

CITY OF NEW YORK
Date of Issue: April 28th, 2009

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
TAXI & LIMOUSINE COMMISSION
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)
RE:
Development Of An Enhanced
Education Training Program

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AUTHORIZED AGENCY CONTACT PERSON

Responders are advised that the Authorized Agency Contact Person for all matters concerning this Request for Information is:

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Section I – Executive Summary

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) is seeking to explore ways to expand, enhance, and improve its driver education program in order to further professionalize drivers capable of delivering exceptional service to the riding public. Experienced and well-trained drivers may opt to remain in the industry for longer periods of time, thus providing the public and government regulators with an even safer, more knowledgeable, and more efficient driver population. TLC believes that a stronger initial education program, combined with an expanded ongoing continuing education component, is an integral part of and key to improving the professionalism of licensed drivers and ultimately the type and manner of service they offer passengers.

The current driver education program managed by the TLC applies only to taxicab drivers. The TLC is looking to expand and improve the existing program, or create a new program, so that all TLC-licensed drivers benefit from a consistent and efficient training program that provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to become professional drivers. This RFI is an opportunity to help us formulate and develop a comprehensive education and training program for over 6,000 new taxicab drivers who enter the medallion taxicab industry each year and explore programs targeted at the 8,000 new livery drivers each year as well as to nurture the skills of over 100,000 veteran drivers.

The TLC is looking for responses that include the utilization and development of continuing education courses for the industry as well as supplemental education programs for those drivers in need of mandated refresher courses. In addition to curriculum development, TLC is also looking to formulate and apply methodologies and practices to measure how well drivers have learned the knowledge and skills taught in training programs, as well as new strategies for administering tests to license applicants and current licensees. Respondents should not be constrained in their responses or suggestions by either our existing rules or requirements or by the current education program. This is to be an open forum for discussing the best possible improvements to existing training or in identifying new training methodologies to meet our goals.

This Request for Information (RFI) seeks to gauge the various ways for the TLC to successfully improve the service offered to the riding public through a strong driver training and education program. We are interested in learning about several topics related to driver education and a more comprehensive training program. These topics include:

- Curriculum and curriculum development
- Education providers and services offered
- Test design and construction
- Test proctoring and administration

This Request for Information (RFI) seeks information from interested parties on how to enhance the required driver education component for taxicab operators and expand it to include all for-hire vehicle (FHV), paratransit and commuter van drivers. The goal of the RFI is to give the agency the opportunity to gather more specific information on training methodologies, psychometrics, the means of assessing driver knowledge and skills, as well as how to best measure whether or not applicants and licensees are meeting standards and to assist us in determining whether standards should be enhanced in certain areas or whether new standards need to be developed. TLC understands that training drivers to know and follow the rules will not, on its own, produce better service for passengers. Drivers not only need to understand TLC rules and requirements for obtaining and maintaining their licenses, but they also need to hone their skills interacting with passengers in a courteous and professional manner. TLC is also seeking ideas and suggestions on the best method by which to impart and instill a sense of enhanced professionalism and professional standards that must be maintained at all times by applicants entering the industry as well as by veteran drivers. Information about all or any of the above topics, as well as any ideas regarding a part or parts of any one topic, are welcome from the education sector and test providers, as well as the riding public and the taxicab, for-hire vehicle, paratransit, and commuter van industries.

Section II – Timetable

Final Response Date/Time and Location:

Please note that there are two (2) response dates for this RFI. We are requesting that you review Section B – Education Providers, subsection – Point Reduction Program first and, if you intend on replying to this section of the RFI, that you do so in advance of submitting your full proposal. You may still include any information on the Point Reduction Program in your final submission.

