



TLC TIMES

Volume 1,
Number 2

Fall 2002

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Matthew W. Daus, Commissioner/Chair

Commissioner's Corner

Let me begin this column by congratulating our medallion taxicab drivers for giving rise to what has evolved into one of the great TLC media stories of the year - the significant decline in complaints.



Every year, the mayoral administration publishes the "Mayor's Management Report," which is essentially the City's report card for its delivery of services. Standing proudly amid a sea of important numbers was the fact that complaints against drivers are at their lowest level in more than a decade. In just a sampling of the statistics, the TLC received 10,183 medallion driver complaints in Fiscal Year 2002 as compared to 14,129 in FY 2000 (a decrease of 39%). Perhaps more importantly, the number of complaints fell consistently in areas such as driver rudeness, which declined by as much as 50% cumulatively over the past two fiscal years. This decrease happened during a time when there are more drivers (an increase of 9% since FY 2000), more medallions (400 additional between 1996 and 1997), more access to the TLC (twice the incoming phone lines at our Customer Service Hotline and an increase in visits to our web site of over 700% since its inception), as well as steadily increasing ridership. Not surprisingly, this good news sparked the

Continued on Page 2

TLC Holds 9/11 Memorial Ceremony; New Taxi Medallion Unveiled

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) hosted a memorial service on Friday, September 13, 2002 to memorialize the victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks with an interfaith service and the ceremonial unveiling and bolting of the first memorial taxicab medallion. The medallion's design contains a simple white background with a red, white and blue ribbon in remembrance of those lost on September 11, 2001.

"September 11th was a day that none of us will ever forget," said TLC Commissioner/Chair Matthew W. Daus. "In order to appropriately memorialize those who lost their lives on that tragic day, the TLC is placing a token of remembrance of them on each of the city's 12,187 taxicabs."

The ceremony took place at the TLC's Woodside, Queens Safety and Emissions Inspection Facility and was attended by many of the leaders of the TLC's regulated industries. The event began with a presentation of colors by the TLC Honor Guard ("*New York's Proudest*") and an invocation by multi-faith religious leaders. Following the opening ceremonies, a TLC Safety and

Emissions Inspector affixed the first memorial medallion to the hood of a taxicab owned by a former New York City Police Officer.

The TLC also took the opportunity to pay tribute to the 1000-plus TLC drivers from all its regulated industries

that participated in "Operation Free Transportation," which the TLC implemented within days of the attack on the World Trade Center as part of its "Industry Recovery Plan." Assisted by

TLC Inspectors, who organized and assisted in their efforts, these volunteers, many of whom were in attendance, provided tens of thousands of free rides to victims' families and emergency workers in the days and weeks following the World Trade Center tragedy, and did so again after the equally tragic crash of Flight 587 in November, 2001. "These drivers selflessly put their own emotions and financial challenges aside, and donated their time and energy to help our city recover from those terrible days, and our city will always be grateful to them for that," said Commissioner Daus.

The new medallions should be on all taxicabs by the end of the year.



TLC Honors Drivers In First Ever Driver Recognition Ceremony

Honors Drivers Who Saved Lives, Returned Lost Property

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) held its first Driver Recognition Ceremony today, honoring drivers that went above and beyond the call of duty in assisting the riding public. The roster of honorees included drivers of the medallion taxicab, livery, black car, commuter van, paratransit and limousine industries.

“You are truly the cream of the crop,” said TLC Commissioner/Chair Matthew W. Daus at the ceremony. “There are so many drivers that do a good job day in and day out, but all of you have done something special that deserves recognition, and we should spend the time to honor you, so that others will hopefully follow your lead.”

The ceremony, which was attended by many of the leaders of the TLC’s regulated industries, honored 62 drivers that have performed outstanding deeds such as returning lost property, potentially saving lives by reporting



crimes and emergencies, and making a difference in the lives of their fellow New Yorkers in other varied ways. Among the honorees was Mr. James Foster, who found a marble statue from the Civil War era that was stolen from Woodlawn Cemetery. Another honoree was Mr. Beniste Senat, who returned two violins to the Juilliard School that were left in his cab by students. There was also Mr. Antonio Miranda who, when not driving his taxicab, runs a soup kitchen for the poor, and Mr. Michael Moncrease, who was one of the

first and most active volunteers of “Operation Free Transportation,” a program that provided free rides to families and emergency workers following the tragic events of September 11th.

