

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2024

Contact: Brad Hennig

brad@hennigcommunications.com

(415) 307-7856

**GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND RIDESHARE SURVEY RESULTS REVEAL
MORE THAN 83 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS HAVE BEEN DENIED ACCESS
- Report Uncovers Impacts of Rideshare Denials for Guide Dog Users**



SAN RAFAEL, Calif. – Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) has announced the findings of its first North American rideshare survey among people who are blind or visually impaired, with more than 83 percent of respondents reporting they been refused service, and many stating they had been denied multiple times when traveling with their guide dog.

The 16-question survey was designed by the GDB Alumni Association Board of Directors, to determine the extent and impact of rideshare denials among guide dog handlers in North America. It was conducted between January and February 2023, with 185 guide dog users in the U.S. and Canada completing the survey.

A large majority of survey participants (82 percent) utilize rideshare services, validating other past research studies which have shown that the convenience of door-to-door transportation has great appeal to those who are blind or visually impaired, causing many to walk to destinations and use public transit less often. In addition to the magnitude of rideshare denials, the survey results uncovered dramatic insights into the often-devastating impacts falling into three major categories: psychological, social, and economic.

"These findings are concerning and sound the alarm that rideshare denials are not just an inconvenience, but they are perilous to the mental health and civil rights of all guide dog handlers who patronize rideshare services," said Dr. Melba Velez-Ortiz, a GDB Alumni Board member who spearheaded the survey design and implementation. "As a researcher and a blind investigator, I see these findings as an opportunity to intervene and improve the lives of guide dog handlers all over North America and potentially the world."

More than 46 percent of respondents reported psychological impacts, which are defined as moderate-to-severe feelings of anxiety, frustration, degradation, abuse, demoralization, stress, tension, or uncertainty brought on as a direct result of being denied service. One respondent reported being "denied service repeatedly because of my guide dog, even in inclement weather, and these experiences have traumatized me."

(more)

Guide Dogs for the Blind Rideshare Survey Results.../2

Social impacts were the second most reported type of impact from respondents, with more than 27 percent saying they had suffered a net loss in social activities and community participation as a direct result of rideshare denials. One respondent professed, "the experience or threat of having the driver give me a bad time or leave upon sight of my guide dog prevents me from going out."

The third critical type of impact from rideshare service denials was economic impacts, which include the expenses incurred by guide dog users and the undue circumstances, such as missing a flight or job interview, that indirectly cost them time and money, as a direct result of being denied access. These losses can be profound to guide dog users, but they also often end up causing profit losses to the rideshare companies, because guide-dog-using customers discontinue service.

"While these findings are very troubling, they can be used to help educate rideshare companies and their drivers about the harmful effects of denying service to guide dog handlers," added Christine Benninger, president and CEO of Guide Dogs for the Blind. "We also hope this research can be leveraged to motivate more advocacy and further research to find lasting solutions to this issue for the blindness community in the coming decades."

For a copy of the survey results report, visit [Rideshare Survey](#).

About Guide Dogs for the Blind

Headquartered in San Rafael, Calif., Guide Dogs for the Blind (GDB) is the largest guide dog school in North America. It is a passionate community that prepares highly qualified guide dogs to empower individuals who are blind or visually impaired to move through the world more safely and confidently. More than 16,000 guide teams have graduated from GDB since it was founded in 1942. Over the course of 80 years, GDB's mission has expanded to three kinds of programs: Guide Dog Mobility Program, Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Program, and K9 Buddy Program. GDB not only improves mobility for its clients, but it also furthers inclusion and advocates for policy reforms that change how the world views blindness. GDB's services are provided free of charge, and it receives no government funding. The organization was the subject of an award-winning documentary feature called *Pick of the Litter*, which continues to be available on various streaming platforms. For more information, visit guidedogs.com, or call 800.295.4050.

#