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TLC NEWS | TESTIMONY

Testimony Before the City Council Transportation Committee Oversight Hearing on the Base Licensing Process

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Commissioner/Chair
New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

Good morning Chairman Liu and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Matthew Daus and I am the Commissioner and Chairman of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC), and I am joined by my First Deputy Commissioner, Andrew Salkin. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present testimony regarding the base licensing process for TLC-licensed for-hire vehicle (FHV) bases.

As you are aware, in addition to regulating the yellow medallion taxicab industry, the TLC also regulates the FHV industry. This includes reviewing applications for, and issuing licenses to, base-station operators, vehicle owners and drivers. My testimony today will focus on the review of applications and the issuance of licenses to operate livery, or community car service base stations.

The requirements by which the TLC reviews such applications are largely set forth in the Administrative Code (Title 19, Chapter 5). Also, Chapter 6 of the TLC's regulations mostly replicates the language of the Administrative Code. The TLC is responsible for reviewing applications and making licensing decisions based upon standards set forth in the applicable laws and rules.

All applicants for a new FHV base station license begin the process by completing the initial application form and submitting the required administrative fee to the TLC. This initial application has recently been streamlined to make it easier to read and understand, and has also been made available on the internet from our website. A copy of the initial application is appended to my testimony for review by this Committee. A similar initial application form exists for current base station license owners who wish to renew their licenses, change the location of their base stations, or make a change in the ownership of their base stations, which must be completed and submitted together with the applicable administrative fee.

The applicant is then required to submit additional information to the TLC including a bond, background information on the proposed owner(s), and proof of available off-street parking facilities. Where applicable, applicants are required to perform an Environmental Assessment, in accordance with both City and State law, and to submit such assessment as part of the application. The applicant is further required to request written comments from the Council Member, Community Board, and police precinct in the area where the base station is located. However, the applicant is only required to make best efforts to obtain the information from the Council Member, community board and police precinct. Should the applicant not receive a response from them, it would not result in rejection of their application.

TLC staff review the initial application form, the required materials and any supplemental information provided by the applicant and then make a recommendation to the Chairperson and the Commission at large for approval or rejection of the application. The criteria for assessment of the application and reaching a recommendation are set forth in the Administrative Code and the TLC Rules.

Since early this year, TLC staff recommendations have been presented at public meetings of the Commission. At those public meetings, the Commission reviews, discusses and then votes to approve or deny each application. Where an application is approved, the Commission's determination is forwarded to the Council, the applicant is notified and the license becomes valid after a period of ninety days. Where an application is denied, the applicant is notified of such decision.

In addition, the TLC has made a number of additional enhancements to the application process over the past year -- consistent with the requirements set forth in the Administrative Code and the TLC's Rules. For example, in order to assist the Commission in evaluating fitness to operate a base station, applicants are now required to submit a "Comprehensive Operating Plan" that includes information about the ability to adequately manage the base, the extent and quality of service provided, as well as the impact on the quality of life in the vicinity of the base station.

As noted earlier, applicants are required to reach out directly to their local council members, community boards and police precincts. Prior to this year, the TLC had sent letters on behalf of applicants requesting input from them. The TLC believes that, as business owners, base stations should be held directly accountable for serving and interacting with the neighborhoods and communities in which they operate. Also, requiring base stations to reach out directly to local Council Members, Community Boards and police precincts as part of the application process further ensures that they become integrated into the fabric of the communities they are aiming to serve. After consultation with the City Council, the industry and TLC staff, I formally notified and reminded Council Members of their role in the base licensing process by letter earlier this summer. A copy of that letter is also appended to the testimony submitted to this Committee.

The enhancements that we have made are recognition of the fact that the TLC's process for review and issuance of base station licenses is a dynamic one. Over the past few months, TLC staff have met with the Borough Presidents and Community Boards in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx (where the majority of FHV base stations are located) to discuss base station licensing. We have received some important feedback that is already informing our policies and actions.

Our goal is to ensure that FHV's, in addition to our other regulated industries, are able to help provide important transportation services to the general public. This is a work in progress, and we expect to recommend, propose and implement further changes to further improve this process. As always, we look forward to working with the City Council to consider their input, advice and direction on this important process that directly affects the constituents in their communities.

Thank you and I would now be happy to answer any questions.

