



**Taxi & Limousine  
Commission**

Winter-Spring 2009

**Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor**  
**Matthew W. Daus, Chairman/Commissioner**



# TLC TIMES

## New Hybrid Incentive Plan Plants Seeds for A Cleaner, Greener Taxi Fleet

The New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission has voted to approve a package of financial incentives for taxi fleet owners to purchase fuel efficient vehicles as part of the overall effort to achieve the goal of a greener, cleaner New York taxi fleet.

As a result of these newly-approved rules, fleet owners will now be permitted to increase the lease cap fee, or the amount that may be charged for the use of a taxicab or medallion license, by \$3 per shift for hybrid or clean-diesel vehicles, with the intention of offsetting the additional purchase costs of a hybrid or clean-diesel vehicle, as specified by fleet operators. While a small number of drivers will be paying approximately 25 cents per hour in additional costs, they will continue to realize savings stemming from reduced fuel costs. The operators of less efficient, non-hybrid vehicles will see the lease cap reduced by \$4 initially, with a total reduction of \$12 phased-in in \$4 increments over a period of two years, representative of a portion of the amount saved by the drivers of fuel-efficient hybrids. The purpose of these lease caps is to achieve a "level playing field" for drivers and to equalize their earning potential, holding them harmless for the wise or unwise vehicle purchase choices made by fleet operators.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg hailed the new TLC rules as "another avenue to reach our goal of greening our yellow cabs, improving our air quality, and reducing our carbon emissions."

Said TLC Commissioner Matthew Daus: "Our intention from the beginning was to get fuel efficient taxis on the road, using whatever appropriate methods are required to achieve our goal of a greener taxi fleet. The approval of this incentive package will help us take the advances we have made thus far to the next level, and help our city become a cleaner, healthier place."



From left to right are event hosts Neomi, Zion and Meir Yakuel, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, City attorney Scott Pasternack, TLC Commissioner/Chairman Mathew Daus, and Congressman Jerrold Nadler.

## New York City to Host Technology-Themed '09 IATR Conference in September



*NYC TLC  
Commissioner Daus  
Named IATR  
President-Elect*

New York City will be the center of the regulatory universe this fall, as the International Association of Transportation Regulators (IATR) brings its 2009 conference to our world class city

from September 12-16.

NYC TLC Commissioner Matthew W. Daus, who has served as Chair of the IATR's education committee and has been responsible for planning educational modules for the IATR's last several conferences, was elected President-Elect of the organization at its most recent conference in Los Angeles. Since presidential terms begin in September, Commissioner Daus will take the reins as the group's new leader at the 2009 conference.

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## TLC Celebrates 100% Customer Service Technology Milestone!



A thrilled Ann Roggen, at right, receives her lost viola from TLC Commissioner Matthew Daus (center) and cabbie Deniz Getting, who is now a candidate for honors at the TLC's annual ceremony.

The TLC's extraordinary five-year journey from concept to reality has at last reached its conclusion, and the milestone of 100% implementation of the TLC's Technology Passenger Enhancement Program (T-PEP) has been achieved. Today, each of the city's 13,237 medallion taxicabs has the capability for the collection of automated trip sheet data, and is equipped with both Passenger and Driver Information Monitors (PIM/DIM) complete with an electronic map for passengers to follow their trip's progress, text messaging for drivers, and equipment enabling the acceptance of all major credit and debit cards. Drivers, will benefit from electronic messages alerting them to fare opportunities they otherwise would not have, matching available taxicabs with passengers in need.

In one of many recent success stories made possible by T-PEP's use of GPS, the irreplaceable antique viola and bows of Broadway and concert violist Ann Roggen, valued at \$66,000, were recovered within several hours after it was left in a taxicab, and hand-delivered by TLC Commissioner Matthew W. Daus and cabbie Deniz Getting. Thanks to the "special delivery," Ms. Roggen was able to play in a concert that very evening with her own instrument, instead of a borrowed one. Making sure he saw this happy tale through to its conclusion, Ms. Roggen was delivered to her New Jersey concert by Mr. Getting, who will be honored with other exemplary drivers at the TLC's annual Driver Recognition Ceremony later this year.

### TLC Releases RFI for Taxi Technology 2.0

The TLC has released an official Request for Information (RFI) to explore the technological and customer service options available to drive the evolution of the current technology systems using newly available technology.

The RFI is available for viewing on the TLC Web site [www.nyc.gov/taxi](http://www.nyc.gov/taxi), and those interested may comment either through the Web site, via US Mail at NYC TLC, 40 Rector Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, N.Y. 10006; via Fax at 212-676-1002, or by e-mail at [policy-mail@tlc.nyc.gov](mailto:policy-mail@tlc.nyc.gov).

