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***New Problems with Rideshares in Town:  
Lawsuits Filed Against Fare and Get Me in Austin for  
Discrimination Against Passengers Who Are Blind***

**AUSTIN** — With Uber and Lyft exiting the Austin scene after voters rejected the companies' proposals to self-regulate regarding security measures, other choices have risen up in the ride hailing transportation arena.

Two of those options are proving to have their own fair share of problems.

Today, Disability Rights Texas (DRTx) and attorney Timothy Elder of the TRE Legal Practice filed two lawsuits on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind of Texas (NFBTX) and five plaintiffs with visual impairments – one against Get Me and another against Fare – for refusing to make their ridesharing mobile phone apps accessible to riders who use text-to-speech software.

The failure to do so violates federal and state law, including Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

“As a blind person, I rely heavily on ridesharing services such as Get Me and Fare to take me where I need to go,” said Jeanine Lineback, one of the plaintiffs. “City transportation options are limited geographically, and regular taxi services are expensive. I have the right to enjoy the reliability, affordability, and convenience of these new ridesharing services just like everyone else.”

The individual plaintiffs include a student, an attorney, a professional consultant, a retired employee from the Texas Attorney General's Office, and another retired professional. All are blind and regularly rely on taxi services for their transportation.

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Fare and Get Me's mobile apps for iPhone and Android have improper labeling and coding for text-to-speech software that is used by people with visual disabilities. Such accessibility problems can be easily and affordably corrected.

For instance, companies like Apple and Google have published guidelines to assist developers in making their apps accessible. The guidelines show how to correctly identify and code the data fields in software in a way that enables text-to-speech software to "read" the information to blind users.

It is not difficult for a mobile developer to properly code a mobile app to be accessible. In fact, most controls and elements are accessible by default in the programming environment, and a developer would have to stray from common functionality to develop an inaccessible app.

Fasten, a leading new ridesharing service operating in Austin, has included accessibility features for blind customers into its mobile app development process so that its technology is accessible to blind customers and will remain accessible in future updates.

DRTx and TRE Legal contacted Get Me and Fare on behalf of the plaintiffs hoping to help these companies fix their technology voluntarily without a lawsuit. Unfortunately, Get Me and Fare were not responsive to the plaintiffs' concerns.

"If blind people are to compete equally in today's job market and live the lives we want, it is critical that we be empowered to utilize all the transportation tools at our disposal," said Norma Crosby, NFBTX President. "Ridesharing apps are a powerful tool of equality when nonvisual access is considered during development. A lack of such access can be detrimental to opportunities for blind users when developers fail to put in the simple fixes necessary to make true access a reality."

The attorneys for the Plaintiffs are interested in talking with other blind people in Austin who are having difficulty accessing these new ridesharing services.

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### **About Disability Rights Texas**

*Disability Rights Texas (previously named Advocacy Inc.) is the federally designated legal protection and advocacy agency (P&A) for people with disabilities in Texas. Our mission is to help people with disabilities understand and exercise their rights under the law, ensuring their full and equal participation in society. Visit [www.DRTx.org](http://www.DRTx.org) for more information on our scope of services.*

### **About TRE Legal Practice**

*Founded by Timothy Elder, TRE Legal is a civil rights law firm fighting discrimination and specializing in the rights of the blind and other disabled people to access employment, education, government programs, public accommodations, accessible technology and all other aspects of society. Visit [www.trelegal.com](http://www.trelegal.com) for more information.*