Section B – Education Providers, subsection: Point Reduction Program:

Due Date: **June 1, 2009**

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: Responses to this RFI shall be submitted to the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

By mail: 32-02 Queens Boulevard, Second Floor

LIC, NY 11101

Attention: Ms. K. Lucas

By facsimile: (718) 391-5615

OR

By email: TLC-EdRFI@tlc.nyc.gov

For all other sections of the RFI:

Due Date: **August 1, 2009**

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: Responses to this RFI shall be submitted to the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

By mail: 32-02 Queens Boulevard, Second Floor

LIC, NY 11101

Attention: Ms. K. Lucas

By facsimile: (718) 391-5615

OR

By email: TLC-EdRFI@tlc.nyc.gov

Section III – Summary of the Request for Information

Purpose of RFI

The TLC is charged with “furthering the development and improvement of taxi and livery service in NYC, establishing an overall public transportation policy governing taxi, coach, and car services and wheelchair-accessible vans, and to establish certain rates and standards.” Combined, the TLC regulates industries that are responsible for over 500,000 daily trips, serving over 1,000,000 passengers. The TLC currently regulates over 100,000 drivers in all of our regulated industries. In fiscal year 2007, the TLC received 6,488 new applications for taxicab driver licenses, 11,577 new applications for for-hire vehicle driver licenses, 577 new applications for paratransit driver licenses, and 50 new applications for commuter van driver licenses. In addition, the TLC processed renewals for 19,674 taxicab driver licenses, 20,060 for-hire vehicle driver licenses, 939 paratransit, and 91 commuter van licenses. Our role is to ensure that each passenger’s riding experience is safe, comfortable, and without incident, and that drivers follow the rules set forth under the Rules of the City of New York Title 35.

The TLC issues four types of operator licenses—taxicab, livery, paratransit, and commuter van—for its regulated industries. Currently, only applicants for a taxicab operator’s license must attend a training course and pass an English Proficiency Test (EPT) and operator exam. Applicants for the remaining three types of licenses must complete the same paperwork and meet virtually the same requirements with the exception of the training and testing requirements. The TLC would like information regarding the effects of creating a training program for drivers in all of our regulated industries. The TLC is requesting information on the best way to approach education for drivers applying for licenses other than a taxicab operator license.

Current education requirements for taxicab drivers

Currently, TLC only trains taxicab drivers. Taxicab drivers are often the first people visitors meet when they arrive in New York City, and therefore, they have an important role in welcoming people to the City. Because taxicab drivers must pick up anyone who hails them on the street, they are expected and legally required to have the ability to read, write, speak, and understand English. For many drivers, however, English is not their native language, and this can impact their ability to complete the education process.

The training program is divided into two courses of different lengths. There is a 24-hour (3-day) course that provides a basic review of geography, points of interest, customer relations, and a basic overview of TLC rules. There is also an 80-hour (10 day) course which includes additional instructional material that more comprehensively covers best routes, destinations, customer service, and TLC rules. The schools that teach these courses are not state accredited, and there is a requirement that the instructors be former taxicab drivers whose licenses are in good standing with the Commission.

Drivers are taught about city geography, how to navigate the roadways of New York City, TLC rules and regulations, and passenger-driver relations (including cultural diversity and how to service passengers with disabilities). In addition, TLC has recently mandated accessible dispatch training

for all taxicab drivers who drive wheelchair accessible vehicles. The TLC does not test applicants' ability to drive nor do we conduct road tests. No demonstration of driving proficiency beyond State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) requirements is mandated. However, TLC rules prohibit TLC licensure until any new DMV issued license applicants have passed a six (6) month DMV probationary period.

After completing their training course, all taxicab driver license applicants are required to take and pass a final examination. The final examination is comprised of two parts. The first is the English Proficiency Test (EPT) where applicants must demonstrate their English reading, writing, and listening comprehension skills through a series of multiple choice questions and written answers. Applicants must earn a score of 70% in order to pass the EPT. The second portion of the exam has two sections. The first section is an open book map test with 10 multiple choice questions. The second section is a closed book multiple choice test with 40 questions covering city geography, directions, best route, and TLC rules. Applicants must also earn a score of 70% to pass the operator exam. An applicant must pass the EPT section of the exam for the written segment to be graded. The initial license issued by the TLC to taxicab drivers is a one-year license. Taxicab drivers must also complete a four-hour continuing education class within 340 days prior to the expiration date of their one-year license. Once those requirements have been met, no additional education requirement is currently mandated by the TLC.

