



Testimony of Acting Commissioner Evan Hines
New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission
Before the City Council Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027
March 17, 2026

Good afternoon, Majority Leader Abreu and members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. It is a pleasure to deliver an update on the fiscal state of the New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC). My name is Evan Hines and I am TLC's Acting Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner for Operations, People, and Innovation. With me is Sherryl Eluto, the agency's General Counsel and James DiGiovanni, the agency's Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Community Affairs. TLC's regulated industries encompass nearly 300,000 licensees including taxi, for-hire vehicle, and commuter van drivers, as well as vehicle owners, bases, and other related businesses. Although TLC is a relatively small agency of about 500 team members, we have a large role to play within our city's transportation ecosystem. As we move into fiscal year 2027, I look forward to continuing our partnership with the Council to ensure that all New Yorkers receive the services that they need and deserve.

The data from calendar year 2025 continues to indicate stability within the TLC's regulated industries. Across all vehicle markets, there were over 320 million trips completed. Overall trips have increased by 6%. Each sector of our regulated industries is unique, and there is some variation across each type. Taxi trips have increased by 16% from 2024 to 2025 and have only recovered 57% from 2019. The agency estimates that between 60-65% of yellow taxi drivers are currently full-time drivers, and the median gross hourly pay for this group is around \$60 an hour compared to \$50 an hour in 2019. Earnings after expenses are unique to each driver but expenses sharply reduce take-home pay. A typical medallion owner pays around \$25,000 per year toward vehicle payments and medallion loan service—and that's before fuel, maintenance, and insurance.

The high-volume for-hire vehicle sector - which includes Lyft and Uber and is the largest segment of our regulated industries - completed over 243 million trips in 2025. That is up from about 239 million in 2024, a 1.7% increase. We also saw earnings increases for drivers in this sector as well. The median pay for full-time drivers before taxes and expenses is approximately \$61 an hour in comparison to \$46 an hour in 2019. This reflects the impact of the driver pay rules authorized by Local Law 150 of 2018 and the amendments TLC adopted last year. Other sectors are also showing progress. Non-high-volume for-hire vehicles completed 28 million trips in 2025, a 4% increase from 2024. Although trips are largely recovered, we know challenges exist in



the industry as well - such as congestion, insurance costs, and more recently, increases in gas prices.

The commuter van recovery extended through this year with 56 vans in service compared to 34 at the beginning of 2024 in part due to Empire State Development's Commuter Van Stabilization Program. Through this program, eligible applicants can receive up to \$40,000 to help offset the cost of annual commuter van auto insurance policies as well as receive reimbursements for specific vehicle safety upgrades, including advanced driver assistance, dash cams, and GPS tracking.

While we see stability across the TLC's regulated industries, we continue to see and address unlicensed activity which not only siphons off trips from licensed drivers and bases who follow city rules but also endangers and exploits passengers. Illegal rides may not be insured, dispatchers may overcharge passengers, vehicles are not inspected for safety by TLC, and drivers may not even have a valid DMV license. This is an issue that TLC has consistently been addressing, and the newly nominated Chair and Chief Executive Officer made a commitment to stop these scofflaws in her testimony before the Council. Moreover, we are working with our city and state partners to identify additional tools that could be used to halt the operations of these bad actors. I would like to thank the Council for passing Local Law 35 of 2026, which through a DOT study will help gather data to assist the agency with unlicensed commuter van enforcement.

TLC continues to support and ensure compliance with several key pieces of legislation which were passed last year. Local Law 78 of 2025 requires taxis and for-hire vehicles to display a decal to warn passengers to look for cyclists when opening the door. The agency voted to adopt rules to implement this requirement at our September 17th Commission meeting and stocked up on our decal supply. TLC will distribute decals during vehicle inspections at the Woodside facility if needed, and decals are available to licensees for free at both our Woodside and Long Island City facilities.

Local Law 84 of 2025 requires the TLC to conduct a new study on the challenges and opportunities related to increasing the use of electric for-hire vehicles and installing new charging infrastructure by the end of this year. In addition, it requires the agency to include data on electric for-hire vehicles, the infrastructure necessary to support them, incentive programs, and overall progress towards the electrification of the for-hire vehicle fleet in its annual for-hire vehicle license review report, which will be released in the next few weeks. I am pleased to announce that 978 new level 2 and 3 chargers have come online since the agency's Green Rides rules were adopted. According to these rules by this year, 25% of all high-volume for-hire vehicle trips must be dispatched to electric or



wheelchair accessible vehicles. Our newly nominated Chair and Chief Executive Officer highlighted in her testimony before the Council that the costs associated with this public good has largely been born by drivers and small businesses and is something that TLC should further review. We fully expect the companies to meet these requirements, and they are on track with a current industry average of 22.7%.

Also in September, TLC completed rulemaking to implement Local Law 90 of 2025, to reduce TLC's insurance requirements for licensed vehicles. TLC now limits the amount of personal injury protection insurance coverage for licensed vehicles to an amount no greater than 200% of the amount required by state law. This change will help drivers and vehicle owners save money while still requiring the highest personal injury protection insurance coverage in the state.

