



TLC TIMES

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Michael R. Bloomberg, *Mayor*

Matthew W. Daus, *Commissioner/Chair*

TLC Makes It “EZ” To Get Licensed

The Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) recently announced the creation of “EZLicense” — a pilot program that will allow new taxicab driver license applicants to take a condensed, three-day (24-hour) training course, rather than the currently required 80-hour course. A primary goal of the pilot program is to highlight the many career opportunities available in the New York City taxicab industry.

This course will feature three concentrated 8-hour modules focusing on the elements that are essential to a successful career in the taxicab industry: Rules and Regulations, Geography, and Driver/Passenger Relations. In addition to completing the 24-hour course, students will



be required to pass an English Proficiency Test and a Final Examination on taxi-related subjects. The program commenced on April 1, 2003.

To allow more flexibility in the application process, “EZLicense” will enable new

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Commissioner’s Corner

I hope everyone is enjoying the Summer. The weather is hot, but I am sure our passengers and drivers are happy that our taxicabs are air-conditioned. Without breaking too much of a sweat, the TLC has been very busy over the last several months; so let me take a few moments to update everyone on recent events.



First, I would like to thank Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and the New York City Council for re-appointing me as Chair and Commissioner of the TLC, for a term that will expire on January 31, 2010. The vote of confidence is very much appreciated and is certainly a tribute to the dedicated employees and public servants at the TLC.

My reappointment came on a day of great tragedy for the City, as it occurred just one hour before the late Councilmember James Davis was murdered in the balcony of the City Council Chamber. This tragic loss hit home with our staff, one of whom was within yards of the shooting. I am just thankful that my staff and I returned to the office on July 23rd after testifying, because we had planned (as we did two years ago) to watch the final Council vote from the very balcony where the tragedy occurred. Our prayers, condolences and respect go out to the Davis family, the constituents of his District where he served, and to our colleagues on the City Council.

At my reappointment hearing on July 23, 2003, I offered testimony recounting our

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Insurance Discounts For Safe Drivers

With the high costs of liability insurance challenging the TLC’s regulated industries, the agency has responded with a “Safe Driver” program designed to enhance driver safety while rewarding its participants with insurance discounts of up to 15%. The TLC strongly encourages driver/owners to apply, and let the TLC determine whether they qualify for the program either online at www.nyc.gov/taxi, or by calling the City’s Customer Service Call Center at 311.



Who Ya Gonna Call? - 311

Next time you have to call New York City, all you need to know is three simple numbers — 311.

This new initiative will allow City residents to obtain important non-emergency services through one central, all-purpose phone number quickly and effectively, and it reflects the Bloomberg Administration’s commitment to bringing government to the people.



The 311 Citizen Service Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides easy access to all non-emergency City services. The telephones are answered by a live operator, which eliminates the need

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many accomplishments, all pursuant to the vision I set forth when I was first confirmed in August 2001. These goals included increased enforcement, enhanced customer service for passengers and our TLC customers, and outreach to the industry and the community to proactively address issues. Looking back over the past two years, many of our ambitious objectives have already been achieved, setting the stage for more accomplishments to come. I thought our readers would like to know more about our future direction. To read even more about this topic, you may access my confirmation testimony before the City Council on our website, www.nyc.gov/taxi.

In terms of enforcement priorities and goals, the TLC has made tremendous strides over the last two years in addressing the problem of unlicensed for-hire activity through new street-level operations known as Operation Street Hail and Operation Hotel. After issuing thousands of summonses, we are making a dent in this problem by more effectively deploying enforcement personnel through our Management Accountability and Productivity Program (M.A.P.P.), which targets hot-spots of illegal activity throughout the City. Moving forward, we recently partnered with the Port Authority

to assist them in eradicating illegal solicitation and for-hire activity at our airports, and we expect significant results on this front in the coming year. In addition to targeting individual offenders on the street, the TLC has recently started to focus more attention on licensed businesses and vehicle owners who permit and facilitate illegal activity. You may have recently heard of various bases that had their licenses revoked for dispatching unlicensed drivers and for operating while on suspension. In the future, we will place particular emphasis on business owner accountability, instituting procedures that include fines, suspension and revocation for dispatching unlicensed or suspended drivers, uninsured or underinsured vehicles, or for operating with a suspended base license. Also, you can expect to see increased enforcement under Operation Refusal in light of increased ridership in the taxicab industry as well as the continuation of our recently instituted insurance fraud investigations.