Expansion to all TLC-regulated industries

Although the current driver training program applies only to taxicab drivers, TLC is committed to exploring ways for all drivers in our regulated industries to receive training and education in order to provide the highest-quality service to the City's riding public. Taxis, liveries, paratransit, and commuter vans are important parts of the public transportation system, and drivers fulfill an essential need for those who visit, work, or live in the City. Our goal is to develop a training and education program that provides all drivers with the tools and skills necessary to enhance the performance of their jobs. Better training and professional development will ultimately reflect more positively upon the drivers themselves, the service they provide their industry, and the City as a whole. This effort to improve the quality of driver education is supported by the NYC Administrative Code Section 19-505 (d) which gives TLC the authority to examine drivers on their knowledge of the city. To achieve this goal, TLC is seeking new ideas and strategies to create the best possible training program to cultivate and retain professional drivers.

In developing these ideas and strategies, respondents should not feel constrained by the existing training curriculum or existing TLC rules. Rather, TLC is interested in creating appropriate training programs for all of our licensees and understanding the many ways to meet these objectives, including modifying current requirements.

Section IV – Content of the Response

Section A: Curriculum and curriculum development

- ***Content***

TLC believes that professional drivers need a knowledge base and skill set that allows them to respond to a dynamic, and often stressful, environment. Our goal is to ensure that our licensees have the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully and professionally manage their shifts each and every time they get behind the wheel. The current curriculum (which is taxicab operator based only) addresses geography, points of interest, direct routes, and map reading. Applicants are also taught selected TLC rules and are expected to be familiar with the traffic regulations of the City of New York and with the Vehicle and Traffic Laws of the State of New York. TLC would like respondents to address the types of knowledge and skills needed to be a professional driver who can provide a high level of customer service. Respondents should also consider how this knowledge and skill set can be translated into a curriculum used to train drivers and what is the most effective method for teaching the curriculum that would result in the highest level of retention and application of knowledge by the driver? In addition, respondents should consider alternatives to a primarily educational setting for all facets of the training. Should there be an external component to the education process and, if so, what would be the best and most effective teaching methods?

- ***Passenger interaction***

TLC expects drivers to be capable of interacting with a wide variety of people during a work shift which usually runs 12 hours. Interacting with people presents unique situations and experiences that challenge drivers on a daily basis. Passengers are not only New Yorkers; they are visitors from out of state and out of the country and may not speak English. The driver training curriculum includes a component on passenger-driver relations and sensitivity toward passenger appearance, gender, cultural and ethnic background, occupation, and physical ability. TLC seeks recommendations on the type of training drivers should receive in order to comfortably and respectfully interact with all passengers and how to capably and effectively handle and manage disputes and avoid conflicts as situations arise.

If a problem occurs during a trip, the TLC has a process for a passenger to file a complaint and attend a hearing before a TLC Administrative Law Judge. All drivers, including FHV, paratransit, and commuter van drivers, can be required to attend a hearing if a passenger files a complaint. TLC is interested in understanding how to educate licensed drivers (other than taxicab drivers) about the complaint process and how to further improve drivers' interaction with passengers to reduce complaints.

- ***English proficiency***

Part of providing professional service, is the ability to communicate with passengers. This communication may be as simple as following directions or as complicated as explaining alternate routes or answering passengers' questions. Current TLC rules require that taxicab drivers be able to speak, read, write and understand the English language. The TLC would like respondents to assess the level of English needed to meet this requirement and the best method to ensure English proficiency at this level. As the TLC seeks to expand driver training and education and given the TLC's mandate by the New York City Administrative Code to provide training for all drivers, what would be the best way to implement this type of training?

