



NEW YORK CITY TAXI & LIMOUSINE COMMISSION

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TLC NEWS | TESTIMONY

Testimony of Chairperson Matthew W. Daus of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission - The Transportation Committee Hearing

Delivered November 20, 2003 Good morning Chairman Liu and members of the Council Transportation Committee. My name is Matthew W. Daus, and I am Commissioner and Chair of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission. Thank you for inviting me to testify on Intro. No. 287.

The Commission applauds the Council's intention of increasing the number of alternative fuel vehicles in the City of New York. Earlier this year, the Council passed a bill which would provide for a portion of the proposed upcoming taxicab medallion sale to be reserved for alternative fuel vehicles and the TLC looks forward to working with the Council and the industry to implement this legislation.

The TLC is proud of the City's recent acceptance into the "Clean Cities" program and we will continue to strive to assist the City in accomplishing its goal of improving air quality. Initiatives such as mandatory vehicle retirement, which limits the lifetime of a taxicab to three years for all double-shifted or fleet operated taxis and five years for all single-shifted cabs, have led to dramatic improvements in the emissions of New York City taxicabs. In addition, enhancements to the TLC's centralized inspection facility, which all taxicabs are required to visit three times a year, help to assure that vehicles with poor emission ratings are not permitted to continue to operate.

The TLC also provides incentives to medallion owners who purchase alternative fuel vehicles. Alternative fuel vehicles receive a two-year extension on the vehicle retirement rule. In addition, through a New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) sponsored program, developed with the TLC, medallion owners can receive up to a \$6,000 rebate for purchasing a CNG vehicle.

We do believe, however, that Intro. 287's call for a December 31, 2003 cut-off date after which all new vehicles would be required to be alternative fuel vehicles could result in a counter-productive hardship for the medallion industry at this time. We must recognize the challenges that exist with respect to mandating CNG vehicles. The TLC did, on January 30, 1996, mandate that medallion fleet stand-by vehicles (SBVs) be powered by CNG. Due to an inadequate number of fueling stations and some technical problems, the program failed and was repealed by the TLC's Board of Commissioners on March 27, 2000.

While there are currently 91 CNG powered taxicabs in service today, there remains a limited number of fueling stations. In fact, there are fewer CNG stations in operation today than there were in previous years. Most of these facilities are open less than 24 hours per day, and are located in areas outside the central business district where most taxicabs operate. While fueling stations are, occasionally, built to meet existing demand, such as a new BP CNG fueling facility at LaGuardia Airport which opened only two weeks ago, it is predominantly this lack of a sufficient number of fueling stations that has prevented the expansion of the program.

Most hybrid vehicles run on both gasoline and electricity and therefore do not require specialized fueling stations. At the present time, however, there are no hybrid vehicles that have been manufactured and presented to the TLC for approval that meet the size specifications set forth in our regulations, or that have been adequately tested for safety and crashworthiness for the American market. For a sedan to be approved for use by the TLC as a medallion taxicab, the vehicle must contain at least 107 interior cubic feet, and must have undergone safety testing by the manufacturer pursuant to criteria established by Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS).

Despite the foregoing challenges, the TLC is exploring pragmatic ways by which it can bring clean air fuel vehicles into service without sacrificing safety or passenger comfort and convenience. To this end, the TLC has partnered with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), which has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to automobile manufacturers that will award grant funds to develop a purpose-built taxicab that is clean-air fueled and accessible.

The TLC believes the medallion sale legislation recently enacted by the Council to be a strong step in the right direction. This legislation requires that nine percent of all medallions sold in any upcoming medallion sale be attached to a CNG or other alternative fuel vehicle. Such legislation will successfully increase the number of alternative fuel vehicles in the City of New York, and will provide for an adequate testing period for these vehicles, during which we hope we will also see the infrastructure continue to expand to meet the increased demand.

Based on the aforementioned facts, the TLC is opposed to Intro. No. 287 at this time.

Thank you for providing me with an opportunity to testify before you. I would now be pleased to take any questions you may have.

