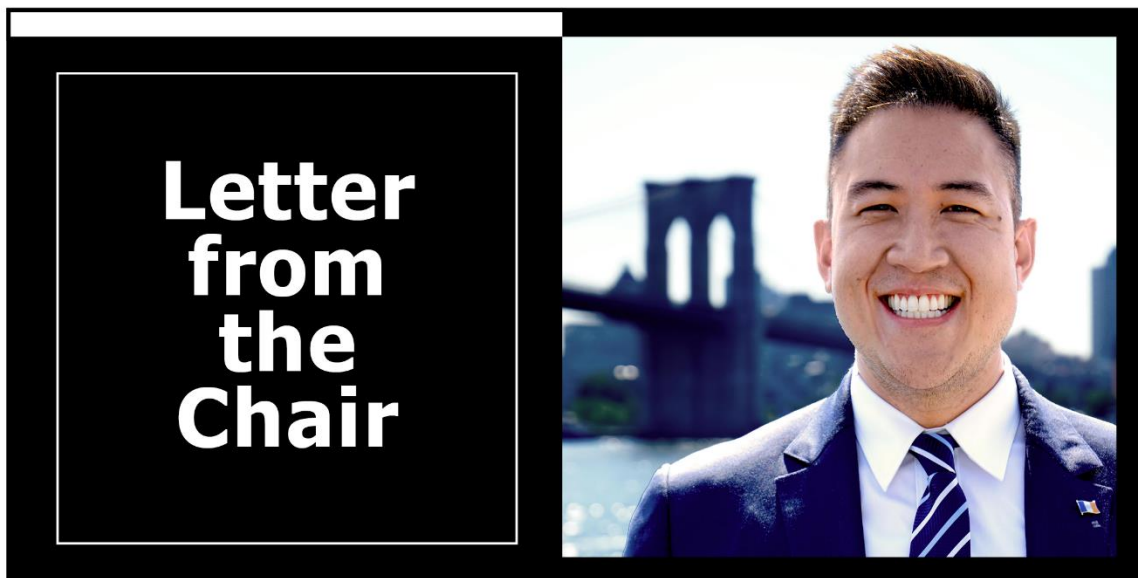




**January 2023 – Keys to the City is a newsletter featuring information about city services that are available to TLC drivers and their families.**



Dear TLC licensees,

I want to wish you, your family, friends, and loved ones a happy New Year! The start of 2023 marks the end of my first calendar year with the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC). Since I

began in May and transitioned from the Department of For-Hire Vehicles (FHV) in Washington, D.C., I have not stopped learning about the taxi and FHV industries in New York City, nor have I stopped working to implement positive changes for our licensees. TLC closed out 2022 with some amazing accomplishments, and we will continue to develop new initiatives throughout 2023.

We have rolled out and expanded the Medallion Relief Program (MRP), which provides small yellow taxi owners burdened by debt with financial assistance and free legal representation to negotiate with their lenders. So far, MRP has helped over 1,700 medallion owners receive over \$350 million in debt relief. In addition, TLC approved the first fare increase in ten years for taxicabs and street-hail liveries to offset the historic increases in fuel costs and inflation. TLC is listening to our licensees as our agency works to effectively and fairly regulate the industry.

In the New Year, licensees can expect a number of new developments. TLC will continue to monitor the legal challenges to the new driver pay standards proposed in 2022. TLC approved changes to its driver pay rules on November 15, 2022, raising the minimum rates of pay for drivers working for High-Volume For-Hire Services. The increased minimum pay rates were scheduled to take effect on December 19, 2022. On January 6, 2023, a judge struck down TLC's proposed pay rate increase for drivers of High-Volume For-Hire Services (Lyft and Uber) as a result of legal action initiated by Uber. Therefore, the current minimum pay rates will remain in effect until further notice. I firmly believe that drivers should be paid fairly for their work. Agency staff is carefully reviewing the judge's written decision, and we will continue to do what is within our legal authority to protect this important pay standard.

Additionally, TLC voted on January 25 to issue 1,000 electric vehicle licenses in order to electrify the TLC-licensed fleet, drive the development of charging infrastructure, and allow drivers to avoid the volatility and high costs of gasoline.

Out of the total 1,000 licenses, 600 will be exclusively available to individual TLC-licensed *drivers*. The 400 licenses will be available to *anyone* (including drivers) and applicants will be limited to 25 licenses per Social Security Number or Employer Identification Number.

Both types of licenses will be distributed on a first come, first served basis via statement of interest forms which will be available online in mid-March. The 600 licenses for *drivers* will be available first with the 400 licenses for *anyone* becoming available in the following weeks. TLC will be providing more updates on timelines and the application process through an Industry Notice, the TLC website, email, and social media in early March.

