NFB has received from its testers during the first year of implementation of Lyft's service animal policy and shows the results of testing in thirteen metropolitan regions.

**II. Testing process**

Testing commenced on May 8, 2017, in the following municipalities: Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Denver, District of Columbia, Los Angeles, Nashville, New York, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Seattle. As required by the Settlement, these metropolitan areas were selected based on factors including the popularity of Lyft in the region, urban density, diversity of states, racial and ethnic diversity, and the size of the blind and low-vision population in each region. See Settlement 2(d). As of February 28, 2018, NFB had gathered a total of 189 Lyft tests in those municipalities.

The NFB is the largest organization of blind people in the United States, consisting of tens of thousands of members across affiliates and local chapters in every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Membership in the NFB is voluntary, and most of NFB's members participate in the organization in an unpaid capacity. Through its membership base, NFB has recruited testers who use Lyft while traveling with their service animals or who travel with someone who has a service animal. Testers are encouraged to complete NFB's online questionnaire, available at <https://nfb.org/rideshare-test>, after each ride. NFB provides grants to the state affiliates that generate a meaningful number of tests.

The testing questionnaire asks the rider to provide information including the following:

- Rider's name;

- Email address;
- If the rider was traveling with a service animal;
- Date ride was ordered;
- City and state of the pickup location;
- If the rider alerted the driver of his/her service animal prior to the ride;
- If the ride was denied;
- If the rider was treated disrespectfully during the ride (e.g., threatened, harassed, ridiculed, or provided inferior service because of the presence of a service animal);
- If the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal; and
- If a complaint was filed regarding the denial or disrespectful treatment (e.g., via website, app, or complaint hotline).

When a tester reports that they were denied a ride by a Lyft driver, or that they experienced other discrimination related to their service animal, that information is forwarded to NFB's legal team for follow up. NFB's legal team has used this information throughout the implementation of the settlement to bring compliance issues to Lyft's attention. The testing program has helped NFB and its legal team gather information about various issues with Lyft's service animal policy, including the accessibility of the app and complaint procedure, specific instances of service denial, and issues that have arisen with Lyft's enforcement of the service animal policy.

### **III. Year One Compliance Testing**

For the purpose of this report, Year One is defined as May 8, 2017, through February 28, 2018.

### **IV. Regions**

#### **A. Baltimore**

##### ***Denials***

NFB received eleven Lyft tests in the greater Baltimore metropolitan area during Year One. Two of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

##### ***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

##### ***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **B. Boston**

### ***Denials***

NFB received five Lyft tests in the greater Boston metropolitan area during Year One. Four of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

### ***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during a ride.

### ***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that a rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **C. Chicago**

### ***Denials***

NFB received eighteen Lyft tests in the greater Chicago metropolitan area during Year One. Five of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

### ***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

### ***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **D. Dallas-Fort Worth**

### ***Denials***

NFB received eight Lyft tests in the greater Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area during Year One. No tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

### ***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

### ***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **E. Denver**

### ***Denials***

NFB received six Lyft tests in the greater Denver metropolitan area during Year One. No tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

### ***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

### ***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **F. District of Columbia**

### ***Denials***

NFB received nineteen Lyft tests in the greater District of Columbia metropolitan area during Year One. Three of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

### ***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

### ***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **G. Los Angeles**

### ***Denials***

NFB received seven Lyft tests in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area during Year One. Three of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

### ***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

### ***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **H. Nashville**

### ***Denials***

NFB received thirty-four Lyft tests in the greater Nashville metropolitan area during Year One. One of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

### ***Disrespectful Treatment***

One test identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

### ***Cleaning Fees***

No test identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **I. New York City**

### ***Denials***

NFB received eighteen Lyft tests in the greater New York City metropolitan area during Year One. Six of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

**J. Phoenix**

***Denials***

NFB received three Lyft tests in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area during Year One. One of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

**K. Sacramento**

***Denials***

NFB received seven Lyft tests in the greater Sacramento metropolitan area during Year One. Five of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during a ride.

***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

**L. San Francisco**

***Denials***

NFB received four Lyft tests in the greater San Francisco metropolitan area during Year One. One of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **M. Seattle**

### ***Denials***

NFB received forty-nine Lyft tests in the greater Seattle metropolitan area during Year One. Nine of these tests identified that a ride had been denied because of a service animal.

### ***Disrespectful Treatment***

No tests identified that the rider had been treated disrespectfully during the ride.

### ***Cleaning Fees***

No tests identified that the rider was charged a cleaning fee because of a service animal.

## **V. Issues**

The comments provided by NFB testers highlights some of the issues that have arisen during the first year of Lyft's implementation of its service animal policy. In addition to highlighting difficulties with the service, testers also provided positive feedback about using Lyft.

### **A. Accessibility**

Testers reported some problems with the accessibility of the app and submitting complaints. Specifically, some testers experienced problems using the CAPTCHA verification feature:

- “The check boxes for the CAPTCHAs are unusable with VoiceOver.”
- “Verification via audio CAPTCHA expires too quickly requiring verification a second time. NVDA 17.3, Windows 10, Firefox 56”
- “Yes, when I filed the complaint, when I checked ‘I am not a robot,’ I was shown several pictures and was asked to pick those that included buses. I have some vision and use screen magnification but turned on VoiceOver to see if the pictures were recognized. They were not, so I made my best guess. I'm concerned that someone who is totally blind might not be able to complete this step.”