### "Taxi of Tomorrow" is on its Way!

*With thoughts of what the "taxi of tomorrow" should be never far from our minds, the agency has prepared a Request for Information (RFI) and distributed it to over 100 entities in the auto manufacturing and design community. In the months ahead, we will continue to analyze responses to the RFI— responses that will need to reflect consensus demands that tomorrow's taxicabs be accessible, resilient, safe, and comfortable for both passengers and drivers. Most believe that those taxicabs should also feature a design style that meshes with New York's landscape, even as they retain a symbolic link to the city's great history. Finally, they must do one more thing that's crucial: help to reduce the carbon footprint on our city, which would be in keeping with Mayor Bloomberg's goal of an all-green taxi fleet for New York City. We at the TLC remain committed to making a final determination as to what the taxi design for tomorrow's taxi will be. After all the learned responses, studies and analyses, the time will soon come to make decisions...and progress.*

## NYC to Host '09 IATR Conference -- It's All About the Technology!

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*The complete conference agenda may be viewed on the IATR's Web site at:*

[www.iatr.org](http://www.iatr.org)

The theme of this year's conference will be **Technology**, with sessions focusing on New York City's taxicab technology program (GPS, credit card capabilities, passenger and driver information screens); accessible vehicle dispatch technology; government information hotlines, Web site development, management information systems and computer security safeguards; handheld summons and electronic fingerprint technology; taximeter technology; inspection facility technology; as well as in-vehicle security and accident prevention camera applications. Conference attendees will also get an up-close and personal look at action points in the city's taxi industry to complement the more businesslike aspects of the conference. Participants will also tour the TLC's state-of-the art Safety & Emissions facility, where the agency administers more than 60,000 of the most comprehensive and sophisticated inspections possible to New York City taxicabs thrice-annually.

In between educational pursuits, attendees will have the opportunity to take full advantage of New York City's renowned uniqueness with a whirlwind package of activities. As always, the conference will culminate in a spectacular Dinner Gala. Visit [www.iatr.org](http://www.iatr.org) for early registration details.

# Customer Service Efforts Win TLC Client Kudos



Mayor Bloomberg honors City Customer Service Representatives, including Frances Student (center), at the recent "Customer Service Week" ceremony at Gracie Mansion as Constituent Affairs Executive Director Dawn Sherman applauds.

The TLC created a new Licensee Support/Customer Service Unit (LS\CS) which places multi-lingual personnel on the floor during the entire day to assist all visitors (both applicants and licensees) to the facility with any questions or concerns they may have. They check and confirm not only current TLC status but identify any open NYS DMV related issues that must be cleared to expedite their transactions as well.

Within just a few months of instituting the new LS\CS system, we noted an increase in the application acceptance rate of 37% - from 48% to 85%, meaning that the licensing process was a more satisfying experience for many, with fewer applications being returned as incomplete.

The TLC has redesigned its forms to be more user-friendly, more informative and easier to complete – there is more white space, the checklists are more specific and actually highlight better the items needed to obtain a new license or renew an old license. The TLC has also improved signage in the Licensing

facility building and more frequently updates the Web site with new data, hyper-links and user-specific sections.

Following the Licensing Division's successful LS\CS project, a similar program was implemented by our Adjudications Division, resulting in better informed customers, and a more efficient flow of activity. New signage in both Spanish and English has also helped us to communicate more efficiently with clients.

Perhaps most spectacular, however, was the Mayor's Management Report's charting of a decrease in the average time to process a hearing decision in the TLC's Adjudication Division from 39:05 to 26:40 – a difference of 47.9%. Even more recently, we have seen a further decrease in decision processing time to 23:50!

Serving six distinct industries that operate on the principle of "time is money" is no easy task. That's why it is all the more satisfying when the TLC can empirically say that its customers are spending less time and getting more done at agency facilities.

In fact, in the most recent Mayor's Management Report, the City's annual report card for governmental services, the TLC's indicators report that the average wait time at the agency's Long Island City Licensing facility has dipped from 33 minutes to 31 minutes.

Typewritten decisions by Administrative Law Judges have also improved the hearing experience, by enhancing clarity for all hearing participants.

Making an already efficient process even more efficient is a challenge, but one that the TLC has gladly undertaken, leading to a further decrease in the time it takes to have a taxicab inspected.

Of course, the TLC will continue to find and implement new and even more innovative ways to reduce the time spent transacting various types of business with the agency, whether it is enhancing the types of transactions available via the Internet, or constantly reviewing its processes to find greater internal efficiency.