Our customer service initiatives have resulted in great progress for both the riding public as well as our licensees and applicants. Passengers now enjoy safer, cleaner and bigger taxicabs, as well as the option of calling the citywide 311 hotline to file compliments, complaints and lost property reports with the TLC. The TLC has

also facilitated additional for-hire service by promoting the licensure of drivers through its various licensing programs and job fairs. The TLC will continue its efforts to expand service for the riding public over the next three years in its role as lead agency for the potential sale of 900 medallions – which would include clean air and accessible vehicles. Another top priority for the TLC over the next year will be to complete the implementation of accessible transportation for the disabled in the for-hire vehicle industry.

The TLC has also made significant progress over the last two years in customer service for its licensees. Waiting times were significantly reduced at the TLC Adjudications Division, March Madness was eliminated in the Licensing Division, a facility was opened in Staten Island with licensing by appointment, and we now offer several on-line licensing transactions for the benefit of the industry. In addition, there are several programs that were implemented to facilitate the licensing of drivers at less cost to applicants, including the EZLicense Program and Expedited Licensing Program for new applicants, the Welcome Back Program for already experienced drivers, and the LiveScan digital fingerprint system to speed-up the processing of all driver applications. In the coming years, we will explore using the internet for more transactions with our licensees, and will continue our experiment with licensing by appointment. Over the last year, we expanded the 212-NYC-TAXI customer service hotline to our licensees for their convenience, and over the next year we will be fully integrated into the citywide 311 system. The 311 number can be used to inquire about everything from alternate side parking regulations to the status of any TLC business.

Our third goal was to reach out and communicate with all levels of the TLC's regulated industries and to the communities these industries serve. Through increased use of our website, attendance at community and civic meetings, and the proactive use of driver focus groups and our advisory boards, the TLC is more in touch now than ever before. Over the next year, the TLC's

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311 - One Stop Shopping

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to search over 4,000 entries on 14 pages of the phone book. The Center can assist callers in 170 languages, and provides tracking numbers so that callers can follow-up on the status of their requests. For example: you can find out if alternate side of the street parking is in effect; report loud noise, or a blocked driveway; and compliment a New York City cabbie.

The TLC recently expanded its call center to include general information inquiries, as part of our agency's transition into the 3-1-1 Call Center, which is expected to be fully implemented during the fall. At that time the 311 Call Center will handle all general inquiries about the TLC as well as any potential medallion sale questions. It will also handle lost property inquiries and complaints when the TLC's Call Center is



TLC Call Center operators answers calls as part of the 311 Citizens Service Center.

closed. All licensee inquiries will continue to be handled by the TLC as well as complaints and lost property inquiries that come in during our regular business hours.

The 311 Citizens Service Center can also be accessed outside of New York City by dialing (212) NEW-YORK. TTY Services are also available by calling (212) 504-4115.

So the next time you need a non-emergency City service, call 311.



EZ License

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applicants to sit for the Final Examination at any time during the four-month life of the application, whether they have taken the course or not. The new course, however, must be completed in full prior to licensure. Each applicant will be permitted to sit for the examination twice per application filed with the TLC. Students may take the examination at the designated school of their choice, regardless of the school that they have chosen for the program.

“The TLC’s EZLicense Pilot Program will help applicants save time and money – because time ‘is’ money for taxicab drivers,” said Commissioner Matthew Daus. “This program will provide more options to meet the TLC’s high licensing standards and is expected to reduce the amount of time it takes to obtain a taxicab license. It is our hope that the EZLicense program will

The TLC has authorized three schools to offer the new 24-hour course:

HANAC N.Y.C. Taxi Academy
29-28 41st Avenue, # 313
Long Island City, NY 11101
Tel. 718-433-0493

LaGuardia Community College Taxi and FHV Driver Institute
31-10 Thomson Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101
Tel. 718-482-5335

Master Cabbie Taxi Academy (A DriveOne Company)
24-05 Jackson Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101
Tel. 718-472-1699

provide an incentive for job seekers to find employment in the taxicab industry. We will monitor this pilot very closely over the coming months and present our findings to the Board of Commissioners.”

The 24-hour course will cost \$105, which

includes all study materials. In addition, students will pay their chosen school \$25 for each examination sitting. This pilot program could result in cost savings of up to \$195 from the current tuition fees for students who pass the Final Examination the first time.

The current 80-hour course, at a fee of \$325 including study materials and two examination sittings, will continue to be available at Master Cabbie Taxi Academy and HANAC N.Y.C. Taxi Academy for those who wish to take it.

For those who wish to self-study and take the Final Examination before completing the course, each of the above schools will offer supplemental training materials, designed as an independent study guide for the Final Examination, for a fee of \$25.

