

**Testimony of David Yassky**  
**NYC Taxi & Limousine Commissioner/Chair**  
**Testimony on Intro. No 635-A and Intro. No. 1123**  
**City Council Transportation Committee**  
**October 31, 2013**

Good morning Chairman Vacca and members of the City Council Committee on Transportation. I am David Yassky, Chairman of the Taxi and Limousine Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Intro. 1123, a local law to amend the administrative code to require all HAIL vehicles with installed payment technology to be accessible to those with visual impairments; and Intro. 635-A, a local law to amend the administrative code to require notification of community boards of new commuter van service areas and to require publication of these service areas on the TLC website.

I'll turn first to Intro. 1123, which affects HAIL vehicles. As you no doubt know, HAIL vehicles, known in TLC rules as Street Hail Livery vehicles (or SHLs) and colloquially referred to as "boro taxis", started providing street hail service this Summer to passengers in Northern Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island. As of the close of business Tuesday, there were 800 Street Hail Liveries serving communities throughout the five boroughs, and another 4,447 permittees have purchased licenses to begin providing service in the coming weeks and months. By next week, I expect that all of the 6,000 SHL licenses which state law authorizes us to sell in the first year of the program will have been sold. To date, these 800 green SHLs have completed over 200,000 trips, with an average of 10 to 15 trips per day per vehicle.

The TLC supports Intro. 1123, which would require all Street Hail Liveries with installed payment technology to be accessible to people with visual disabilities. This requirement exists currently with respect to yellow medallion taxis, and would be extended to comparable Street Hail Liveries. Thanks in large part to your initiative, Chairman Vacca, all yellow taxis are required to have payment technology that is accessible to people with visual impairments. The Taxi TV screens, when prompted, provide visually impaired users a running audio tally of the fare, audio directions on how to pay for the taxi trip and how to set a tip amount without any assistance from the driver.

All Street Hail Liveries currently in service are equipped with similar technology from the same two vendors authorized by the TLC to provide this service in yellow taxis – namely, Verifone and CMT. As they do in yellow taxis, their payment systems installed in Street Hail Liveries can be made to provide these same functions. In fact, the TLC published in September of this year rules that would require them to do just that, with one difference: our rules permit the owner of a Street Hail Livery vehicle to choose a one-device system – that is a system which combines the driver information monitor and the passenger payment screen into one device which is stationed in a device cradle in the front seat and passed back to the passenger at the time of payment. Even though such a device is not installed, and would thus not be subject to the requirement of Intro. 1123, TLC’s proposed rules nevertheless require such one-device solutions to provide some of the same accessibility features required of installed systems. We believe it is worthwhile to give vehicle owners the choice between a traditional two-screen system and the more affordable one-device solution. And we believe it necessary to ensure that visually impaired passengers can use both

types of systems. We believe our proposed rules – which the Commission will be voting on at its November 21 meeting – and Intro. 1123 both accomplish that. I would also suggest that we change the enactment date to February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 to allow existing vehicles time to comply with the requirement.

This proposed legislation would also require information in Braille about how to contact the TLC to be affixed in the vehicle in a location easily accessible to a person with visual disabilities. You should know that this is already a requirement in our rules and is one of the items that our Uniformed Services Bureau personnel check for when they inspect a Street Hail Livery vehicle.

As a result, even though it may not be necessary in light of TLC's existing or proposed rules, we support the intent of this proposed law.

Next, I would like to address Intro. 635-A, which would require the TLC to notify community boards of proposed commuter van service areas and to list approved commuter van service areas on our website. As with the establishment of any new transportation service, it is important to inform the public and give residents living in the affected area, in particular, the opportunity to provide feedback. TLC considers the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) input when reviewing and approving new commuter van service. During this process, and pursuant to Subdivision e of section 19-504.2(e)(3) of the Administrative Code, the DOT informs the affected community boards, City council members, local precincts and the public of applications; and each of those stakeholders is given the opportunity to provide feedback to DOT prior to its determination of whether there is a public need for the service. Once DOT, having considered any input from the aforementioned stakeholders, determines

the parameters of the service area associated with a commuter van base application and submits a recommendation on the application to the TLC, the TLC then reviews the base application – including items such as sufficiency of insurance, bond requirements, proof of business status, and any outstanding judgments – and issues the base license.

Because DOT already notifies the relevant local community boards as part of its application review process, it would not add anything for the TLC to repeat this process with respect to those same applications. I would recommend that you remove this requirement of the proposed law, as it is redundant with DOT's current process. I do, however, see the value of TLC listing each of the commuter van service area on our website, since interested customers are likely to look to the TLC for information on commuter van services, since commuter vans are a form of on-demand for-hire service. We will, therefore, work together with DOT to make the requisite information about commuter van service more readily available to the public on our website.

With regards to requiring the Department of City Planning or any other agency to submit future commuter van studies to the Mayor, City council and all affected community boards, we believe this section should be deleted in its entirety. The provision refers to a City Planning report produced one time in 1998 regarding commuter van service policies. Since that time, City Planning has had no further role in commuter van policy, which is entirely within the purview of TLC and DOT. It is worth noting that City Planning shares a copy of all studies with the City Council and affected Community Boards as a matter of practice, and in cases where the report is funded under grants (such as the 1998 report), as a condition

of grant funding. Should the section not be deleted, we would encourage that the amendments be rewritten to ensure that City Planning does not have the requirement for distribution of other agencies reports for which it is not the author or recipient.

This concludes my testimony on the legislation related to HAIL vehicles and commuter vans. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.