American Council of the Blind
Together for a bright future

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May 31, 2023

Consumer Protection and Enforcement Division
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3214

RE: American Council of the Blind in Support of Draft Resolution TL-19145

Dear Consumer Protection and Enforcement Division:

The American Council of the Blind (ACB) appreciates the opportunity to write in continued support for Cruise's application to serve the entire city of San Francisco, 24/7. Cruise has worked side-by-side with us to advance solutions that address our community's mobility and transportation challenges. We believe Draft Resolution TL-19145 will play a vital role in creating more accessible, affordable, and sustainable transportation options for those who are blind or have low vision.

The American Council of the Blind is the nation's leading member-driven organization of and for blind and low vision individuals. Founded in 1961 and comprised of thousands of members and 66 state and special-interest affiliate organizations, including the California Council of the Blind. ACB strives to increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and to improve the quality of life of all people who are blind or experiencing vision loss. Integral to this mission is ensuring and advocating for equitable access to public transportation services at both the local and national level.

Cruise's ride-hail service and self-driving technology have the potential to help people who are blind and disabled live more independently and safely. For example, the company is currently developing the first fully autonomous and wheelchair-accessible vehicle, the Origin Mobility. This innovation will be a huge step in increasing mobility for those who cannot drive and make it easier for them to live their daily lives and stay connected. Additionally, ACB has been working closely with Cruise to make sure that its vehicles and technology used to call, locate, and control the passenger-facing infrastructure of those vehicles are fully accessible to, and usable by, individuals who are blind or low vision.

In the United States, there are an estimated 7 million people who are blind, 25 million who are visually impaired, and 93 million who are at high risk of severe vision loss. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Eye Institute, the prevalence of vision loss is expected to increase and varies with population demographics: age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, cataract, and diabetic retinopathy are the most common eye diseases in Americans age 40 and over; women are more likely to experience vision loss than men; and Hispanic and African Americans are more likely to experience vision loss than white Americans. Additionally, the rates of blindness are anticipated to double in the United states by 2030 and 20 percent of people over 85 have permanent vision loss. It is essential that we continue to drive innovation and accessibility in transportation to meet the needs of the growing number of individuals with disabilities."

ACB urges the commission to approve Cruise's application to provide 24/7 service to all of San Francisco. This will increase access to equitable transportation options for people who are blind and have low vision, while building a more accessible and affordable transportation ecosystem. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our comments further, you may contact ACB's Advocacy and Outreach Specialist, Swatha Nandhakumar, at either snandhakumar@acb.org or (202) 467-5081. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Swatha Nandhakumar
Advocacy and Outreach Specialist

Cc: Douglas Ito, Director, Consumer Protection and Enforcement Division (douglas.ito@cpuc.ca.gov)
Service lists for R.12-12-011, R.19-02-012, and R.21-11-014