- ***Related industry information***

Although the majority of their time is spent with passengers, drivers also interact with other related licensed groups, such as owners, brokers, and agents, within the taxi and FHV industries. The current curriculum does not address the rules for these separate, but related, groups. TLC would like recommendations on whether or not drivers need to understand what is required of these related groups and what they are responsible for? To what extent should an understanding of the responsibility of other licensees be included in the curriculum? For example, drivers could be further educated on their rights regarding lease caps and other ownership obligations which have a direct impact on them, passengers, or others.

- ***Assessment of driving skills***

The knowledge and skills required of a professional driver also include how to drive safely in all types of traffic and weather. TLC does not test an applicant's ability to drive nor does it conduct road tests. The TLC requires that applicants demonstrate driving proficiency at the level mandated by the state in which they were licensed to drive. The TLC is interested in determining whether that is sufficient or if there are additional driving skills beyond the standard DMV road test that should be tested. Respondents should also consider the possible format of such a driving test.

Section B: Education Providers

- ***Teaching standards, qualifications, and requirements***

Producing professional drivers requires high standards and requirements for teachers. The TLC is responsible for developing the driver education and training curriculum and sets the requirements for the schools' instructors. Although instructor requirements are set by the TLC, each school determines how best to teach the material and present information to students. Instructors must have current TLC licenses and their background is reviewed by the TLC Education Coordinator before they are allowed to teach a class. TLC is requesting

information about the most important qualifications for instructors teaching driver training and educating professional drivers. What standards should be used to measure an instructor's ability to teach and communicate the curriculum to students? What qualifications should a prospective educator/instructor hold in order to effectively educate drivers?

- ***Criteria for educating drivers***

Currently, taxi schools need to be licensed or granted an exemption for licensure by the Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision (BPSS), they do not need to be accredited by the New York State Department of Education. Today's taxi school operators must demonstrate to the TLC that they are in compliance with Building, Fire Code, and ADA requirements, have a maximum 32:1 student-to-instructor ratio, and have a surety bond or certificate of self-insurance. The TLC would like information on what qualifies an institution or a program to train professional drivers and/or what are the best criteria for determining if an institution is qualified to educate drivers. The TLC would like respondents to discuss the effects of accreditation on the performance of trade schools and if accreditation provides a higher quality of education and a better professional outcome for students as well as any other costs and benefits of accreditation.

- ***Taxi School Locations***

Currently there are four (4) taxi schools located in Brooklyn and Queens. Should greater emphasis be placed on locating schools in all five (5) boroughs? Would a centralized instructional center at a single location be of greater benefit for the maintenance of standards and uniformity of the educational process?

- ***Development of professionalism***

Instilling in drivers that they are part of a professional community is an important part of the education process. Professionalism requires more than just following all rules and regulations; it requires adherence to a set of standards and an approach to working that are not necessarily written in a rule book. What, specifically, can be done to encourage greater levels of professionalism and is there a way that the education process can convey the level of professionalism expected of drivers?

- ***Maintaining and updating driver knowledge and understanding of TLC rules and requirements***

TLC would like to ensure that all drivers maintain their professional service long after they have completed their initial training course and are up-to-date on all rules and regulations. Currently, after taxicab drivers complete their initial training, the TLC requires them to complete a continuing education course sixty days prior to the expiration of their first year probationary license. This is a refresher course in taxi-related subjects, including rule changes, a review of driver responsibilities and duties, driver-passenger relations, and an awareness of serving passengers with disabilities. Taxicab drivers are not required to attend additional training courses as long as they remain in good standing with both TLC and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). As there is currently no training or education requirement for all categories of drivers, there are no ongoing or continuing education

requirements for them. The TLC is interested in determining if, once a comprehensive education program is developed for all drivers, a continuing education requirement would be necessary or useful.

TLC is looking to improve the way it helps its licensed, professional drivers maintain their knowledge of TLC rules and regulations, including new rules, through the use of new technology. TLC would like respondents to discuss the most effective methods to keep approximately 100,000 licensees updated on rule changes as well as how to ensure that all drivers maintain a strong familiarity with and understanding of existing rules. Should continuing education be linked to license renewal, and how often should updated training courses be required?