The TLC's new Licensing Support/Customer Service Unit (seen here staffed by Vicki Hongdilokkul) helps keep things flowing at the TLC Licensing facility.

## Commissioner's Corner



By Commissioner/Chairman  
Matthew W. Daus

It is unquestionably true that 2008 was a milestone year for the TLC, with tremendous progress having been made on a number of initiatives. It would appear, however, that 2009 is shaping up to be even more active.

### T-PEP

In 2008, we achieved 100 percent implementation of the Taxicab Technology Passenger Enhancement Project (T-PEP). With T-PEP systems operating in each of the city's 13,237 medallion taxicabs, passengers have access to a screen that provides useful information, enables them to follow the taxi's progress, allows for fare payment via credit/debit cards, improves data-collection, thereby increasing the ability to assist in the recovery of lost items, and more.

### Enforcement Ops. "Secret Rider"

In terms of enforcement, we instituted the "Operation: Secret Rider" program aimed at ensuring that taxi drivers comply with regulations specific to the "Taxi Passengers Bill of Rights." Dedicated TLC Officers are specially trained to ride cabs as ordinary passengers while making judgments about a driver's performance, acting to correct imperfections but also to cite those drivers whose attentiveness and polite service to passengers was exemplary.

### Accessible Dispatch Program

Our efforts on behalf of persons with disabilities have been a particular source of pride for us. We initiated an experimental project in 2008 that allows for the dispatch of wheelchair accessible taxicabs when a wheelchair user calls 311, the government-services hotline number, to request a ride, at which time technology assists a dispatch service to help determine which vehicles are closest to the location of the caller and notifies the driver. At present, we have recorded in excess of 1800 dispatches!

### Clean Air Taxicabs/Hybrids

Another area of progress for the TLC in 2008 can be seen in the increased number of hybrid taxicabs -- more than tripling the number from just over 600 to more than 2,100. That is more than 16 percent of the total fleet, which is a higher percentage than can be found in any other city in the nation. The superior performance of hybrids is underscored by industry experience, which points to the need for even further progress toward hybrids, even in the face of challenges and resistance based on cost concerns and other factors. It is for this reason that Mayor Bloomberg proposed and the TLC approved the new "Leasing Incentive" plan detailed elsewhere in this newsletter.

### Taxi of Tomorrow

No one I know would not like to see a taxicab fleet that

met the highest safety and accessibility standards; that provided superior comfort and an ideal riding experience for passengers and drivers alike; that was appropriately designed for the urban environment that is New York City; that has a reasonable purchase price, impacts the environment in a lesser way, and even features an iconic design. Any such vehicle would certainly qualify as a "taxi of tomorrow," which is exactly the type of taxi in the sights of the TLC's "Taxi of Tomorrow" project. Numerous responses to a Request for Information from a large number of entities in the vehicle manufacturing community represented real progress achieved in 2008 -- and those responses will continue to receive the careful study and evaluation they deserve in the months ahead.

### Medallion Sale/Auction

The Medallion Auction held last May saw the TLC complete the sale of a total of 1,050 taxicab medallions over the last six years, with the final auction of 89 new taxicab medallions, 87 of which were earmarked for use on wheelchair accessible taxicabs. The auctions as a whole were responsible for bringing over \$400 million in revenue into the City's General Fund to pay for essential services. Also worthy of note is the fact that a number of the auction's participants bid on a number of medallions in excess of their value on the open market; a positive statement indeed about the medallion license as an investment in the future of both the taxi industry and our city. The open market for taxicab medallions has and continues to set records on an almost monthly basis, with latest sale prices on the two types of medallions (Individual and Minifleet/Corporate) averaging \$569,000 and \$763,000, respectively, for the month of April 2009 -- two new all-time record highs.

### Economic Challenges Ahead

During 2009, we will not only continue to work as tirelessly as always, but will do so with a heightened awareness of a troubled economy that has certainly impacted our city. That means keeping a very close eye on our taxi industry, which according to every monitoring device we have, has thus far shown great resilience in weathering the storm. Drivers are still earning in excess of a living wage (netting between \$14 and \$16 per hour), while credit card trips have increased over the last year from 6% to about 21% - and credit card tips have averaged about 20% of the total fare.

Moreover, we have seen an increase of more than 7% in the driver pool over the last year, another sign of industry stability during a difficult time for the city. Many economic forecasters have predicted that the economy will begin to see signs of a turnaround in the second half of this year, and hopefully they are correct. When that happens, there is every reason to believe that the taxi industry, holding its own even now, will be performing better than ever. The TLC will continue to monitor this situation closely and help wherever it can.