



TLC TIMES

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Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Matthew W. Daus, Commissioner/Chair

Mayor Bloomberg Signs Bill Authorizing “A Ride For All” As First Citywide Wheelchair Accessible Base

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg joined New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) Commissioner/Chair Matthew W. Daus, DOT Commissioner Iris Weinshall and Executive Director Matt Sapolin of the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities at a bill signing authorizing “A Ride For All” as the first Wheelchair Accessible livery base.

“This is a truly historic piece of legislation,” Mayor Bloomberg said. “It will establish the first for-hire vehicle service in the city that will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to accommodate the approximately 60,000 New Yorkers who use wheelchairs and motorized scooters.”

A Ride For All, which is located in Long Island City, will operate in all five boroughs. It will provide, by contract, wheelchair-accessible service upon request to other TLC-licensed livery bases for their wheelchair-using patrons. The company now owns three retrofitted wheelchair-accessible mini-vans, and has a vendor that is prepared to supply it with as many additional specially equipped vehicles as demand dictates. They will have both English- and Spanish-speaking dispatchers available to accommodate passengers.

Commissioner Daus echoed the Mayor’s



Mayor Bloomberg joins Matt Sapolin of the Mayor’s Office for People With Disabilities and TLC Commissioner Matthew Daus as they inspect one of A Ride For All’s vehicles.



Mayor Bloomberg signs the “A Ride For All” legislation at a ceremony at City Hall.

sentiment, saying, “This legislation is an important advancement in achieving our goal of providing equal access to livery transportation for all New Yorkers. I look forward to working with the Mayor’s Office, the City Council, and A Ride for All to see that this program is a success.”

Commissioner Daus continued, “I would also like to thank Speaker Miller and the City Council for working with the Commission to facilitate the approval of A Ride for All. The TLC continues to work closely with the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, and its Executive Director Matt Sapolin, as well as A Ride for All principals Les Jacobs and Neil Greenbaum, in the hope that the partnership we have forged will result in improved accessibility in the for-hire vehicle industry. By working hand in hand with the industry, we are successfully developing a solution to this transportation inequity that suits both the needs of the riding public, as well as for-hire vehicle base owners. The TLC, through its Disability Advisory Board, will work to support A Ride for All’s outreach efforts to the disability community. This is the TLC’s first step in ensuring that adequate service is provided to the disability community, and as time passes, more of these types of bases will provide service to wheelchair passengers.

Commissioner’s Corner

As I write this column, the summer is a rapidly fading memory. However, one event that will be remembered is the “Great Blackout of 2003.”

Eight million of the fifty million people affected by the blackout were in New York City. With the temperature heating up, instead of a City in disarray or panic there were so many stories of perseverance and cooperation. The TLC and its regulated industries proudly stepped-up to the plate to lend their helping hands not only moments into the emergency, but long after most people arrived safely at home after the evening rush hour on August 14th. Without the City’s subway system functioning, taxicabs and for-hire vehicles became the only way to get around for many people.



With lessons learned from past situations, TLC employees sprang into action to assist the City’s overall emergency efforts. We immediately deployed staff to the Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management to assist in directing traffic and in providing transportation for stranded passengers. After the rush hour, TLC enforcement hit the streets and remained in “high gear” until power was restored. I am pleased with the way our agency stepped-up to the plate during the blackout, and I know that New Yorkers are grateful for the professionalism and

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helpfulness of our regulated industries.

The TLC has received several compliments relating stories of drivers who took passengers to their destinations for free. We heard still other stories of drivers who comforted and calmed people in moments of fear and doubt, touching their lives in unexpectedly positive ways. Maximizing resources, many drivers and bases engaged in group-riding reminiscent of the TLC's transit strike contingency plans of 2002. All in all, New York City's taxicab drivers deserve great praise for the way they helped our city during the blackout. We are very pleased with the overall performance of our industries.

The TLC did receive 48 complaints from passengers of medallion taxicab and for-hire vehicles alleging various forms of misconduct during the blackout. The most common offense cited was operating "off-the-meter" and overcharging customers. Although we estimate the number of drivers who acted inappropriately to be very small, unfortunately the media highlighted and focused on these drivers more than on the overwhelming majority of drivers who did the right thing. There is absolutely no excuse for the misconduct of these drivers and the TLC will be prosecuting each of these cases to the full extent of the law. Several cases have been commenced and the drivers charged face the possibility of fines, suspension and/or revocation of their operator's license and medallions. These prosecutions will send a strong message to those drivers who will hopefully now think twice before placing their greed above public service and compliance with the law.

