

**Testimony of David Yassky**  
**NYC Taxi & Limousine Commissioner/Chair**  
**EXECUTIVE BUDGET for FISCAL YEAR 2012**

**City Council Transportation & Finance Committees**  
**June 2, 2011**

Good morning, Chairs Vacca and Recchia and the members of the City Council Committees on Transportation and Finance. I am David Yassky, Chairman of the Taxi and Limousine Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding the TLC's Fiscal Year 2012 Executive Budget. We have begun work on a number of new projects and initiatives and are excited to see them progress throughout 2011 and into 2012.

The TLC's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2012 is \$32 million. Of that amount, \$25 million is for Personal Service and \$7 million is for Other Than Personal Service.

A key project for the agency over the past four years has been the Taxi of Tomorrow initiative – a design competition to establish New York City's next iconic taxi. At the end of 2010 Mayor Bloomberg announced the project's three finalists, and as I am sure you know, last month we announced Nissan Americas as our partner for the Taxi of Tomorrow. While this may seem like the end of a process, it really is just the beginning. The TLC has begun working with Nissan to solicit input about what drivers, owners, and New Yorkers want to see in tomorrow's cab. We are excited to embark on this process and anticipate delivery of the first cabs at the end of 2013.

To better serve all New Yorkers, the agency continues to work toward making our industries more accessible to all. Earlier this year, after a public hearing attended by industry members, the public, and disability advocates, we released a Request for Information (RFI) to solicit opinions and suggestions about how to best expand access in our regulated industries. The RFI responses helped inform two Request for Proposals (RFPs) – one for the yellow-cab industry and the other for the for-hire vehicle industry – released in April. The RFPs call for an accountable and efficient dispatch

system to match passengers with vehicles – providing a greater number of New Yorkers with better, more-responsive transportation options. The pre-proposal conferences for both RFPs were held in May and well-attended; we anticipate many innovative ideas. Submissions are due later this month, and we expect service to begin in spring 2012.

The agency also continues work in other areas to provide all New Yorkers with safe and reliable on-demand transportation. Our Uniformed Services Bureau has increased targeted enforcement to reduce yellow-cab service refusals. Thanks to the work of this Committee and the entire Council on Local Law 35, the Commission will move forward with increased fines for drivers who refuse service to passengers. The TLC, along with the Mayor, is taking a zero-tolerance approach to this increasing problem. Our enforcement officers will continue to work so New Yorkers and visitors can use yellow cabs to go anywhere in the City.

Additionally, this budget provides for new resources and tools to increase and improve our enforcement efforts. We will welcome sixteen new officers this month and the Fiscal Year 2012 budget allocates funds for eight more positions. These men and women will increase our on-street presence throughout the City. Our enforcement activities also require important infrastructure. To improve this, the agency is releasing an Invitation for Bids for vehicle tow, storage, and release services. Additional officers on the street and new capacity for seized vehicles will allow us to better-enforce our rules and ensure safe, legal transportation options for New Yorkers.

Beyond their on-the-street enforcement, our Uniformed Services Bureau also inspects all vehicles that we license. At our state-of-the-art inspection facility in Woodside, TLC's hard-working inspection officers have inspected 44,787 yellow cabs and 31,596 for-hire vehicles between July 2010 and April 2011. A key part of our agency's PEG for fiscal year 2012 examined the fees we charge for inspections, and after review, it was clear that agency costs outweighed current fees. Given this finding, the TLC has proposed raising first-time inspection fees for yellow cabs from fifty dollars to ninety dollars and fees for for-hire vehicles from thirty-seven dollars to seventy-five

dollars. These changes, which require approval by the Council, would bring in an additional \$2.7 million dollars over the next year. We ask the Council to act swiftly to approve Introductory Number 473 and help us ensure that our regulated industries provide safe, reliable service.

Along with the Uniform Services Bureau, TLC's Licensing Division works to provide outstanding service for our over 100,000 licensees. Earlier this year, the Division introduced online license renewal. This new option will save a trip to our licensing facility in Long Island City for licensees when they renew their license. Fewer trips to our licensing facility will mean shorter wait times, saving our licensees' time when they do need in-person services. Our average wait-time has already been halved, to fifteen minutes, since efficiency changes were first implemented in 2008, and this initiative will further reduce them.

Like inspection fees, our license fees were reviewed last year with a user-cost analysis. Many of these fees have not been changed since 1986, and it has become clear that our current fee structure does not support the rising cost of the agency's licensing functions. As part of our PEG program, all driver-license fees would be raised from sixty dollars per year to eighty-four dollars per year; this includes licenses for yellow-taxi, livery, para-transit, and commuter van drivers. Given that the TLC issues over 100,000 licenses annually this change would bring in an additional \$2.5 million. These fee changes and the inspection fee changes are part of Intro 473; we hope to work with you and the rest of the Council to pass these measures expeditiously.

In a broader effort to maximize citywide efficiencies, the Mayor and the Council approved consolidation of some agency administrative tribunals under the Office of Administrative Tribunals and Hearings (OATH). TLC's adjudications division will be making this move in 2011. Our staff has already begun working with OATH to plan for a smooth transition, and we expect to fully transition by next month. This move will provide operational efficiencies and a uniform experience across agencies while maintaining customer service.

Finally, in another effort to expand service for all New Yorkers, the Mayor announced in his State of the City Address the agency's Five-Borough Taxi Plan. Currently, only yellow taxis can legally accept street-hails, and this plan will introduce new "borough taxis" that can accept street hails outside Manhattan. As you and all New Yorkers know, even though yellow cabs are required to serve the entire City, they are almost exclusively found in Manhattan; in fact, 97% of yellow-taxi trips start in Manhattan or the airports. Furthermore, we know that there is demand for street-hail service beyond Manhattan and it is currently being met with illegal service. This plan would set standards of service, ensure passenger and driver safety, and provide a legal option for on-demand service throughout all of New York City.

Our staff has met with your community boards, visited your council districts, and listened to constituents across the City. We are now working with state elected officials to develop and pass necessary legislation to deliver this new service to New Yorkers. However, this is just a first step of many required for policy to become service. After state action on this plan, we will need your support and anticipate working with this committee and the entire Council to implement street-hail taxi service citywide. We have worked hard to incorporate feedback from all stakeholders, and while changes have been made to the original plan, we remain committed to providing better street-hail taxi service across New York City – regardless of where you are.

This concludes my testimony of the TLC's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2012. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the exciting programs and initiatives that will greatly benefit our passengers and drivers throughout the TLC's regulated for-hire vehicle industries. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.