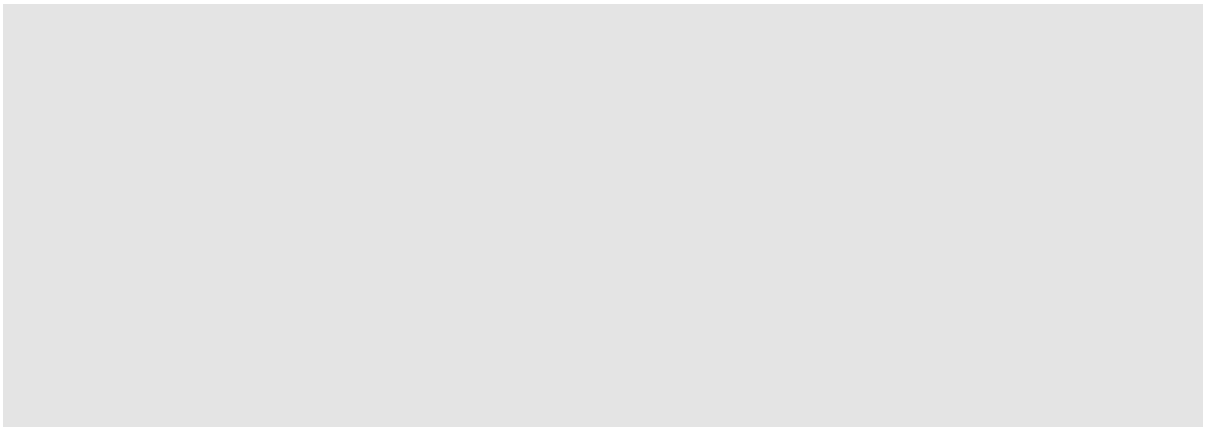




**September 2022 – Keys to the City is a newsletter featuring information about city services that are available to TLC drivers and their families.**



# Letter from the Chair



Dear TLC Licensees,

I hope you and your families have enjoyed the summer! I've been visiting neighborhoods throughout New York City with the TLC External Affairs team to connect with TLC drivers, answer questions, and listen to their stories. I also had the opportunity to speak with passengers about their TLC ride experiences and I look forward to incorporating everyone's feedback into how we deliver a quality transportation experience for all New Yorkers. So far, we met our licensees and passengers at:

- The Independent Driver Guild (IDG) Family Day, Queens
- Taxi Driver Appreciation Day, JFK and LGA Airport
- FDNY Block Party at Engine 153/Ladder 77, Staten Island
- Stop Asian Hate Event, Queens
- ROAR! Resource Fair, Manhattan



**Caption: TLC Commissioner David Do spent Taxi Appreciation Day celebrating hardworking yellow taxi drivers with Executive Director Rick Cotton from Port Authority. Thank you to all our drivers at JFK & LaGuardia for helping to keep the region moving!**

TLC also provided a week of in-person Medallion Relief Program Plus (MRP+) closings to small medallion owners in our Long Island City Office in mid-September. It was a great event! The Medallion Relief Program is now MRP+ and will provide debt relief to more than 3,000 medallion owners under its new terms.

Our TLC team is also working on initiatives that will allow drivers to receive more equitable pay. TLC recently proposed rules that would raise the metered rate and airport fares for taxis and green cabs and increase for-hire vehicle (FHV) driver pay for trips dispatched by high-volume companies (Lyft and Uber). The taxi metered rate of fare proposal would be the first increase in 10 years and would boost taxi driver revenue an average of 33%. The high-volume FHV driver pay proposal, combined with the increase that took effect in March, would result in a 20% increase in the minimum pay for an average trip. The hearings on these proposed rules will be held in early October. If you would like more information, visit our website [here](#). Everyone is invited to sign up to testify or send your written comments to us at [tlcrules@tlc.nyc.gov](mailto:tlcrules@tlc.nyc.gov).

Thank you for your continued service to the city and for helping passengers get to their destination safely.

Sincerely,

*David Do*

TLC Commissioner & Chair



## Highlights this month

- TLC Data Hub
- TLC Owner/Driver Resource Center (ODRC)
- Past and Upcoming TLC Events
- TLC Licensee Leaders- Driver Profiles
- The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) 2022 Community Needs Assessment
- Kingsborough Community College Continuing Education
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging

## TLC Data Hub

The [Data Hub](#) is an interactive and user-friendly tool that allows the public to better visualize and understand trends behind the city's ever-changing licensed vehicle industry. The goal is to make the information the city gathers more accessible to everyone. The digital tool maps the agency's data across the city with industry breakdowns—yellow cab, green taxi, for-hire vehicles, etc.—along with metrics of trips, pick-ups, and drop-offs, allowing users to easily isolate various transportation trends.

## TLC Owner/Driver Resource Center (ODRC)

ODRC offers FREE professional counseling to all TLC licensees. Financial counseling can help you reduce your debt and strengthen your credit score. ODRC can also help you access local, state, and federal emergency resources.

Visit <https://portal.driverresourcecenter.tlc.nyc.gov/> to schedule your appointment today!