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg demonstrated exceptional leadership both during and after this emergency. Soon after the lights were turned on and

Mayor Bloomberg Signs Legislation Establishing Driver Advisory Board



The Mayor is joined by Councilmember Miguel Martinez, Commissioner/Chair Matthew Daus, and Councilmembers Peter Vallone, Jr. and Gale Brewer.

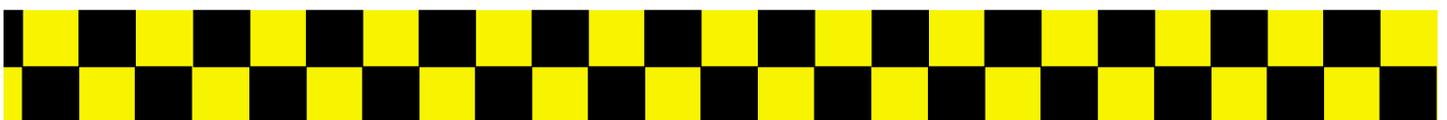
On October 20, 2003, Mayor Bloomberg signed into law a bill that establishes a Drivers Advisory Board to advise the Taxi and Limousine Commission on driver experiences and help detect trends that will reform existing laws or TLC rules. The board is to be made up of members representing active drivers across the TLC-licensed industries as follows: two taxicab lease drivers, two taxicab owner-operators, two for-hire vehicle fleet drivers, two independent for-hire vehicle operators, two black car drivers, two commuter van drivers and two paratransit drivers. This board will provide TLC with the opportunity to evaluate policy and procedural reforms while taking into consideration the opinions of drivers in the industry.

the city was back to business, the Mayor established a task force to evaluate the City's response during the blackout. This effort is an excellent management exercise to promote a deeper level of understanding for future emergency response operations. The TLC is working closely with the Emergency Response Task Force and the Mayor's Offices of Operations and Emergency Management to identify areas in which for-hire service and transportation can be better utilized during future emergencies. I will keep all of our readers apprised of our progress in this area.

I would now like to bring you up-to-date on two medallion taxicab-related issues that the media has been following – the proposed medallion sale and fare increase.

With regard to the medallion sale, the City Council passed legislation authorizing the sale of up to 900 additional medallions over the next three fiscal years – for both individual owner/operators and corporate owners. That means the TLC has been granted the authority, as lead agency, to auction up to 300 additional medallions anytime between now and the end of June 2004. This could be followed by another 300 medallions being sold between July 2004 and June 2005, and up to a final 300 between July 2005 and June 2006. Also, for the first time medallions would be sold to both corporate and individual bidders who commit to using wheelchair accessible and/or clean-air fueled vehicles as taxicabs, at potentially less than the average sales price of other medallions. However, before any of

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TLC Welcomes Visitors From Bermuda, Costa Rica, Philadelphia Taxi Commissions

Recently, the TLC hosted visitors from the taxi commissions of Philadelphia, Bermuda and Costa Rica who came to our offices for advice and information on how to better their operations back home.

This is not the first time the TLC has



Assistant Commissioner Desiree Blackwood explains the licensing process to Kevin Monkman and Charles Clarke of the Bermuda Taxi Commission.



TLC staff members pose with officials from the Philadelphia Taxi Commission, who came to TLC to ask for assistance with new taxi reforms.

hosted officials from other taxi commissions. Back in November of 2002, members of the Costa Rican taxi agency visited the TLC to gather advice and information from members of our staff. Visitors from Hong Kong also came to the TLC in 2002 to ask our assistance in helping them develop their

own TLC from the ground up.

“We get requests like this all the time,” said Commissioner Daus. “The constant flow of visitors coming to our offices shows how our agency is viewed by the rest of the world. Our staff should be very proud of their efforts and our reputation.”



Costa Rican taxi officials met with TLC staff back in November of 2002.

Commissioner Arout Re-Appointed By Council

TLC Commission Member Elias Arout, who was originally appointed to the Commission by Mayor Ed Koch in January 1988, was reappointed for the second time by the City Council on October 27th for the remainder of a seven year term that will expire in 2008.

