



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



Dear TLC Licensees,

Happy Holidays! I hope you and your families are enjoying good food and quality time together.

Daylight savings time occurred in early November which means that now during afternoon rush hour, visibility is drastically reduced which can lead to fatal crashes. It is important for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians to be mindful of one another. Please remember to drive under the speed limit and to turn on your headlights 30 minutes before sunset.

Visibility Decreases at Dusk

IF YOU DRIVE:

Slow Down:
At 25 MPH drivers are better able to avoid crashes.

Don't Cut Corners:
A safe turn is 5 MPH. Pause and look for people in the crosswalk every time.

WHEN YOU WALK:

Do What you Can to Be Seen:
Drivers' vision drops tenfold as night falls so you might not be visible.

Watch for Turning Vehicles:
More pedestrians are hurt in crashes around sunset than any other time.

nyc.gov/visionzero

On November 15th, TLC voted to increase the taxi fare and high-volume (Uber & Lyft) driver pay. The taxi fare increase is the first in over 10 years and it will put more money in the pockets of drivers, medallion owners, and other industry members, helping to attract drivers to the taxi industry and get taxis back on the road so that they can provide needed passenger service. The increase to high-volume minimum driver pay will also ensure that FHV drivers are adequately compensated and that their pay keeps up with inflation and increased expenses. For a trip of 30 minutes and 7.5 miles, a driver will now have to be paid at least \$27.15. That's up more than \$4 from the original rates and more than \$2.50 from the current rates. The taxi fare and driver pay increases will go into effect on December 19.

TLC is also continuing its Medallion Relief Program (MRP+) closings to small medallion owners and is now available to owners who have DePalma, PenFed, Victoria Funding, and New York Community Bank as their lender. We've eliminated approximately \$316.5 million worth of medallion debt so far. We look forward to adding more lenders in the future. If you have questions about the MRP+ program, please contact the Owner Driver Resource Center at driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov or by calling 718-391-5713.

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

Sincerely,

David Do
TLC Commissioner & Chair

Highlights this month

- Electric Vehicle (EV) Discount
- TLC Emails to Know
- TLC Licensee Leaders- Driver Profile
- Holiday Safety Tips

Electric Vehicle (EV) Discount

TLC is partnering with the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) to offer TLC licensees discounted electric vehicle charging at two municipal fast charging hubs. TLC drivers will pay 30¢ per kW, a discount of 5¢ per kW. The cost of the first hour of parking will be deducted from the charging transaction.

In order to receive this discount, **licensees must sign up using [this web form](#) and use the same email address to sign up for the [EV Connect App](#)** (available on Android and iOS). This discount is currently only available at the **Court Square Municipal Garage located at 45-40 Court Square, Long Island City, NY 11101** and the **Delancey and Essex Municipal Parking Garage located at 105-113 Essex Street and 112-120 Ludlow Street, New York, NY 10002**.

DOT will continue to make more fast-charging stations available to TLC-licensed drivers at discounted prices across the five boroughs. For additional information about DOT's electric vehicle charging initiatives, [click here](#). If you have any additional questions, please e-mail electricvehicles@tlc.nyc.gov.

TLC Emails to Know

The email addresses below can provide timely assistance to your TLC questions. These inboxes are regularly monitored by TLC staff members.

- Plate/Vehicle transfers - FHVTransfers@tlc.nyc.gov
- Licensing Inquiries - licensinginquiries@tlc.nyc.gov
- Driver Protection Unit - driverprotection@tlc.nyc.gov
- Taxi Improvement Fund (TIF) - tift@tlc.nyc.gov
- Medallion Relief Program - MRP@tlc.nyc.gov
- Lease to Own Vehicle Applications - TLCFHVConditional@tlc.nyc.gov
- Drug Test Questions- tlccompliance@tlc.nyc.gov

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.