Questions? Email [driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov](mailto:driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov)

## Past and Upcoming TLC Events

### Past Events:

#### August 2<sup>nd</sup>:

- **National Night Out-** is an event that to cultivate a relationship between the community and law enforcement. TLC visited Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens for National Night Out and provided passenger and driver information on TLC initiatives.

#### August 20<sup>th</sup>

- **IDG Driver Family Day:** Independent Driver Guild (IDG) held their annual family day in Flushing-Meadows Park. This event was a day of fun, food, and driver resources/offering.

#### August 24<sup>th</sup>

- **Taxi Appreciation Day:** Port Authority held their second annual Taxi Appreciation Day at LaGuardia and JFK Airport. 4 drivers were honored for completing the most airport trips. There were giveaways, refreshments, and food! TLC External Affairs was on hand to answer any questions or concerns.

**Upcoming Events:**

TLC will attend the events below and send email to all licensees about the events closer to their dates. TLC's External Affairs team will be on hand at the events to answer questions and concerns from the riding public and licensees.

- **October 1<sup>st</sup>-Fordham Road Food Festival, Bronx**
- **October 6<sup>th</sup>- TLC in Your Borough (TIYB), Queens**
- **October 16th- New Dorp Car Show, Staten Island**

## TLC Licensee Leaders- Driver Profile

**Join us in TLC Licensee Leaders as we meet with TLC licensees across the city to discuss the issues that matter most.**

Here we speak with Ranny Mercado, a driver of nearly ten years for TLC's Accessible Dispatch and recognized Honor Roll recipient, on his day-to-day as a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) owner and his recent upgrade to the hybrid Toyota Sienna.



**TLC:** How long have you been a TLC licensee?

**Ranny Mercado (RM):** I've been driving since 2013. I started with the green minivan, a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle. I've been in this job for about ten years. I have driven people from New York to Long Island, Buffalo, Virginia Beach, Boston, the list goes on.

**TLC:** What does your typical day look like as a driver for Accessible Dispatch?

**RM:** My experiences haven't been limited to one type. For example, I had this one passenger many times. One day, she started crying. I said, "Why are you crying?" She said, while referring to her wheelchair, "Because of this and what's happening to me. Look at me." I said, "Well, what's wrong?" And you could tell that she didn't feel good about the way she was, because of her condition. And so, I tried to help brighten her day. After all, things happen. Everyone has a different set of circumstances. But the best thing is that you're alive, and when you have people who love you and take care of you. That's the most important. Forget about the rest. Enjoy life and

enjoy the people that you have around. You might be crying today but tomorrow will be another day. It might be raining today, but tomorrow, it's going to be sunny. Same thing.

**TLC: What would you say are some crucial skills to have as a safe and successful driver?**

**RM:** Make people feel better. That is how I drive. Bring them safely. Forget about complaining. Forget about the other drivers. I am not driving for them. Again, I am driving for the other person, the customer. When it's your job, you take that person where they want to go, wherever they're going safely, and to keep a nice environment inside the car. If the person wants to listen to music – Do it. Don't make that time a nightmare.

I suggest to drivers: keep a clean environment inside the van. If you clean your house, clean your car. That is key. No bad smells – no. If I have some type of scent such as vanilla or coconut in the car and the customer doesn't like it, I throw it out.

**TLC: What do you believe is key to customer service?**

**RM:** Where a person is being offensive and makes a comment about a topic, I stay quiet, and I show respect. I don't try to keep a distance between me and the customer, but I try to make the person feel comfortable in the car. When a customer gets in, for example, I am not the owner. The customer is the owner. You have to treat every single person in the same way that you want to be treated. You don't want to be treated bad, right? You want to be treated with respect. We can have a better world!

**TLC: Where do you feel your value system originated from?**

**RM:** Everything comes from your family background. My mom passed, she had cancer. My father had died when I was thirteen – he went through a heart attack. But my mom taught me how to treat others. And this is something that will always stay inside of me. It would be hard for a person to get me upset. My job is one where whatever problem I might have at home stays at home.

**TLC: How have you learned to mitigate a challenging situation?**

**RM:** If a person is getting upset, for whatever reason, my job is to listen. My job is not to get into an argument or create a conflict. It's not my job. My job is to keep my ears open and to see what's going on. If I can do something, to make things better, I might ask, "Can I say something?" If not, I stay quiet. You don't need to create another situation. It is important to remember when you're providing transportation to people with a disability. Whatever problem that person might carry; you have to be ready for it.

**TLC: You just purchased the new hybrid Toyota Sienna. What led to this?**

**RM:** The reason why I changed the van is because the customer deserves better. You want to have something where the person inside is comfortable. And so, I felt it was time to get something better, bigger, and where the customer has plenty of space. [Ranny pulls out the ramp from the back of his Sienna and shows us the size and spotless interior.] You can't keep a customer in an environment where they are going to feel trapped or as though in a little box.

Also, I had put a lot of mileage on my other vehicle. I take a customer wherever they are going when they request a trip, even nine hours away. People would see me in Virginia Beach and be like, "What is this? New York City?" Because of the plates and the NYC logo on the taxi. They were surprised: "You came from New York?" I'd be in PA [Pennsylvania], then all across the Tri-State.