“This ceremony is a prime example that our licensees are providing the best possible service to the riding public,” said Commissioner/Chair Daus. “At the TLC, complaints against drivers are down and compliments keep going up. There are so many letters that come across our desks praising drivers for everything from returning their lost property, to simply providing a courteous and pleasant ride.”

If a passenger experiences a situation where a driver goes above and beyond the call of duty and wants to compliment their driver, they are encouraged to call the TLC’s Customer Service Hotline at 212-NYC-TAXI, or e-mail the TLC at www.nyc.gov/taxi.

Commissioner’s Corner

Continued from Page 1

interest of the media over a period of several days, and remains a hot topic of discussion even as we speak.

What is going right instead of wrong? First, there is no doubt in my mind that we are seeing the tangible cumulative benefits of the TLC’s reforms of 1998 and 1999. The creation of the Persistent Violator and Critical Driver Programs did more than just hold our drivers to a uniform high standard of behavior, it served to weed out the small number of bad drivers that cast so negative a shadow on the rest of the industry. With those bad drivers gone, those who were left felt justifiable pride at being the best the industry has to offer. They know a TLC license is a privilege, and they treat their passengers

accordingly. I have said it before, and I will say it again, no one wants a bad driver off the road more than a good driver. Continually improving both our initial and continuing education curricula was key to this success as well. The idea that drivers could come back into the classroom environment after a year’s worth of experiences, share them with their colleagues and receive additional customer service training to sharpen their skills translates into drivers who are more sensitive to the needs of passengers.

Then there was the major shift in our philosophy. As promised, we are communicating better, we are listening better, and we are reaching out more in new and better ways. A prime example is the TLC’s new Driver Recognition Program. When hundreds of drivers

were invited to the first-ever Driver Recognition Ceremony to receive awards and the City’s heartfelt thanks for their good work, they knew that the TLC truly appreciates what they are doing. The same is true when drivers now receive a personal letter from me to let them know that someone took the time to write us to praise them. Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool, to be sure, but it is also common sense to say “thank you” when someone is doing a good job.

In the understanding that nothing is more important than protecting our families’ health, drivers have also responded positively to the TLC’s reaching out on a grassroots level to sign them up for HealthStat, to provide low-cost and free health insurance for them

Continued on Page 3



TLC Welcomes New Inspectors And ALJs At Ceremony

The TLC welcomed 16 new inspectors and six new Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) into its family when they were sworn in at a ceremony held at 40 Rector Street on August 23rd.

"This is your day," Commissioner Daus said to the new inspectors at the ceremony. "Good luck and make us proud."

The new TLC inspectors that joined New York's Proudest were Jean Aujla, Olga Baez, Desean Casado, Anthony DePalma, Ramon Freire, Gennady Garber, Gary Hayes, Nicholas Healey, Eikeren Johnson, Howard Katz, Juan Alberto Olivera, Jorge Ortega, Carlos M. Romero, Clifford Tillman, Kenneth



General Counsel Peter Mazer swears in the new inspectors.

Ward, and Michael Worsham.

The six ALJs that were appointed are Kenneth Diamond, Sandra Felix, Todd Kenyon, Charles Otey, Carmena Schwecke, Rochelle Sirota.

Joining the attendees at the ceremony were Peter Gutierrez, assistant director,

citywide division of the Teamsters, Local 237, IBT, Deputy Inspector Walter Smith, Captain William Crosson, Deputy Chief James McShane and Chief Michael Scagnelli of the NYPD. Chief Scagnelli works very closely with TLC Inspectors in joint operations. "New York's Proudest and New York's Finest, what a marriage," he said.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Commissioner Daus congratulated the graduates and wished them luck on their first tour. "The staff of the TLC joins me in welcoming you and wishing you luck in your new role as public servants," Commissioner Daus said.

Commissioner's Corner

Continued from Page 2

and their families.

Drivers have also embraced the TLC's combination of enhanced technology and hands-on management to help them spend less time at the TLC and more time on the road, providing for their families. On the technology side, our imminent implementation of the LiveScan system, which electronically transmits fingerprints directly to State authorities rather than mailing them, will see driver applicants with a license in hand faster than ever before. Also, innovative management techniques have now resulted in significantly decreased waiting times at our adjudications facility.