Licensee Introduction:

Here we speak with Ahmed Elmaskeny, an accountant and taxi driver of nearly thirty-five years and WAV owner-driver of fourteen of them. A TLC Accessible Dispatch Honor Roll honoree and one-half medallion owner, Elmaskeny talks an ever-transformative city and what he's learned across his multi-decade career.



TLC: Where are you from originally?

Ahmed Elmaskeny (AE) : I grew up in Alexandria, Egypt and first came to New York in 1985. I then started driving in 1987 – about thirty-five years ago.

TLC: Would you walk us through your background and what first interested you in becoming a professional driver?

AE: I knew many people who were living here in New York from long before and who were working in the taxi business. Usually, you encounter people who describe that they are able to earn very well

as a driver. However, for me, I started out as an accountant in Egypt where I was working for the Authority of Justice. There, we evaluated financials and the price people had paid for things such as houses and cars when registering them. I still do accounting on the side, part time – focusing on income tax which I started doing around five or six years ago.

I also have a business back in Egypt where I am working with clothes, which I also had here when I first arrived – for the first three years. We were selling garments to outlets and department stores like Sears. Though I quickly found that a business like that requires regular everyday time and effort, and you can only really focus on that. Alongside that, you have to keep buying clothes for resale – so there are many ongoing costs.

TLC: How does your background in business inform and/or vary from your work as a driver?

AE: For one, the business requires your attention seven days a week. Whereas, as a driver and being self-employed, I am able to work when I want and set my own schedule. With one example, when you are sick, you must still work and conduct or open your business. For me, when feeling sick, I can and do go home right away. I am able to open and close whenever I want and that is something I really like about being a driver.

TLC: What was your first vehicle and when did you start driving a WAV?

AE: I have been driving a WAV since 2008. Though I have had a medallion much longer, when there were also no WAVs. Originally, I used to lease a car. I had chances to buy different vehicles early on yet decided it wasn't the right choice at the time because I was still spending time traveling. Since and now it is a different story, as I have my family here too and can't take vacation as I used to. I am here most of the time now, in New York. I have a partner as well, another driver, and we both own a medallion together and this vehicle. Though since 2008, I've driven three different WAVs overall – the first being a Chrysler, then another Toyota, and now this one. This one now was purchased in 2017 and so tomorrow will reach its retirement year. However, due to COVID and driving less, I would say the vehicle does not have too much mileage on it, and especially considering that it is a taxi.

TLC: What does your typical day look like now and how has it changed over time?

AE: Overall, since COVID, our day-to-day has changed a bit. We used to work double shifts, from 5:00 to 5:00. But now we will work one day, having the car for 24 hours each, and then have the next day off. Having two people, two drivers per car, this works better. We used to have another car and that created another shift. We used to work with another partner with that vehicle. Though since COVID, we now only have this car. We had been switching in the sense that one partner could work on day shifts for two weeks, and the other nights – and then that partner switches for the next two weeks that follow. It became easier that way. It's how we agreed on our scheduling, and it worked well. And now we are really working one day on, one day off, and so on. This amounts to one week having three days and the next week having four days of working in total, with the day on, day off solution.

When we were younger, we used to work longer hours. But now we have families! We can only really work until 1:00 am maximum and the only exception is if someone takes us far away. Hour-wise, having the vehicle 24 hours each per driver, I tend to end my day around 11:00 pm or 12:00 am. But I also take breaks all the time. I go to the mosque to pray. This is every two or three hours I take a break. Whenever I am close by a particular place, I am able to stop, and around the time I like to

break, I will go ahead and visit a mosque – especially since there are so many across the city now. You can find a mosque anywhere now. Even at the airport, there is a facility where we can pray. Also, Port Authority has given us a truck where we can pray. It's really good at both Lagoon [airport] and JFK [airport]. Sometimes you will even encounter irregular events there, with, for example, the [TLC] Taxi Appreciation Day at JFK last week. Some drivers earned awards, with one earning \$500.00.

TLC: How has your experience been driving for TLC's Accessible Dispatch?