I feel that some customers, where they see that the driver is providing the trip, cares, and is putting effort, may even say, "I need you for my long trip." I have found a lot of repeat customers by

providing service.

**TLC: What learning curve, if any, did you face in understanding WAV securement?**

**RM:** It took me a day to learn. Sometimes I even help other WAV drivers, that I am passing by and who stop me, and they ask me, “Please! Can you help me out? Can you help me secure this? I don’t know how to deal with the locks.” They ask for help in how to secure the passenger.

**TLC: What have you learned in driving for Accessible Dispatch?**

**RM :** When driving, whether green or yellow, we have a job to do. Not only to take the call from Accessible Dispatch, but to help people that we see in the street who are requesting it and to provide service. You have to stop [when seeing a passenger]. That is why we are here. I even see police officers who stop to provide service for passengers with wheelchairs. This job is not something where you should be refusing [service]. And it is not only about the money – it is someone providing you a service. I put myself in the other person’s position – every single person. I think how, tomorrow, it could be me. I ask, “Is there anything I can do for you? Do you have back problems? Surgery?” I try to also avoid the bumps in the road. Keeping your speed limit down helps this.

**TLC: What was your initial experience with TLC education?**

**RM:** When I started, I went to a place in Queens for training. When I went to take classes, I realized it was important to keep my mind clear. I made it a point to listen and take notes. I knew that I didn’t want to face any problems in the future. And the best way that a driver can avoid dealing with a problem is to take their classes. TLC knows what they are doing. Just go, be present, try to learn as much as you can, and learn from other’s experiences. I still have some of the materials in my car.

Also, these days there are a lot of ways for drivers to learn and to understand. We have the internet, and various companies who make videos about how to work with wheelchairs and use ramps.

**TLC: Do you feel you added to your WAV education specifically?**

**RM:** Oh, yeah. It is my business. So, I try to learn as much as I can. Especially because every situation is different with each customer. There are different types of wheelchairs, from motorized ones to manual. Some wheelchairs run out of power. And then you have to help that person.

**TLC: How long does it take you at this point to secure a passenger using a wheelchair?**

**RM:** It takes me about a minute to a minute and a half to secure a passenger. The reason is because I want to make sure that everything is strapped properly and will not cause any movement of the wheelchair. For example, like I said, that person might have a back problem or have had a surgery. So, you have to make sure that the chair is not going to move. It is not the same as when you are driving a regular car, compared to an accessible vehicle. You have to take your time. Remember also to be aware of when you apply the brake, for someone sitting in the back. That can create a problem for the customer, and automatically then is my problem. So, we have to be careful. It’s really about the driver. You have to be responsible. We are dealing with people coming out of surgery, using a wheelchair, everything. In some cases even, the person using a wheelchair might not be seated, but is more like reclined. You have to drive the best way you can and take the person safely to their destination.

**TLC: What do you feel is the future of the NYC taxi industry and WAVs?**



**RM:** I think we should be prepared as a city to encounter more demand for accessible transportation. More and more. But we have a very little amount of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles.

**TLC:** Which current WAV model has the best characteristics?

**RM:** I would say the Sienna. It's very comfortable and has a lot of space. And it does make it possible to save money on gas. The other cars are not hybrid. And this one is. See how it is on right now [gestures to the vehicle] but is running on electricity.

## The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) 2022 Community Needs Assessment

DYCD is conducting their 2022 Community Needs Assessment (CNA) survey. DYCD invests in community-based organizations and programs to alleviate the effects of poverty and provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish. The agency supports a wide range of high-quality community development programs, including:

- After School
- Community Development
- Family Support
- Literacy Services
- Youth Services
- Youth Workforce Development

Your input is valuable and will help inform DYCD about the services you would like to see in your community. Please take a moment to complete [DCYD's Survey](#) to make sure your voice is heard.

## Kingsborough Community College Continuing Education

Kingsborough Community College is a City University of New York (CUNY) school in Brooklyn, and they offer a wide range of classes, programs, and trainings that will allow you to further your education and professional career. Please note that price of courses varies by subject.

Courses included:

- Graphic Design
- Microsoft Excel
- Veterinary Assistant
- Accounting & QuickBooks
- Culinary Arts
- Pharmacy Technician
- Business
- Real Estate and much more!

For more information, visit their [website](#).

**Questions?** Call 718-368-5051 or email [conted@kbcc.cuny.edu](mailto:conted@kbcc.cuny.edu).

## Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging

TLC drivers can access a growing EV charging network in New York City! The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) provide affordable charging to the public in convenient locations. Check these links for more information on the [DOT](#) and [DCAS](#) charging programs!

For even more charging locations, view the New York State Energy Research & Development's (NYSERDA) [Electric Vehicle Station Locator](#), to find Level 2 and DC Fast Chargers that are convenient for you.



Taxi & Limousine Commission

**Let us know what you think! Email comments, questions, suggestions to**  
[tlcexternalaffairs@tlc.nyc.gov](mailto:tlcexternalaffairs@tlc.nyc.gov)