One tester reported difficulties with the feature that allows riders to rate drivers:

- “When rating a driver, the blind person does not have the ability to easily choose a rating because it is a slide bar. Make them radio buttons.”

Testers had difficulty filing complaints when the driver canceled the ride because the canceled trip did not show up in their ride history:

- “Lyft makes it difficult to complain about service animals since they don't show your driver-canceled rides and they didn't have a specific complaint form.”
- “I was talking to the driver. He was directly in front of me, as I could hear my phone call on his car speakers. As I walked toward the car with my dog, he gassed it quickly and drove off . . . saying ‘no,

no, no, no, no dog.’ I tried to report this to Lyft via the app but because he never picked me up, it doesn't show up in my history. I can't log something that doesn't show up in my history.”

A number of testers noted that they did not receive a communication from Lyft informing them about the outcome of its investigation into their complaints, as is required by the Settlement (see Settlement 1(g)(iii)(a)). For example:

- “No communication from either driver so can't prove it was a service animal issue, but I reported them anyway. The response line representative was again unaware of Lyft's policy to notify me of the action that was taken against the driver. In his follow-up email he stated that Lyft has ‘followed up with the drivers appropriately’ and did not include what action was taken.”
- “So far I have received the following email from them, which is a violation of the settlement.  
Hi Michael,  
Thank you for contacting us about your experience. We appreciate you taking the time to let Lyft know. I’m sorry to hear that this ride didn't live up to our standards.  
I want to reassure you that your concerns have been heard, and that our Trust & Safety team has followed up with this driver appropriately.  
Rest assured that you won't be paired with this individual again.  
If there is anything else you’d like to add for Trust & Safety to review, please respond directly to this email thread with any questions or concerns.  
Best,  
Diana, Critical Response Line Representative”

## **B. Discrimination**

A number of riders were told that service was being denied because the driver had a fear of dogs or reported an allergy to dogs:

- “Driver said she did not allow animals in her car, and that she was afraid of dogs. She also asked how big the dog was, and then asked me to please cancel the ride. I tried to explain to her this was a federally licensed guide dog, but she raised her voice and said I could not make her do it. At which point I told her nobody was making her do a thing and that she had to drop the ride herself.”
  - In response to a complaint about this incident, Lyft educated the driver about their responsibilities and warned them that if they received another complaint they would be terminated from the app.
- “When the driver saw that I had a dog, he said, ‘Oh, you have a dog. I am really allergic to dogs, so I'm sorry, I can't take you. It would have been nice if I'd known you had a dog in advance.’ Clearly the driver either did not know or chose to disregard that he was required to transport a guide dog regardless of allergies or religious/cultural objections. This, per the Lyft service animal policy.”

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- In response to a complaint about this incident, Lyft educated the driver about their responsibilities and warned them that if they received another complaint they would be terminated from the app.
- “He said he would not take me because he had allergies.”
  - In response to a complaint about this incident, Lyft terminated the driver.

Two riders with service animals traveling together were denied a ride because the driver claimed the car was too small:

- “The driver asserted that his car was too small as there were two of us with guides. I stated that we travel together with these animals all the time and have no problem but received an alert through the app that another driver had been assigned.”
  - In response to a complaint about this incident, Lyft educated the driver about their responsibilities and warned them that if they received another complaint they would be terminated from the app.

Some testers were given a ride but experienced discrimination or poor service resulting from their having service animals. For example:

- “The lady was so frightened of my dog that she would not get back in the car after my dog and I got in. I had to talk her into taking me. Then, she dropped me off at the wrong address way down the street from where I needed to go. I asked her if it was the right address and she said yes. It was on the other side of the street and several blocks down.”

### **C. Positive feedback**

A number of the testers reported having a positive experience while riding with Lyft. For example:

- “The driver was very kind. She stated she received recent information from Lyft and stated she saw the need to be in full compliance. It was a pleasant experience.”
- “Andrew was very professional, timely, and was fully aware of the state and federal laws. I was impressed with his professionalism and customer service. A+”
- “She was actually super excited because she had never transported a service dog before.”

## **VI. Extrapolating the feedback collected by NFB**

As noted above, the purpose of this compliance testing program is to ask riders for feedback regarding their experiences using Lyft while traveling with their service animals, and it has been useful for identifying issues with the implementation of the settlement. We caution, however, against using the feedback to draw conclusions about trends in the rate of ride denials due to service animal discrimination. Testers submit reports on a voluntary basis and may not submit reports for every ride. Therefore, it is difficult to

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determine whether ride denials are overrepresented or underrepresented in the data. Chart 1 below reflects a substantial amount of variation in the percentage of ride denials that were reported each month.

**Chart 1: Number of Reports of Discrimination by Month**

Month	Total Number of Reports	Number of Rides Completed	Number of Rides Denied	Percentage of Ride Denials
May 2017	25	24	1	4.0%
Jun 2017	20	12	8	40.0%
Jul 2017	20	17	3	15.0%
Aug 2017	13	10	3	23.1%
Sep 2017	17	10	7	41.2%
Oct 2017	20	14	6	30.0%
Nov 2017	12	11	1	8.3%
Dec 2017	12	10	2	16.7%
Jan 2018	33	27	6	18.2%
Feb 2018	17	14	3	17.6%
Grand Total	189	149	40	

**VII. Conclusion**

The variations in the information gathered through NFB's Lyft testing program make it difficult to draw conclusions about the rates at which Lyft riders with service animals experience service denial discrimination. However, the feedback testers provide offers additional insight into individual experiences. These tester comments should be used to help steer Lyft's driver education initiatives.