Those who are interested in these new licenses should not purchase an electric vehicle or expect to be eligible until TLC announces additional details.

We appreciate your patience as we work to implement this process.

Sincerely,

David Do  
*TLC Commissioner & Chair*

## **This Month's Highlights**

- **New Employee Spotlight Series Coming Soon!**
- **Winter Driving Tips from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)**
- **TLC Releases Important Reports**
- **LGA Taxi Raffles**
- **Mobile Office Van**
- **MRP Update**
- **New Black Car Fund Insurance**
- **CUNY in the Heights Free Course Offerings**
- **Legislation Updates**
- **Upcoming Public Hearings and Commission Meetings**
- **TLC Email Directory**
- **License Leaders - Driver Profiles**
- **Update LARS for the New Year**

**New Employee Spotlight Series Coming Soon!**



Each day, Taxi and Limousine Commission team members from many different departments interact with hundreds of people throughout the course of their duties. A new employee spotlight is going to take a deeper look into what our employees do and how they play a big part in keeping our agency running. Whether they work in Manhattan, Queens, or Staten Island, you will soon get to see the exclusive behind-the-scenes action that very few get to experience!

**Winter Driving Tips from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)**



Winter is finally upon us, which means that we should all take extra precautions while driving. According to the NHTSA, there were over 25,000 crashes that resulted in injuries in 2020. You can stay safe this season by understanding how colder temperatures affect your vehicle and road conditions. Visit the NHTSA's website for more information on winter driving: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/winter-driving-tips>.

### TLC Releases Important Reports



TLC released *Charged Up!*, a report on the electrification of the taxi and for-hire vehicle industries in New York City. We encourage you to read the full report by [clicking here](#).

As part of our agency's efforts to address climate change and improve air quality, TLC is committed to transitioning the vast majority of its licensed fleet to electric vehicles by 2030. Our report identifies public policy tools to meet the distinct challenges to the electrification of the taxi and for-hire industries in New York City.

Additionally, TLC released its 2022 Annual Report. This document contains important information about the activities of the agency in the past year and covers important information about the agency's structure, rulemaking actions, policies, initiatives, consumer complaints, and summons. You can read the full report by [clicking here](#).





**LaGuardia**  
Airport

## Taxi Incentive Raffle Ticket Giveaway

**Date:** Wednesday, February 8<sup>th</sup> 12pm-1pm

**Location:** Terminal C Taxi Hold Lot



**Requirement:** Get your raffle tickets Sunday and Tuesday 10pm-12am from Terminal B or C Taxi Hold Lots.

- Chance to win a free airline ticket!
- Thank you to our taxi drivers!



The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has started a new taxi incentive raffle at LaGuardia Airport (LGA)! Yellow taxi drivers who service the airport at certain times will be eligible to win free airline tickets. If you are interested in participating, visit [LGA Taxi Hold Lot Supply](#) on Twitter at

[@lgataxi](#). New raffle dates will be announced on social media.

## Mobile Office Van

**NYC**  
Taxi & Limousine  
Commission

**Coming early 2023!**

# TLC Mobile Office

Skip the trip to Long Island City  
- let us come to you! We're bringing  
customer service to all five  
boroughs!

### What we can help you with:

Navigating TLC Up  
Scheduling appointments  
Paying a summons  
And more!

[www.nyc.gov/taxi](http://www.nyc.gov/taxi)



Through a new pilot initiative starting in early 2023, TLC will be offering services from our new mobile office across the five boroughs. This means that you may be able to get some of the same services available at our Long Island City office at an accessible location in a neighborhood near you. Services and

dates will be finalized soon!

## MRP Update

A promotional graphic for the Medallion Relief Program (MRP). It features a yellow background with a blue archway containing a side-view illustration of an orange NYC taxi. The text "MEDALLION RELIEF PROGRAM" is written in a blue, sans-serif font along the top curve of the arch. Below the arch, the text "\$350M in Debt Relief" is displayed in a large, bold, blue font. At the bottom of the graphic, contact information is provided: the phone number "718-391-5511", the email address "driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov", and the address "31-00 47th Avenue Long Island City, NY". The NYC Taxi & Limousine Commission logo is positioned at the very bottom center.

Medallion owners with six or fewer medallions can sign up for the Medallion Relief Program (MRP) before the program ends on January 31<sup>st</sup>! The NYC Taxi Medallion Relief Program has helped over 1,600 medallion owners receive over \$348 million in debt relief and is available for a limited time. All loan closings and grants must go through the TLC Owner/Driver Resource Center (ODRC).