Commissioner Elias Arout was born and raised in Staten Island and attended Alexander Hamilton Vocational High School, and has been a very active TLC Commissioner.

Of his many TLC-related accomplishments, among which include the well-known reforms of 1998, Commissioner Arout was instrumental in the opening of the Staten Island TLC office.

A veteran of the Armed Forces, Commissioner Arout retired as a



photographer First Class from the U.S. Naval Air Reserve after 26 years of service, including two years of active duty during the Korean conflict. He is also a current member of the Staten Island Council Knights of Columbus as well as a Past Grand Knight, a Past Chapter Chairman and Past District Deputy of the organization and is currently serving his second year as President of the American Association of Retired

Persons #1424 of Staten Island.

“I am very thrilled that the City Council gave me the opportunity to serve again,” Commissioner Arout said. “I look forward to working with Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Commissioner Daus to the best of my ability. There is a lot I want to accomplish and I hope I can get it all in before my term expires.”

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these sales can take place, the City must complete an extensive legally mandated review process that is being performed by an independent consultant known as Urbitran Associates. This includes measuring the effect that more taxicabs would have upon air quality, traffic congestion as well as the socio-economic impact upon medallion owners, drivers and others. I am pleased to report that this long process is nearing completion – thanks to the many hours of work by Urbitran and City staff who assisted in the necessary data compilation. The next step is the issuance of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement that the public will have the opportunity to comment on prior to any final decision as to whether, when and how many medallions will be sold. This is an exciting time and you will be hearing a lot more

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Redesigned TLC Website Offers User Friendly Info and Assistance For Passengers and Drivers

The TLC recently redesigned its website, making it easier to navigate and adding useful information for both its licensees and the riding public.

The website, since its inception, has been visited on a very frequent basis. In fact, just in the month of November, TLC's website was visited by 57,001 web surfers.

The new website, which is located at www.nyc.gov/taxi, offers passengers the opportunity to file a lost property report, compliment a driver, and obtain the contact information of TLC licensed bases by zipcode. The website offers licensees the ability to download necessary forms, request records from the TLC, and even apply for an insurance discount if they qualify. Licensed base owners can also view their own current license status and vehicle information.

The website also includes recent press releases, commissioner columns and testimony delivered at recent bill signings and City Council hearings, and links to related governmental agencies.

With the new website comes a very



easy walkthrough for those interested in obtaining their own TLC Operator's License. Whether someone wishes to be a medallion taxicab driver, a for-hire vehicle driver, or a paratransit or commuter van operator, prospective licensees have all the information they need on how to obtain the license of their choice right at their fingertips.

In the event that you have trouble reviewed. I am confident that whatever action is ultimately taken by the Board of Commissioners will be well-informed, based upon verified facts and will achieve a fair balance of the interests of the drivers, owners and the riding public. The fare increase process is set forth in the New York City Charter and places the burden on the taxicab industry to prove its case. These groups have expended much time and effort on behalf of the entire industry, but for those who remain anxious about this issue I would like you to know that we understand your frustration about how long it is taking. I would like all drivers and owners who are reading this column to know that the fare increase process is not as simple as

viewing the site, the recommended way to access the TLC website for the first time is by going to www.nyc.gov and selecting "Taxi and Limousine Commission" in the "City Agencies" dropdown list. If you book-marked or added the TLC website to your favorites list, you must delete these old references and reload the view using the "F5 key" or your browsers "reload" button.

one might think. For example, due to the dynamics of industry business relationships, determining how additional income would be distributed between owners and drivers is a challenge. I would like to thank the industry for their patience and respectfully ask them to be patient for a little while longer.

Well, the holidays are almost upon us and I hope that means more business for all of our for-hire industries. Until next time, I would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy and safe holiday season.

With peace and happiness,

Matthew W. Daus
Commissioner/Chair

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about this topic during the coming months.

The TLC is also in the process of evaluating two industry requests for a fare increase. Both groups, the Metropolitan Taxicab Board of Trade (MTBOT) and the Taxi Workers' Alliance (TWA), filed fare increase petitions with the TLC that are being reviewed. These petitions are not yet ready for consideration because the petitioners need to submit some additional data and make certain technical changes, but I can assure the industry that these requests are being taken seriously and will be thoroughly

