



NEW YORK CITY TAXI & LIMOUSINE COMMISSION

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TLC NEWS | TESTIMONY

The TLC testified on a bill calling for a Driver Advisory board to advise the Commission on driver policy and procedure

Delivered September 18, 2003 Good morning Chairman Liu, and members of the City Council Transportation Committee. I am Matthew Daus Commissioner/Chair of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, and I appreciate this opportunity to offer testimony on proposed Intro. 195-A.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend Council Member Miguel Martinez, Chairman John Liu, and the New York City Council for proposing 195-A, which calls for the creation of a Driver Advisory Board. Through my tenure as TLC Commissioner, one of my highest priorities has been obtaining valuable information from our licensees. Furthermore, driver outreach and consultation has been a cornerstone of this administration.

When I was first appointed as Chair of the Agency, I began a grassroots campaign to communicate and learn from our licensees. I personally visited a large portion of our licensed bases and fleets with the intention of gaining valuable industry-specific input and feedback. In addition, last year I instituted a Driver Focus Group program. Through this program I meet with drivers from all of the industries we regulate on a regular basis, to discuss both policy and procedural issues. Time and time again these meetings have provided helpful guidance and perspective from the driver participants, resulting in changes and improvements in TLC policy and operations. The TLC's Safe Driver Program, a program which resulted in Insurance discounts for our licensees, and Operation Hotel, an enforcement operation that targets illegal activity outside hotels throughout the city, were programs that were developed as a direct result of insight provided by our Driver Focus Groups. Without driver input these programs would not have been successful.

The TLC currently has six advisory boards and committees including Livery, Taxi, Disability, Commuter Van, Black Car/Luxury Limousine, and Regional For-Hire Transportation. For many years the TLC has benefited from working closely with these boards and has received operational and creative benefits, through close consultation and collaboration with the board members on a myriad of issues. For example, during the recovery effort after September 11th, during the Queens private bus strike last summer, and during preparation for the threatened transit strike last December, advisory board members worked closely with the Agency to develop and implement contingency plans. Their ability to provide first-hand insight and experience is something that we relied upon heavily during these events.

To date the agency has not had grassroots participation at the Advisory Board level. This bill closes that gap by providing for an official Driver Advisory Board sanctioned by law. I would like to thank the committee for adopting many of our recommendations from my testimony offered on June 20, 2002 and September 18, 2003. This bill provides for a board that will contain a diverse group of drivers from many of the industries we regulate. This will be of great value because it provides us with the opportunity to evaluate policy and procedural reforms while taking into consideration, from first-hand opinions, the ramifications of such action on all of our drivers. We believe the Board will highlight both the similarities and differences that exist among our driver licensee pool. We also support the bill's provision that the drivers have minimal experience of at least one year as a licensed driver to allow for the appropriate breadth of perspective, and to maintain a license in good standing with the Commission for the duration of his or her tenure on the Board.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would now be happy to take any questions you may have.