The deadline to sign up for the Medallion Relief Program (MRP) is January 31, 2023. Closings will continue after that date, but you need to sign up first. Please contact the Owner/Driver Resource Center by the deadline to see if you qualify.

Medallion owners can connect with the Owner/Driver Resource Center in four different ways to complete the first step:



- Book a Legal Services Appointment: <https://portal.driverresourcecenter.tlc.nyc.gov>
- Email: [driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov](mailto:driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov)
- Call: (718) 391-5713

## New Black Car Fund Insurance



# BlackCar FUND

## DRIVERS BENEFITS

[Accident Disability Insurance](#) is now available through the Black Car Fund. This insurance covers accidental disability while outside of work and is separate from the Workers Compensation benefit provided by the Black Car Fund.

Drivers unable to work due to a covered accident can receive 70% of their pre-disability net driving income up to \$1,500 per month, for up to a year (after a 30-day elimination period). This can help pay for essential living expenses such as utilities, rent, car payments, insurance, and more while you're unable to work.

You must be enrolled in the Black Car Fund Driver Benefits program to receive the new Accident Disability Insurance benefit. To learn more or to sign up for these benefits, please visit [ny.driversbenefits.org](http://ny.driversbenefits.org). If you have additional questions or require assistance, you can contact Black Car Fund Driver Benefits by phone at 1 (833) 814-8590 or by email at [help@driversbenefits.org](mailto:help@driversbenefits.org).

## CUNY in the Heights Free Course Offerings



**FREE Programs!**  
**Learn More. Apply Online Today!**  
**[www.bmcc.cuny.edu/meoc](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/meoc)**

**Learn English**

**Earn Your  
High School Equivalency Diploma**

**Prepare for College**

**Move from a Job to a Career**

**Certified EKG Training**

**Certified Nursing Assistant**

**Certified Phlebotomy Training**

**Certified Electronic Health Records**

**Certified Medical Administrative Assistant**

**Security Officer Training**

**OSHA Program (30-Hr. & 10-Hr. SST and Flagger)**

163 West 125th Street, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10027  
212-961-3231 • [admissions@man.eoc.cuny.edu](mailto:admissions@man.eoc.cuny.edu) • [www.bmcc.cuny.edu/meoc](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/meoc)

SUNY MEOC is an equal opportunity employer/program.  
Auxiliary aids and services are available upon reasonable request to individuals with disabilities.





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212-961-3231 • [admissions@man.eoc.cuny.edu](mailto:admissions@man.eoc.cuny.edu)**

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PROGRAM**

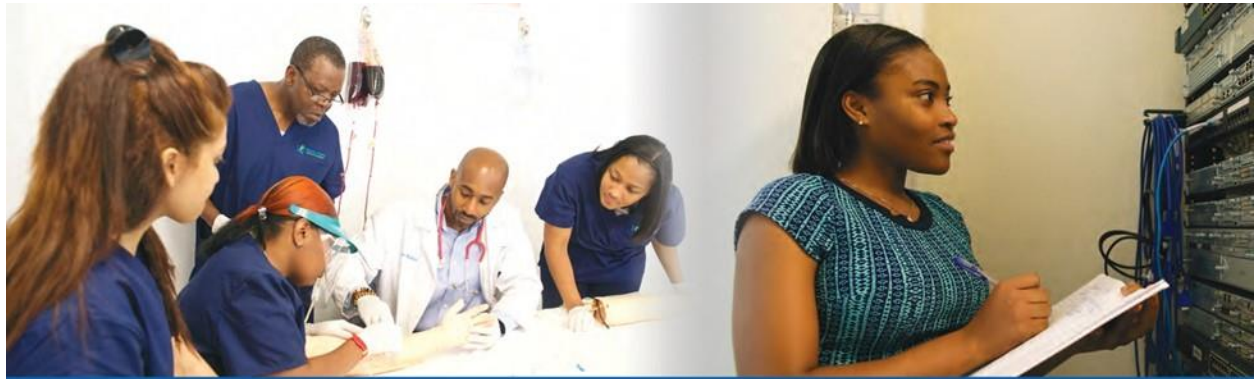


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CUNY in The Heights, operated by the Borough of Manhattan Community College, provides opportunities for academic, career, and personal advancement at its campus in Inwood at 5030 Broadway, New York, NY 10034. Please see the above flyers or click here for additional details about [their course offerings](#) and [English classes](#).

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## Start a new career in **Healthcare** or **Information Technology** at NO COST TO YOU!