- ***Training drivers who are persistent violators of TLC rules***

Not all drivers follow the rules and remain in good standing with both TLC and New York State DMV. To address these individuals, drivers who are guilty of three or more TLC violations within a fifteen month period are required to attend a persistent violator course. This 6 hour course teaches drivers how to professionalize their service, improve passenger-driver relations, and reviews the rules governing point accumulations and their consequences.

NYS DMV has a point reduction program available to all licensed drivers. This program allows all New York State drivers who voluntarily attend and satisfactorily complete a motor vehicle accident prevention course approved by the New York State DMV to have up to four points deducted from their DMV license. Licensees can only attend one accident prevention course within an eighteen-month period for the purpose of point reduction.

The TLC would like to explore its options to re-educate and modify the behavior of drivers who repeatedly violate TLC rules and for those who have accumulated points on their driving license, including out-of-state drivers. The TLC seeks information on the best way to educate drivers who have broken the rules and other possible responses to these drivers.

- **Point Reduction Program**

Responses are due back to this section as indicated on Page 3

Recently passed TLC rules mandate penalty points for various FHV base and vehicle rule violations. The TLC would like to explore the possible options to create a point reduction program for our licensees that would allow them to reduce the accumulated points on their license. We seek input on course content and structure, the means to ensure attendance, the best method to evaluate both the satisfactory completion of the course and the comprehension of the licensee, the maximum number of points that can be reduced, and how frequently a licensee would be eligible to take the course. (For example, NYS DMV allows an individual to take the “Point and Insurance Reduction” course to remove four (4) points from their license only once every 18 months.)

Information on the new rules can be found at the following two locations on our web site – www.nyc.gov/taxi.

Full Rules: http://www.nyc.gov/html/tlc/downloads/pdf/newly_passed_rule_fhv_comb_base.pdf

Please pay careful attention to Section 29 (page 29) and Section 30 (page 24 through page 28) when preparing your response.

A guide to the rules can also be found on our web site at: http://www.nyc.gov/html/tlc/downloads/pdf/fhv_rules_guide.pdf.

In addition, the TLC would like to explore the possible options to create a point reduction program for drivers that would allow them to reduce the accumulated points on their license. We seek input on how the course should be structured, the method of attendance, the best method to evaluate the satisfactory completion of the course and the comprehension of the licensee, the maximum number of points that can be reduced, and how frequently a licensee would be eligible to take the course. (For example, NYS DMV allows a person to take the “Point and Insurance Reduction” course to remove four (4) points from their license only once every 18 months.)

The response to the driver point reduction program can be submitted when you submit your full response to the RFI.

- ***Structure and scheduling of training course***

As the first step to becoming a TLC-licensed driver, the structure of the education course establishes what is expected of applicants and sets the tone for the education process. Currently, taxicab drivers register for either the 24 or 80 hour course at the school they wish to attend and are then scheduled for the next available class. Therefore, enrollment is on a rolling basis, and the length of time applicants must wait to get into a course varies on the school and time of year. There can also be a time lag between when applicants take the

course and when they sit for the final exam. As the TLC explores ways to expand education to all drivers, it would like to explore whether classes should be scheduled on a fixed term or rolling basis.

Section C: Test Design and Construction

- ***Assessment of skill level and knowledge of the material***

Creating a curriculum that trains professional drivers requires the ability to assess whether or not those drivers have achieved specified standards and can demonstrate mastery of skill. Earning a score of 70 % or higher on both the final examination and the EPT is the current method for measuring an applicant's ability to become a TLC licensed taxicab driver. TLC would like respondents to comment on the current methods used to assess an applicant's knowledge of English and of course material. Is the current testing and grading system a good measure of what applicants have learned in the training program and how prepared they are to drive professionally in New York City? The TLC would like to know the best methods for demonstrating mastery of skills and knowledge for the purpose of assessing drivers in all license classes—taxicab, for-hire vehicle, paratransit, and commuter van. The TLC is also interested in understanding how to examine and assess all drivers on the entire content of the rules in order to ensure that applicants have learned all of the material and do not just memorize the bare minimum of information required to pass the exam. The TLC also seeks information on how to assess English proficiency and determine the appropriate level of English proficiency for all drivers. The TLC would like to know if there are common standards used to measure English proficiency and how are these standards applied to institutions that may have different English proficiency requirements.

