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ACCESS-A-RIDE DRIVER CHARGED WITH E-HAIL APP SCAM
FOR FAKING TRIPS, RAKING IN NEARLY \$70,000

*Defendant Charged with Grand Larceny and Other Crimes;
Faces Up to 15 Years in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz, joined by Office of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Inspector General Carolyn Pokorny, announced today that James Laverty, 72, has been charged with grand larceny and other crimes for allegedly bilking the MTA out of nearly \$70,000. The Access-a-Ride driver allegedly submitted bogus claims for rides requested using a mobile phone app between September 2020 and March 2021.

District Attorney Katz said, “The Access-a-Ride service provides much-needed transportation options for those with mobility issues. Sadly, this defendant allegedly found a way to scam the system. This kind of malfeasance is unacceptable and the defendant will be prosecuted for his alleged crimes. My Office will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to stop scammers from lining their pockets at the expense of others.”

MTA Inspector General Carolyn Pokorny said, “It is morally bankrupt that this unscrupulous driver was allegedly able to rip off nearly \$70,000 from a program specifically intended to provide vital transportation to people with disabilities. This case highlights why strong fraud controls must be implemented throughout the MTA. I am proud to stand with the Queens District Attorney’s Office, the NYC Department of Investigation and the NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission, to ensure that this bad actor is held responsible for his actions. We will continue to work with the MTA to ensure strong internal controls are in place to prevent this misconduct from happening again.”

Laverty, of Freeport, Long Island, was arraigned yesterday before Queens Criminal Court Judge Scott Dunn on a three-count complaint. The defendant is charged with grand larceny in the second degree, identity theft in the first degree and falsifying business records in the first degree. Judge Dunn ordered the defendant to return to Court on December 9, 2021. If convicted, Laverty faces up to 15 years in prison.

The DA said, in early 2019 the MTA partnered with Curb Mobility LLC to provide paratransit users the ability to request an Access-a-Ride through their mobile phones. Sometime after September 1, 2020, a Queens woman downloaded the Curb app and created a username and password. She requested two rides and defendant Laverty was the driver who picked her up and provided her with service. However, the defendant’s monthly reimbursement requests for payment to Curb allegedly stated he had picked up this same woman 661 times between September 2020 and February 2021.

According to the charges, the MTA reimbursed Curb for the cost of those 661 trips – just over \$69,860. Investigators with the MTA observed the defendant driving his own wheelchair-accessible TLC yellow taxi on numerous occasions within the borough of Queens and elsewhere. On these trips in which the defendant was supposed to be driving the female passenger, there was actually no one else in the vehicle except for Laverty.

The investigation was conducted by Investigators with the Office of the MTA Inspector General and by Queens County District Attorney’s Detective Bureau Detectives Hugh Dorsey and James Monaco under the supervision of Sergeant Ronald Georg and under the overall supervision of Assistant Chief Daniel O’Brien. Also, assisting in the investigation were Investigative Attorney Kristen Dufour and Deputy Inspector General Mercedes Bayon, of the New York City Department of Investigation, under the supervision of NYC DOI Senior Inspector General Laura Millendorf, and members of the Office of the MTA Inspector General’s Legal and Investigations Units.

Assistant District Attorney Suzanne Sullivan, of the DA’s Major Economic Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Mary Lowenburg, Bureau Chief, Catherine Kane, Senior Deputy Chief, Jonathan Scharf, Deputy Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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