### Eligibility:

- ✓ Interested in healthcare or I.T. careers
- ✓ A single parent, or guardian
- ✓ 25 years of age and older
- ✓ Have a high school diploma or equivalent
- ✓ Have not completed an associate nor an undergraduate degree
- ✓ Live in Upper Manhattan, or the Bronx

Apply now for the **IHOPE PROGRAM** at BMCC/CUNY in The Heights to start your pathway to a career in the fast-growing field of healthcare or information technology. In a matter of months, you can earn a certificate and create new possibilities for your family and your future.

**Questions?**  
 Contact Nina Aristy  
 naristy@bmcc.cuny.edu  
 212-776-6616

The IHOPE Program is generously supported by a grant from The Robin Hood Foundation. Our IHOPE Community Partners are WHEDco, NMIC, POTS and BronxWorks.



### Benefits



Childcare costs covered (for any of your dependent children under the age of 6)



Free laptop and hot spot



Access to student support services such as tutoring, peer support, career exploration and much more!



Career Navigator champion to ensure you successfully graduate from this program and gain employment



Free MetroCard



Access to emergency funds

### Get Started

[www.bmcc.cuny.edu/cuny-in-the-heights/ihope](http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/cuny-in-the-heights/ihope)





- Learn English.
- Earn a High School Equivalency Diploma.
- Prepare for careers as State Licensed Security Guards.
- Earn certifications in a number of fields.

Additionally, students interested in a new career in healthcare or information technology may be eligible for free tuition and benefits through the IHOPE program. Please see the below flyer or [click here for additional details](#).

### Legislation Updates

- Catalytic Converter Legislation:
  - The Governor signed [S.9428/A.1940](#) to impose restrictions on the purchase, sale and possession of catalytic converters by dismantlers, scrap processors, and others to deter theft. It also requires vehicle dealers to stock catalytic converter etching kits to be offered with new vehicles at no cost.
  - The New York City Council passed [Int 0525-2022](#) which requires sellers of second-hand Catalytic Converters to verify that the part was removed legally. The New York City Council also passed [Int 0759-2022](#) which requires the Police Department to establish a program to provide the public with etchings that affix or engrave identifying numbers into catalytic converters.
- Commuter Van Resolution:
  - The New York City Council passed [Res 0292-2022](#) calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the New York State Governor to sign, S.5320/A.9731, which would allow commuter vans to accept hails from prospective passengers in the street.

### Upcoming Public Hearings and Commission Meetings

**Taxi and Limousine Commission:** <https://www.nyc.gov/site/tlc/about/public-notice.page>

### TLC Email Directory

If you have specific TLC questions, please refer to the below list to find the best inbox to get assistance from. These inboxes are regularly monitored by TLC staff members.

Issue	Email
Enforcement	<a href="mailto:enforcement@tlc.nyc.gov">enforcement@tlc.nyc.gov</a>

Vehicle Inspections	<a href="mailto:inspections@tlc.nyc.gov">inspections@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Taxi Improvement Fund	<a href="mailto:tift@tlc.nyc.gov">tift@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Medallion Relief Program	<a href="mailto:mrp@tlc.nyc.gov">mrp@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Owner Driver Resource Center	<a href="mailto:driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov">driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Public Testimony on TLC Rules	<a href="mailto:tlcrules@tlc.nyc.gov">tlcrules@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Driver Protection Unit	<a href="mailto:driverprotection@tlc.nyc.gov">driverprotection@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Licensing	<a href="mailto:licensinginquiries@tlc.nyc.gov">licensinginquiries@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Drug Testing	<a href="mailto:tlccompliance@tlc.nyc.gov">tlccompliance@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Medallion Hardship Vehicle Retirement Extension	<a href="mailto:vre@tlc.nyc.gov">vre@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Settlement Requests	<a href="mailto:settlements@tlc.nyc.gov">settlements@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Driver Education Requirements	<a href="mailto:education@tlc.nyc.gov">education@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Plate/Vehicle Transfers	<a href="mailto:fhvtransfers@tlc.nyc.gov">fhvtransfers@tlc.nyc.gov</a>
Lease to Own Vehicle Applications	<a href="mailto:tlcfhvconditional@tlc.nyc.gov">tlcfhvconditional@tlc.nyc.gov</a>

## Licensee Leaders - Driver Profiles

### Licensee Leader Profiles

Join us for TLC Licensee Leaders as we meet with TLC licensees across the city to discuss the issues that matter most. This edition features interviews with two TLC licensees. These interviews have been condensed and edited for clarity.

### Licensee Introduction:

Syed “Sunny” Zahoori, a 30-year taxi industry veteran and manager of the Harlem-based East West

Management base and garage, chronicles his background as a mechanical engineer back in Pakistan, in his role as a voluntary advisor on NYC's Taxi of Tomorrow and the Ford Transit Connect, and what it takes to oversee a 24/7 operation in the "land of opportunity," as he calls it.