Accessibility remains a top priority for TLC, and we are excited to report that as of today over 58% of the city's active taxi fleet is wheelchair accessible. Currently there are more than 6,300 accessible taxis bringing us closer to our next goal of 50% accessibility of the authorized fleet. Notably, TLC thoroughly reviewed its accessible taxi programs last year to keep the Taxi Improvement Fund (TIF) solvent in anticipation of the increase in wheelchair accessible vehicle hack ups. Leaving the TIF program as it was, with grants for hack ups, quarterly operational payments, \$1 per trip payments for all trips in a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV), and funding the Accessible Dispatch Program was not possible. Our amended rules increased the accessible vehicle hack-up grant for medallion owners from \$14,000 to \$20,000 and capped operational payments at a maximum of \$10,000 for a period of 4 years for eligible participants for a total of \$30,000 in grants to owners. As part of these changes, TLC shifted from a single-vendor accessible dispatch model that cost the TIF \$6 million annually to a multi-provider model serviced by individually licensed E-hail apps at no cost to the fund. Redirecting these funds afforded us the opportunity to add an additional 200 WAVs to the medallion fleet, as well as a \$10 bonus incentive for drivers dispatched by the E-hail companies' call centers. TLC maintained the 24/7 call center requirement and established more stringent service standards, such as requiring agents to receive disability etiquette and sensitivity training. Throughout this process TLC engaged members of the disability community and continues to listen to feedback and perform service audits.

TLC authorized the ATLAS pilot program which helps owners qualify for low-cost financing for accessible vehicle purchases. The program will provide assistance to 100 small business medallion owners to purchase a wheelchair accessible Toyota Sienna, in partnership with Empire State Development, the Disability Opportunity Fund, Hillside Toyota, and the New York Taxi Workers Alliance. The Fund can provide a low interest loan due to the upfront TIF grant of \$30,000, thereby reducing the loan amount from \$80,000



to \$50,000. So far, 16 medallions have received funding, passed inspection, and are in revenue service.

Next, I would like to preview TLC's preliminary budget for fiscal year 2027, which is projected to be approximately \$57.9 million, broken down into \$45.5 million in personal services (PS) and \$12.4 million in other than personal services (OTPS). This is an overall decrease of \$4.2 million, or 6.6%, from the current modified budget. This decrease is the result of less funding for Medallion Relief Program (MRP) needs. Last fiscal year an additional \$4.2 million was added to TLC's budget, specifically for MRP.

Currently the TLC's authorized headcount is 546 for fiscal year 2027. At our budget hearing last year, we reported that we hired the first of several cadet classes to fill 100 new vacancies given to us to backfill high attrition positions. Since then, we have filled all these new lines. Although we continue to see high attrition amongst our Uniformed Service Bureau, we've made great progress in reducing our vacancy rate since the 2025 Preliminary Budget hearing. Last year our vacancy rate at this time was 30%, whereas I am happy to report our current rate is 13%.

As is customary, I want to ensure that the new Committee members are aware of one of TLC's major capital projects. Our Safety and Emissions Inspection Facility in Woodside, Queens, is currently entering the second phase of a \$180 million reconstruction. This project is being managed by the Department of Design and Construction and is expected to be substantially complete by the end of 2028. The project is needed to mitigate structural degradation as well as to meet an increasing demand for inspection services. Once completed, the new facility will increase inspection capacity by 200 cars per day and reduce street congestion associated with entering and exiting vehicles. The original scope of the project was expanded to include 70 new electric vehicle chargers, including 30 level 3 fast chargers, to support TLC's Green Rides initiative. For TLC employees, there will also be a new administrative building, a parking garage, and vehicle testing equipment. The current inspection facility remains operational while the new construction is underway.

Across all of TLC's projects, the agency is committed to ensuring that our vendors reflect the diversity of New York City. The Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE) program expands opportunities for local entrepreneurs to access government contracts and grow their businesses. TLC's current Fiscal Year 2026 M/WBE utilization rate is 40.9%, or \$1.4 million in M/WBE contracts, nearly 11 percentage points greater than the citywide goal of 30%. We are incredibly proud of this achievement. For six consecutive years, TLC has exceeded the citywide M/WBE participation goals and remains committed to closing the fiscal year on June 30th above New York City's 30%



M/WBE requirement. This number reflects utilization for eligible contracts, which do not include intergovernmental contracts or requirement contracts. M/WBE vendors were procured for services required to revise our educational course curriculum, provide translation services, cloud security, and quality assurance. Through all these contracts, we are contributing to advancing equity in our city.

As we prepare for the upcoming fiscal year, I want to thank the dedicated staff at TLC for their efforts to ensure that agency initiatives are successful. I look forward to the opportunity to work with the Mayor, Council, and incoming agency leadership to ensure that the Taxi and Limousine Commission continues to support a fair and equitable industry for licensees, passengers, and all New Yorkers. I am now happy to answer any questions you may have about the TLC's budget or regulated industries.