

**Testimony of Taxi & Limousine Commission
Commissioner/Chair, Matthew W. Daus**

**City Council Finance and Transportation Committees
May 13, 2009, 2:00 PM**

Executive Budget Hearing

Good afternoon, Chairmen Liu and Weprin, and members of the City Council Transportation and Finance Committees. My name is Matthew Daus, and I am the Commissioner/Chair of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present testimony regarding the Fiscal Year 2010 Executive Budget for the TLC. Joining me today are First Deputy Commissioner Andrew Salkin and Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Louis Tazzi.

The TLC's Budget for Fiscal Year 2010 is \$29,643,230. Of that amount, \$22,865,565 is for Personal Service (PS) and \$6,777,665 is for Other Than Personal Service or (OTPS).

Currently, the TLC licenses 103,326 drivers and 55,561 vehicles. The number of taxicab driver licenses hit another record high this April of 47,458, in addition to 52,821 for-hire vehicle driver licenses, 2,788 paratransit driver licenses and 259 commuter van driver licenses. The TLC has worked diligently to ensure that operational standards are not compromised as the number of license applications continue to increase. We have seen a 11% increase in transaction volume from FY'07 to FY'08 and a 6% increase in transaction volume when comparing the first half of FY'08 to the first half of FY'09, however, the average wait time at the licensing facility actually decreased from 32 minutes in April '08 to 18 minutes in April '09 which is a 44% decrease. One reason for this success is the recent creation of a new Licensee Support/Customer Relations Unit which helps to provide "hands-on" assistance to our licensees. We employ a bilingual staff of greeters, informational kiosks, and new signage and forms written in "plain

language” that are more user-friendly, all helping to facilitate TLC communication with licensees and expedite license transactions.

The TLC Adjudications Division has also actively employed new services and technology to enhance access to the adjudication process. As we mentioned previously, the TLC commenced a new telephone consumer hearing process, which is the first of its kind in New York City. Since January, a total of 235 phone hearings were held. Telephonic hearings make it possible for those consumers who may not be able to actually attend a hearing to finally have a way to participate in the process. The TLC also implemented access to “Language Line,” which provides free language translation services to licensees during the hearing process. From March 11th through April 30th, a total of 48 calls were placed to Language Line with the majority of language requests in Spanish. Other translations have included: Korean, Mandarin, Russian, French, Creole, Arabic, Polish, and Cantonese. While we are still developing our Web conferencing capacity to increase participation in the adjudications process, a videoconferencing system is being tested between the TLC’s Staten Island and Long Island City facilities.

TLC’s current budget reflects several special projects and initiatives, including the “Rule Revision Project”, “Livery Reforms”, the “Accessible Dispatch Program”, “Taxi Group Rides, Multi-Fare Meters and Livery Stands”. These programs require close coordination between the TLC, the industry and interested stakeholders to ensure success.

The “Rule Revision Project,” which is in the second of its three phases, requires continuous outreach and work with our consultants to make our more than 3,000+ rules easier to understand in “plain language”, more concise and better organized.

As a regulatory agency, the TLC has an obligation to ensure that each passenger’s riding experience meets standards for safety, comfort, reliability and convenience. After many months of extensive outreach and work with the industry, the TLC’s Board of Commissioners recently considered a broad set of reforms to our For-

Hire Vehicle Rules. These reforms will significantly enhance TLC regulation of the livery, black car and limousine industries, and will raise service standards by requiring new levels of accountability between drivers, bases and vehicle owners. These reforms include the display of driver licenses, TLC vehicle license stickers and exterior base affiliation markings on vehicles. Other rules require that vehicle inspections for each licensed vehicle take place at the TLC's Centralized Dispatch Facility upon licensure and license renewal, in addition to the five (5) required vehicle inspections that will continue to be required at New York State Department of Motor Vehicles authorized inspection facilities during a vehicle's license term. These inspections will help to ensure that only vehicles that meet TLC standards remain in service. Also, thanks to a law passed by the City Council, a Livery Passenger Bill of Rights will soon be displayed in all livery vehicles, helping passengers to better understand and enforce their rights - many of which are reinforced through the TLC's new For-Hire Vehicle Rule Reforms.

TLC's accessible dispatch demonstration project will continue into next year. This program utilizes a dispatcher to link the 239 accessible vehicles with identified riders that use a wheelchair. To date, this program has successfully provided almost 2000 riders with wheelchair accessible service. The TLC and the Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities are continuing a public outreach campaign to ensure NYC visitors and residents know about this service.

As mentioned in the Mayor's recent State of the City Address, there is renewed interest in transportation initiatives that not only decrease the carbon footprint from vehicle emissions, but also help to provide additional transportation services throughout the city. The TLC, along with its partners at the Department of Transportation and the Economic Development Corporation, have been exploring potential pilot programs that may utilize multi-fare meters, as well as designated group ride and livery stands throughout the City. These proposed pilot programs will test new technology, explore the feasibility of safe and reliable "on-demand" livery service at designated locations, and assess a variety of ride share locations where drivers can earn more money and

passengers pay less per trip. TLC staff will be presenting these new initiatives to the TLC Board of Commissioners at an upcoming commission meeting.

In sum, today's testimony highlights TLC's continuous commitment to better serve our licensees and the riding public through key operational improvements, as well as to explore new and exciting methods to deliver TLC regulated transportation services. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would now be happy to answer any questions you may have.