**Interview:**

**TLC:** Please tell us a bit about your professional background.

**Syed “Sunny” Zahoori:** My background is as a mechanical engineer, and I somehow became involved in this industry. I have been here for around 30 years—starting with this company [East West Management] in the early 1990s as the manager of operations.

**TLC:** How do you feel that perspective as a mechanical engineer informed your work as a base manager?

**SZ:** From time to time, and as my skill set expanded, I have volunteered to participate with the TLC on a number of projects. These have included when partitions first became mandated in-car in the early 1990s as well as, around the same time, incorporating passenger-side air conditioning within the vehicle. Before then, there was not air conditioning on that side—so we really jumped on that project and in being a part of it. We introduced a plastic duct for that, which I designed using PVC pipes, which was approved by the TLC.

I love my job so when I have something I can work on or improve; I jump on it. That is why I have been here for 30 years! Of course, many things come gradually.

As another example, for the Crown Victoria vehicle, I was working with Ford [Motor Company] in modifying it as a taxi—a stretched version of the regular sized vehicle, [which became] the Ford Stretch Crown Victoria [first introduced as a yellow taxi in 2001].

**TLC: What was it like being a voluntary advisor consulting on such large-scale taxi industry projects?**

**SZ:** It has been interesting advising on such projects because I am also considering the industry and the drivers and what they want.

Eventually, the city decided to focus on the Taxi of Tomorrow—to choose a vehicle representing the New York City taxi—which became the [Nissan Motor Corporation's] NV200. I was also participating with that, working with both Nissan and the TLC. Anything going on with the project, the TLC sent it over here, and then I would coordinate with Nissan's team in Tokyo, Japan, for the NV200, and the Japanese company Jatco, for the transmission. I had to focus on the different parts of the car—that was my project on the Taxi of Tomorrow.

**TLC: What did exercising that expertise look like on an everyday basis?**

**SZ:** The base of the project consisted of modifying the engine for the car—this was 24/7. The TLC allowed us to run a pilot program. Initially we put out just eight or nine cars for the program. We tested the weight and the load for the vehicle. It was a huge program. The engineers working on design were here every day. It was actually going pretty well, and we addressed early problems with the vehicle while considering the need for a strong car. The goal was for all parties to be happy and to have comfort. With passengers as well, we focused on developing comfort for people of all ages.

From the time we started, it was seven years in total that I worked on the Taxi of Tomorrow and in modifying it—working on its suspension, etc. I continued to participate in the project on my own time. The TLC's requirements were very tough, and that is the way to be for projects like that—for a taxi which will be across New York City and meant to be comfortable for the public. We had to develop a very strong car, paying attention to every detail.

We did extensive testing for a long time. For example, to test the load, we would drive 500 kilograms of weight on different sides of the vehicle. This would be for 100 miles at a time. After such a trip we would then check the vehicle, take a picture of it, make a full report on it. It was day and night work. And I loved it. There were many challenges that we had to overcome. The large glass sunroof was one of them. The idea was to be sitting in the back and being able to see the high-rise buildings and skyscrapers, to create a pleasant ride.

**TLC: How did you initially prepare yourself for that?**

**SZ:** That is a very good question. I feel that when you have decided on something, you have to be prepared for it—you jump into something and maybe don't know how deeply you will be involved in it. What will happen at the end of that? Will it work and will it be suitable [for the industry]?

You always have to be prepared for a U-turn. Since working in this industry, I have learned that and have become mentally prepared for it.

**TLC: Share with us your thoughts on Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs).**



**SZ:** My opinion about Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles, from the beginning, is that they are a wonderful idea. I love that they came to the industry. If I remember correctly, we were also the first to have a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle medallion.

**TLC: What are some observations of WAVs you've had over time?**

**SZ:** The first thing is that from both the drivers and the passengers, we hear very good remarks on WAVs. Trust me—everywhere.

And of course, I really wanted that [to be], from the first day. When we initiated having our first ten WAV-related medallions, I was asked about the order by the president, of my company East West Management, “Are you sure you want that?” And I was sure that’s what I wanted. And that was a time, no less, when there was only one car choice available. And so, ten new cars came in from Michigan. Yet that particular car was not as strong as others [that followed], and mechanically required a lot of modification—from the ramp to everything else.

From then until now, a lot has changed. Everything gets better and better.

Also, early on, it started without incentives for the drivers [to drive WAVs], incentives for the honest. And then I think with the NV200 is when the incentives started to be introduced. And from there it could also be seen that every driver realized they loved to drive WAVs.