AE: We used to make seven to eight trips a day with passengers who were using wheelchairs. Now it is averaging out to two to three, for a driver like myself who is willing to accept as many trips as possible with Accessible Dispatch. We used to also take Access-a-Ride trips, though we have stopped and now focus on Accessible Dispatch.

TLC: How do you and your passengers feel about your Toyota Sienna in general, considering you've worked with several other vehicles?

AE: Toyotas are great cars overall. Also, in the way they wear. People have been very happy with the amount of space – and that includes passengers who use wheelchairs and anyone who might be joining them. The vehicle can fit several people, which is pretty different from other vehicles.

TLC: What do you feel are the prevailing opinions toward WAVs?

AE: I think that a lot of people like to drive WAVs. Many also like the incentives.

And on the passenger side, I think that the service is liked and also appreciated. You just have to know when to be there to help someone – especially a passenger who is using a wheelchair. For example, you have to be aware and know when to help by lending your arm. We learned this from the [TLC Driver Education WAV] course. Though certain things you can also only learn from experience.

As for the securements, it did not take long at all to learn how to use them. If anything, it takes a moment for some drivers to learn how to use the ramp on the vehicle properly. [Elmaskeny proceeds to show us how to use the vehicle's ramp.] The ramp is also something you have to repair as needed.

TLC: What advice do you have for new WAV owners or drivers?

AE: My advice would be to be careful and to take it easy. Do not rush. And be mindful with passengers who use wheelchairs.

You might also encounter someone who is using a wheelchair of which the break isn't working. In that case you have to spot it and do your best to secure the chair in the vehicle and to use a seatbelt. Take your time to make sure they will be safe.

TLC: What would you say it takes to be a safe driver?

AE: To be a safe driver, you must have patience. With traffic and everything else, without patience, you will go crazy. With patience you can calm down. Do not rush yourself. Patience is the most important thing having to do with this job. Be aware as you are dealing with different people – different nationalities and also backgrounds.

TLC: What changes have you observed in the areas you typically serve as a driver?

AE: There is a lot of interesting change I have noticed with downtown Manhattan, and especially the Financial District – a neighborhood which once made up 75% of the trips we focused on. Now, I'd say it is less than 50% overall. There are a few different reasons for this yet one would be that the Wall Street crowd, those working down here, have in large part moved to New Jersey or elsewhere. And we don't serve New Jersey directly, as yellow taxi drivers.

I have also noticed that everyone is busy with their phone now, while being a passenger in the vehicle. Where people used to talk to you, as the driver, they now mostly stick to their phone.

TLC: What do you see as beneficial for the future of the New York City taxi industry?

AE: To have an increase in the [taximeter rate of] fare and the reductions on the money owed on loans [by way of the TLC's Medallion Relief Program Plus (MRP+)] we see certain solutions that will help many drivers. Everyone who owes on their medallion should be a part of the program.

TLC: In parting, what continues to inspire you with your work as a NYC taxi driver?

AE: I have raised my family with this business. And I like to be free – If there is some time where I want to travel, then I travel. If I want time off, then I take off. It is the best thing to be your own boss.

Holiday Safety Tips

1. Holiday get-togethers, lack of sleep and shorter hours of daylight make drivers more at risk for drowsiness. Get adequate rest, take frequent breaks, and allow for additional travel time.
2. Winter weather can change quickly, making for hazardous road conditions. Check the forecast and road conditions in advance of traveling. If you are caught in bad weather, find shelter, and wait out the storm.
3. Make sure to provide your vehicle with regular maintenance. Keep tires properly inflated (including your spare tire). Always carry an emergency kit that includes flashlights, jumper cables, blankets, and other tools.
4. During the holidays, more drivers on the road is common. Drive defensively and always keep a space open around your vehicle so you have time to change lanes if someone cuts you off, brakes abruptly or slides on ice.



Taxi & Limousine Commission

Let us know what you think! Email comments, questions, suggestions to
tlcexternalaffairs@tlc.nyc.gov