- ***Exam structure***

An appropriate exam structure is important for creating an accurate and meaningful test that measures retained knowledge. Currently, the EPT and the operator exam are taken by taxicab applicants at the same time. The ability to speak, read, write, and understand English is not measured before applicants take the taxi school course or the final exam. The TLC seeks input and guidance on the feasibility of English proficiency being assessed before applicants start school.

Additionally, the TLC would like respondents to assess the best method to determine the English proficiency of FHV license holders who hold a license in good standing with the goal of providing them with the opportunity to apply for and be approved for a medallion operator license. What would be the preferred methodology for assessing a current, non-medallion license holders' knowledge and their ability to meet the standards established for a medallion operator?

Section D: Test proctoring and administration

- ***Locations for testing***

At present, there are four approved taxi schools that provide driver training for prospective taxicab operators. Each school conducts classes and provides space for testing. Students are required to take the exam at the school where they attended class. They register separately for each and are not required to take the exam immediately upon completing the course. Space for testing is limited to the maximum number that a classroom holds, and the number of proctors the TLC will send, which is usually one per school. (The school must also provide one proctor for every 30 students.) Exam dates are filled quickly, and there can be a wait of several weeks before a student can be accommodated. The TLC seeks to explore whether there are more efficient methods to administer the exam, to register applicants, and otherwise improve the overall efficiency of school testing location procedures.

- ***Exam administration integrity***

Exam integrity is an essential part of creating a meaningful test and establishing a level of professionalism. The TLC is open to exploring and further enhancing its integrity and test security procedures, and it solicits new ideas to accomplish these goals including the use of technology to do so.

- ***Consistency of administration and Quality Assurance Controls***

TLC must be confident that the exams are being administered according to the rules and that the proctors meet the standards. TLC proctors are given basic training, and they are provided with written instructions. They have oversight of the exam and control the timing of the various sections. The TLC is open to exploring enhancements to its standards and methods for ensuring accuracy and consistency.

- ***Grading and transmitting results***

The majority of the exam is graded using a program that scans the answer sheets and reads the darkened circles. Ten of the 30 questions from the EPT require a written answer and are reviewed by a staff member, after which the results (right or wrong) are entered into the computer. The computer calculates the score, and a report is generated with the corresponding information. Each school is sent an email report of who passed and who failed, and they are responsible for providing the information to the students. This process takes approximately three days. The TLC would also like to explore whether this process can be further enhanced, via possible increased use of technology.

Section V- Details of the Response

In your response, please provide details with respect to and explain your experience in developing, teaching, and/or administering educational or training programs. In addition, please explain why you are interested in and ultimately responded to this RFI. You are not required to respond to all of the sections, questions, or points listed. You may respond to some or all of the sections. TLC may, upon review of the submissions, contact individual respondents with questions pertaining to their response to this RFI for the purpose of clarifying information or data presented.

It should be understood that this RFI will not result in any type of procurement for any system or for any goods and services at this time. This RFI does not represent a commitment on the part of the City to enter into any type of agreement with the companies, groups, educational institutions or individuals that choose to respond. The information provided by respondents will not be used by the City to pre-qualify respondents or in any other way determine eligibility for the purposes of any procurement that may be undertaken in the future.

Vendors should note that no contract will be awarded pursuant to this RFI. Likewise, submission of a response to this RFI will not enhance any vendor's chances to be included in any preferred vendor's list.

No representation is made herein that responses to this RFI will be confidential, proprietary, or nondisclosable pursuant to the New York State Freedom of Information Law, Public Officers Law Article 6 Sections 84-90.

In the event that TLC decides to form an advisory committee, please include in your response if you wish to be considered for appointment to the committee.