**TLC: What are your plans for the base's fleet of WAVs in the future?**

**SZ:** We have a new order of 22 WAVs we are waiting for now, in 2022. They are on their way. The idea as well is to replace the other cars too—to be all Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles. Of course, there will be a lot of money involved, and it is a process, but we are on the path.

**TLC: In your opinion, why is providing that WAV availability so important?**

**SZ:** I have thought a lot about WAVs and how the WAV classes are good for and benefit the drivers, and even as a human. Think of when you have seen someone who uses a wheelchair waiting in the street for a car—think about it. Tomorrow, that could be you using a wheelchair.

Think of the changing demographic. In the next years, more than 40% of people will be of older age. It is another reason I love WAVs and that they are a wonderful idea. And the drivers here love to drive them. They love the concept and love to work with cars that are accessible—love it. I have also experienced not being able to dispatch the regular car—with drivers telling me, “Sunny, I need the accessible vehicle.” They have waited months, because others are driving them, until they are available. I would have to organize it where I put them on the waiting list until something is open.

And now, while we wait for our new order, we also find that everything is on the road. Drivers seem to be very happy with them. Let’s see. If everything goes okay, by this time next year, I hope to have completely replaced the fleet to WAVs—that is the project now. With the money required, I would do it tomorrow. It takes a lot to get there, but today, it is my dream. And it will happen—when you walk in the right path.

**TLC: What is your relationship with the drivers?**

**SZ:** I have really found my own way of handling this operation. Everything to do with this operation is resting on my shoulders, and I can say that the best thing is that within the last 30 years, I have not heard any complaints from the drivers.

My door is open all the time for the drivers. The driver is my family. And I feel you have to show respect to them, as much as possible. And that is the reason for them to respect you in return. Also, for us, the driver is the customer. If they are not working, then I am not working, and nobody is working. Whatever it is they have to say, we listen. They give advice a lot of the time, and I make sure to let them know when it is good advice.

**TLC: How has doing this work and managing the business shaped you as a person?**

**SZ:** Since starting, I can see that—doing this work—you have no life. That is the truth. I will tell you though that I am most happy with and love my job. There are critical responsibilities every moment, and sometimes they have to do with unforeseen hazards. There are situations where you do not know what is going to happen—this is the taxi industry, 24/7. I sleep in my guest room, not in my bedroom! [Laughs.] Because at 2:00 am, when a phone call comes, I don't want my wife to be disturbed. And I don't want to *not* pick up the phone—I love to pick up the phone.

One thing that I learned, for success in this business, to never ever pile up the jobs. When you have a problem come, solve it right away. And if you can, plan that problem's solution out before the sun even comes up.

I have six kids in total. All of them are doing well and reaching the top—two who attended Ivy League schools. My son, Zammam, he attended Cornell University and just did his PhD in Neuroscience. And my youngest daughter just finished her double master's at Columbia University. I feel they have done everything, and they will always ask me, "Come on, Dad, how are you doing it?" I'll tell them, "You choose your life."

There are so many things in life that I have put to the side because of my job. You know, sometimes I emotionally regret it. Everything is a tradeoff. But, if you asked me, "How do you feel about your past thirty years?" I would say how I thank God—I'm still in good shape and still love my job. I don't smoke, I don't drink; basically, I am a sportsman and practice karate, as a black belt. Life is good and I have no complaints. I give credit to my wife. 24/7 for 30 years—I am 62. Half of the life I have given to this job. I give credit to my kids, as well, for reaching top of their fields and getting good jobs.

**TLC: Where do you feel your values and interests first originated?**

**SZ:** I grew up in Pakistan, where I was a mechanical engineer. My cousin, who was like a father figure to me, had started a business there and within 20 years, he built the company up as a provider of automobile parts manufacturing. From the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I was spending time with my father there. He was very strict and a hard-working guy. And from 1988, my father's industry became the third largest in Pakistan. There were many engineers, doctors, and skilled people working. We went on to making everything from war tents to chains to tankers, and eventually specialized in matches. The match industry is something that had huge demand and we helped build it up. Then as well the sugar and cement industries. I remember [early on] that any new machinery or equipment we had bought, I would ask my cousin, "Can I please go to training, please?" to learn. Eventually I was able to and went to Germany and China to learn more. I became the youngest engineer in my company.

Are you familiar with Morris Motors? They made a very famous car in Europe. And somehow, we got their assembly line. As well, a sample I made for the Pakistan Army, resulted in me being personally

awarded a bonus of 150,000 rupees (almost \$5,000). As you can see, I made it a point to always be involved, from the beginning.

Of course, sometimes I have not balanced my family and my work. My family and others will say to me, “You love your job more than us.” I have said, “You know, somehow, you’re right.” [Laughs.] But you know what, I am happy for them.