Speaking of enhanced technology, the TLC also very recently unveiled a pilot program to test seven In-Taxi Video Systems in a limited number of taxicabs, a test that we believe may add an additional measure of enjoyment and customer service for the riding public. Each of the seven companies has a unique product, with some offering interactive capabilities and service, while others simply deliver a combination of entertainment and advertising. All will carry TLC-mandated public service announcements designed to improve public safety and passenger convenience. While the goal is better customer service to the public, a secondary benefit to this program is that it also augments driver and owner income through better tips and monthly fees from technology providers.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank

Continued on Page 4

A Note From Mayor Bloomberg



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
New York, N.Y. 10007

October 3, 2002

Mr. Matthew Daus
Commissioner
Taxi and Limousine Commission
40 Rector Street
New York, NY 10006

Dear Matthew:

I would like to thank you and your staff for your work in the planning and implementation of the City's commemorative events marking the one-year anniversary of September 11th.

With your agency's commitment and cooperation, we were able to provide a day with respectful and dignified observances and events for the families, victims and uniform services that reflected the importance of this occasion for all of us as a community. The thoughtful participation of your agency in the Honor Guard and the many City personnel who worked together as a team with this entire effort reaffirmed the strength and kindness of our community and promise of a better future.

Please express my deep appreciation to your team dedicated to this effort. On behalf of our fellow eight million New Yorkers, I hope all of you take pride in your work—we do!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mike".

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor



TLC Introduces New Taxi Technology Authorizes Pilot Program For In-Taxi Video Systems

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) announced that it has authorized the pilot testing of in-taxicab video systems that will offer passengers the opportunity to view or “surf” while they ride. The systems were unveiled on Friday, September 6, 2002 by TLC Commissioner/Chair Matthew W. Daus at the agency’s Safety and Emissions inspection facility in Woodside, Queens.

The pilot project authorizes the makers of several in-taxi video systems to test their products in New York City medallion taxicabs, and will offer passengers such varied content as information on cultural and sporting events, museum exhibits and concerts, movie listings, restaurant reviews, clubs, hotel listings, real-time news, weather and much more. Some of the video units will display entertainment/magazine type programming, while others take an interactive approach with touch-



sensitive screens that will allow passengers to access up-to-the-minute news, sports, weather and other Internet-type offerings. Most of the systems will feature various forms of advertising. One product, which will have no advertising, will offer passengers the option to pay for their ride via credit or debit card. Public service announcements will be prominently displayed on each of the systems. Passengers may also mute the system’s audio if they wish to have a silent ride.

“This is a great use of technology,” said Commissioner Daus. “It is entertaining, interesting,

and allows taxi passengers to maximize their time in transit while promoting New York City in a positive way. We will let the riding public decide what form this technology will take in the future by soliciting their feedback during the pilot program. Once again, New York City leads the way in technology and in ideas.”

Other companies who wish to propose similar technology may do so by contacting the TLC directly. The TLC also encourages members of the riding public to provide feedback on the pilot program through its web site at www.nyc.gov/taxi, or our Customer Service Hotline at 212-NYC-TAXI.

Over the course of the pilot test program, the TLC will work closely with participating companies to garner public feedback on which products and features are preferred by passengers.

Looking ahead, the TLC has many other initiatives and plans in the works to assist its regulated industries. Some of those you will be seeing in the near future involve the TLC working to provide insurance discounts to eligible vehicle owners, reforms of the TLC’s licensing system to streamline and reduce the amount of time it takes to get a TLC license, as well as the positive results of our efforts to address issues at the city’s hotels (again, we are listening to you!).

We at the TLC wish you all a happy, healthy, and, above all, a safe holiday season.

Matthew W. Daus

Commissioner’s Corner

Continued from Page 3

everyone who participated in our TLC 9/11 Memorial Ceremony on September 13, and made it such an overwhelming success. For those who were not there, it was a day to mourn the many lost lives, but also to honor the drivers who contributed their time and their energy - at great personal cost - through Operation Free Transportation. It was a fitting time to unveil what will be a tangible, lasting memorial to the victims of our city’s greatest tragedy - a new taxi medallion featuring a stark white background, and a simple red, white and blue ribbon of remembrance.

Last but not least, I would like to leave you all with the message that the

TLC listens. Over the past year, we heard not one but many dozens of complaints about the situation that existed at JFK Airport with respect to certain individuals soliciting bribes to give some drivers preferential treatment at the dispatch line. Almost immediately upon hearing these complaints, we partnered with the Port Authority and the Queens District Attorney’s Office to begin a far-reaching undercover investigation. I am pleased to report that this investigation has culminated in the arrest of seven individuals on serious charges. These arrests should return airport operations to normal, which will ensure equal treatment and less waiting time for all drivers, for whom time is money.

