

Matthew W. Daus, Commissioner/Chair

**Press Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 23, 2008

**TLC LAUNCHES “OPERATION: SECRET RIDER”
TO ENFORCE PASSENGER BILL OF RIGHTS**

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) today launched a new undercover initiative designed to measure the compliance of medallion taxicab drivers with regulations prohibiting cell phone use and rudeness, allowing passengers to use credit cards for payment, as well as other regulations tied to the “Taxi Passenger Bill of Rights.” The TLC will be assisted by Police Officers from the Surface Transportation Enforcement District (STED), who will also be undercover.

Operation: Secret Rider, modeled to some extent after the “secret shopper” quality assurance programs that have been successfully used in the retail and service industries, kicked off simultaneously today in various locations throughout the city. TLC Officers, also known as *New York’s Proudest*, have been specially trained to simulate both local and tourist taxi passengers, and ride an unspecified distance to gauge drivers’ performance in delivering the levels of customer service required by law.

Balancing the positive with the negative, TLC Officers will also be on the lookout for drivers that provide exemplary service, flagging them for consideration of honors at the TLC’s Annual Driver Recognition Ceremony.

Said TLC Commissioner Matthew W. Daus, “Passengers deserve a driver whose full attention is to the job, and who is ready, willing and able to follow the *Passenger Bill of Rights* to a ‘T.’ Most drivers understand that they are professionals, working in a service industry, and do a great job. We believe this program will very effectively drive the point home to those who don’t fully understand that fact, and prevent our having to stiffen penalties to make the same point.

“The bottom line is that drivers will never know whether their passenger is a ‘*Secret Rider*’, so the sooner they get their priorities in order, the better.”

Selected Enforcement Categories and Associated Penalties

- ***Driver may not refuse Passenger Request of method of payment, including credit card***
 - ***Fine: \$150 - \$350***

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- ***Driver may not use a telephone while operating a taxicab, unless such taxicab shall be legally standing or parked***
 - ***Fine: \$200, plus 2 Persistent Violator Program Points***

- ***A driver shall be courteous to passengers***
 - ***Fine: \$150 plus 2 Persistent Violator Points***

The Persistent Violator Program (PVP) accrues, upon conviction, points for violations of TLC regulations typically specific to providing customer service. If a driver reaches a threshold of six PVP points within a 15-month floating window, the driver will receive a 30-day TLC license suspension. If a driver reaches a threshold of 10 PVP points within such a 15-month period, the penalty is automatic TLC license revocation.

While *Operation: Secret Rider* will be the most public aspect of this customer service initiative, the TLC will be pursuing other avenues to ensure that passengers receive the highest levels of customer service to which they are entitled, and the *Passenger Bill of Rights* promises. For one thing, the TLC will be “beefing up” the Bill of Rights to include such things as “the right to pay by debit or credit card on request.” This will put drivers on notice as to what is expected of them, as well as informing passengers about what is and what is not acceptable in terms of the regulations and code of conduct that all drivers must follow in order to provide the expected passenger experience.

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) was created in 1971, and is the agency responsible for the regulation and licensing of almost 200,000 yellow medallion taxicabs and for-hire vehicles, their drivers, and the businesses that operate and support their industries. It is recognized as the largest and most active taxi and limousine regulatory body in the United States.

To find out more about the TLC, or to review its rules, regulations and procedures, we encourage you to visit our official web site at WWW.NYC.GOV/TAXI or call 311 in New York City, or 212-NEW-YORK from outside of New York City.