What I found to be the most dangerous thing would be if my kids inherited the way I work—and you can see they have, as though it is a copy. For example, I asked my son, who moved to Boston and is working as a senior advisor, “How many hours do you work?” He said, “Dad, you’re right. I am working 18-hour, 19-hour-days.” I responded, “Well, if someone gives you half a million dollars, do you think they are going to give it to you for free?” [Laughs.] All my kids—sometimes I’ll say, “What are you doing? Today is a holiday.” They say, “Did you ever stay at home on a holiday?” I say, “No,” and so they say “OK, let us go.” [Laughs.] And the same thing with my father—I never saw my father. You know, he was a wonderful person—a very lovely person and very honest—and the same thing has come to us. I thank God for an excellent life, without problems or surprises or sickness. What else could you want? Nothing. It’s a win-win situation.

**TLC: How do you see the future of the NYC taxi industry and that of your own?**

**SZ:** Very bright. There are so many different ideas.

And I will tell you, I have loved the TLC from the first day. I feel I know this industry very deeply and believe me, the TLC is needed. For one example, inspections are needed—to always ensure the vehicle is taken care of.

I will also be ready for electric vehicles and charging stations—I’ll jump on it. I really want that. There is also something else, about the future. I noticed that the drivers now are more vigilant, more knowledgeable. You can also see over the years that the drivers have become more understanding of the industry and are not here to take advantage of it. They come to bring a part of themselves to this industry.

I don’t know how much longer I myself will be in the industry—I see everyone deciding to take retirement. I don’t feel like I will ever retire—I don’t want to retire until my last breath. No, I don’t know how long. Only God knows. I do have the question from my wife though, “Are we going to spend some time in our life?” And I say, “Definitely. I promise.” I am 62 years old, and I don’t know when I’ll retire.

**TLC: What is a major takeaway you have received from this base?**

**SZ:** Teamwork. This company has treated me like silk—very well. I have never had problems of any kind. It is nice when someone trusts you with so much responsibility. And, of course, all the time I have taken guidance from my boss, Guy Roberts, a very talented and knowledgeable person—78 years old now. I can say he takes care of me as though he would himself. We have a great mutual understanding and mutual disposition. Being here, in my dream place, has been like raising a child. You take care and watch growth—every day thinking of it.

I have a very good team, an unbeatable team. Do you see that sign there? [points to plaque in the room gifted by the owner of East West Management.] “Unstoppable.” It is from my boss 25 years ago. Emotionally, I sometimes feel like, it’s not going to be fair to leave eventually and let this base go down. The taxi industry is such a place where if you are not having your personal, regular attention on it—a lot can happen within a small time, and then a time comes when it is something that is out of control, and some type of collapse even.

That's my motto: Don't pile up the jobs. And this attitude is something that has been recognized by the industry by choosing to participate and that includes the previous TLC chairpersons who have visited me here. I will keep going as long as I can. I have no complaints. And again, I have no doubt that the future is very bright. After all, New York is the land of opportunity. It's important to take note of when you are "fishing with shrimp" and reminding yourself that what you are doing here is for the long term. And that the time for all things will come.



### **Licensee Introduction:**

We also have a chance to meet with Felix Cadet, a medallion owner and customer service enthusiast originally from Port-au-Prince, Haiti. With Cadet, we speak of customer service values, taking time to rest, and being there for your fellow driver.

### **Interview:**

**TLC:** Tell us a bit about your background. What first influenced you to be a professional driver?

**Felix Cadet:** I'm from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and originally came to New York in 1985. I first drove a black car and then moved on to driving a yellow cab. I found that being a yellow cab driver was safer. Also, it was my dream to work in Manhattan, and to work with passengers there, whereas with the other company, I was working mostly in Brooklyn.



It was my dream to drive a taxi and to get a medallion. It is something I think is dependable and allows me to make a better living. That's what first had me interested in getting my TLC license to be a cab driver.

**TLC: What were your first experiences like with a passenger and what did you ultimately learn from that trip?**

**Cadet:** When I first started, I felt like it wasn't easy to learn the names of the hotels. But at school, they actually do tell you about some of them. They also give you tips on the best way to cross Central Park and accessing these places.

I remember a passenger who had asked me, for example, to bring her to Lincoln Center. And I did not know exactly where Lincoln Center was! It's easy when you know, but at that time I had to ask her, as the passenger, "Do you know how I can get there?" I asked her, "What Street?" Because I learned how to read the streets, from school. I kept learning and learning until finally I found it easy. And the passenger was helpful! She said, "Oh! Are you a new driver?" I told her yes, and she gave me a good tip, telling me "Ok, keep learning!" Since then, I've never had a problem or got a ticket, you know. I was lucky.

Passengers always tell me how I am a good and careful driver. And for me, concern for the passenger is something I really feel. I really care about their safety. They always treat me good!

**TLC: What are you most proud of as a driver and self-employed individual?**

**Cadet:** When you're a taxi driver, you're self-employed. You have your medallion; you don't have a boss... And when you feel like you have a day where you don't want to go to work, where there is something very important to do, there is no one to say, "Hey, you can't take a day off." You can do what you want when you are self-employed. You're free. And that makes me happy about it.

At this time, I don't drive every day. But I make sure I work and make money to pay my bills.

**TLC: What is something that you would like to share with new drivers entering this industry?**

**Cadet:** They should know that when they come to work, to do good things. Especially, they have to learn to make passengers happy. Do the right thing – have respect for them and don't overcharge them, develop a good relationship with your passengers. Drive safely.

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

**Cadet:** When driving, first of all, you have to look out for pedestrians. Then, there's speed. The speed is a big concern for my passengers and customers, and the pedestrians on the street. That is a concern. An accident is not something you want. Thank God I have never had one.

Something useful I learned is that when a passenger enters your car, to always repeat the destination they tell you – to make sure you know exactly where they are going, to not upset them. It is what I learned from [TLC driver education], to make sure everything is right. That's why I never had trouble with passengers. They tell me that I'm a very good driver. And I really appreciate that. When passengers are happy about your service, they will treat you better and give you a good tip.

The way I see it I take what I've learned, like knowing the city very well, and I feel it makes passengers happy when they are with me. They are happy with my service.

**TLC: What is something important you've learned in your career that you'd like to share with others?**

**Cadet:** After a while, I became sick. My sickness was that I had heart failure and kidney failure. It was a bad experience. Going back [to work] was something that I made sure to do easily. I had heart surgery on February 2001 and afterwards, I also had the kidney issue. They have to clean my blood every week, four times a week, for four hours with the machine. It isn't easy but now I am used to it.

I realized that I had to pay attention to things like sitting too long. When you're driving a taxi, you have to walk around and not sit for eight to ten hours straight. That was something that I learned. And I really felt thankful to God that I could go back to work.

**TLC: How do you feel you incorporate those moments of rest throughout your workday?**

**Cadet:** There are certain things. For example, I will be at the airport, and I'll park the car and go for a walk. There are a few others that do it as well.

**TLC: In what way do you see drivers watching out for each other?**

When I was in the hospital, admitted for three months, my friend who is a driver, supported me a lot. They even helped to pick me up when being discharged. They were happy to take me home – from Manhattan to Brooklyn. It's a good relationship. I have another friend driving as well. We make it a point to stay in touch and support each other.

**TLC: What do you wish people knew about WAVs?**

**Cadet:** For one thing, a WAV is not only for people who use wheelchairs. But, in general, it is nice to be able to help passengers who might want it. I am happy to be able to. I feel lucky to have gotten an accessible vehicle.

And for drivers, it's good because you can make a little extra profit.

Before, I felt this way, but now I am even more concerned. Being in the hospital, I saw what it feels like. If you are someone who needs help from others, you can also learn to appreciate giving it. I think it is a good thing to help other people. And it is good to be helped.

**TLC: Describe your experience learning to drive a WAV.**

**Cadet:** Before anything, there is the program – the WAV course. I think with that, so long as you learn what you need, you will manage, and it will be easy. I would say I'm used to it. It's really due to the school – they teach you and show you how to interact with people and their wheelchairs. It is not difficult. They have it on screen, and next to that the instructor is there going over what you're watching.

If there is a passenger who cannot walk or who uses a cane, you can give them your arm to hold onto. It might also be good to stay near enough to help them if they ask you. Then, when seated, if they cannot put their seatbelt on, you can help them by putting it on after asking. All of this can help provide good service. This is something I am really concerned about and attend to.

As a driver, communication is important. You have to know how to speak to the passenger. It is something that can make the job easier for you. It is convenient for both the driver and the passenger.

**TLC: How do you see the future of the NYC taxi industry?**

**Cadet:** Well, the future... for me, I think the Taxi and Limousine Commission, right now, is always looking to make the industry better. It looks like the future is good and I have the feeling it will keep getting better.

As for electric vehicles, it will be a matter of making sure there are enough charging stations. Let's say you have a passenger who wants to go somewhere far, like even out of state, you'd have to make sure your battery isn't going to die. I'm just happy driving my WAV.

**Update LARS for the New Year**



Remember to update the contact information associated with your license on TLC LARS if it has changed so that you continue to receive important notices from TLC. To get started, visit <https://www.nyc.gov/lars/>.



**Taxi & Limousine Commission**

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