For more information, log onto the TLC’s web site, www.nyc.gov/taxi, or call 311.

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unique management program known as H.O.M.E. (“Hands-On Management Experience”) will be expanded so that all TLC managers will learn - not only about all the functions of the agency - but about our regulated industries and how they work, so that we can be more responsive, understanding and effective. We will be expanding our outreach over the next few years not only for purposes of possibly selling more medallions, but also to inform more drivers about the TLC’s insurance discount and health insurance programs. We will continue to expand our driver recognition program because the industry’s labor force is its backbone and we need to ensure that we do everything we can to retain experienced drivers in the coming years. Finally, we need to continue to educate our drivers to make them safer and to learn more about the TLC and its regulations. To this end, we will be exploring the publication of materials for drivers to inform them of their rights and responsibilities, and to provide them with information that will make it easier to better serve their passengers.

We move forward to accomplish these goals with a full Board of Commissioners that includes the recent addition of two new

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Matt Lauer Trades Places - And Jobs - With Cabbie For Today Show

NBC’s popular *Today Show* recently turned its attention to the New York City taxicab industry, and the agency that regulates it.

With the theme of “trading places,” host Matt Lauer earned his TLC hack license, and spent a productive day behind the wheel as a New York City hack driver. To complete the turnabout, industry leader/cabby David Pollack co-hosted the *Today Show* alongside



(From left to right) *Today Show* Co-Host Al Roker, Commissioner Matthew Daus, and Hosts Katie Couric and Matt Lauer.



Cabbie Co-Host Dave Pollack with Katie Couric.

Katie Couric. “It was a great day for both the TLC and the taxicab industry,” said Commissioner Daus. “Not only did it highlight the training and hard work that goes into earning the privilege of holding a TLC hack license, but the day also served to spotlight and solidify New York City’s well-deserved place as the taxicab capital of the world.”

Two-Year Medallion Renewals

In order to streamline agency operations while offering the highest level of customer service to its licensees, the TLC has implemented a two-year licensing renewal program for medallion owners that will save both time and effort.

The four-year phase-in of the program will encompass all of the City’s 12,187 medallions by its culmination in 2007. Licensees will be notified of the program in writing.



TLC Authorizes Sienna Pilot Test



To broaden the number of vehicles available to medallion owners as New York City taxicabs, as well as to provide a variety of different vehicles to the riding public, the TLC has begun a pilot test of the 2003 Toyota Sienna.

In June 2003, the TLC authorized the testing of Toyota Siennas as taxicabs. At present, 11 of the vehicles are on the road and in service.

Initial reports are positive, indicating that passengers are pleased with the vehicle's size and additional cargo space. Those wishing to participate in this pilot program may directly contact Assistant Commissioner for Safety and Emissions, Jed Appelbaum, at 718-267-4599.

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appointees – Commissioners Iris Weinshall and Stanley Michels. Iris Weinshall is also the Commissioner of the NYC Department of Transportation, and lends her vast transportation and governmental experience to the Board. Stanley Michels, an attorney and former City Council Member who chaired the Council's Environmental Committee, brings great public policy and environmental expertise to the table.

Without a doubt, the TLC's agenda is packed. There is plenty of good history, and more history to make. I would like to thank the industry not only for its support and cooperation, but also for its constructive criticism from which we have and will continue to learn. I look forward to making this term as productive and exciting as the first.

Matthew W. Daus

You can find back issues of the TLC Times on our website:
www.nyc.gov/taxi

TLC Hails Driver Who Returned Over \$10,000 In Cash To Passenger

Driver Mahmood Butt poses with Commissioner/Chair Matthew W. Daus and passenger Gonul Aldogan, who left a pouch containing \$13,052.07, \$10,000 of which was cash, in the back of Mahmood's taxicab. When another passenger handed Mahmood the package and he discovered its contents, he immediately came to the TLC's offices to try and reunite the package with its rightful owner. BRAVO MAHMOOD!



Bye Bye Elmo!

TLC Ends Celebrity Talking Taxi Program

Recently, the TLC repealed the rule mandating the Celebrity Talking Taxi Program, which offered celebrity safety reminders to passengers.

The program, which was introduced on August 1, 1997, featured 38 celebrities including talk show host Montel Williams, Batman's Adam West, and Sesame Street's Elmo. The purpose of the program was to convey pre/post-trip information to passengers that would reduce injury in accidents, reduce lost property incidents, and enable passengers to identify the driver and/or vehicle in case of complaints or compliments.

Each celebrity message encouraged passengers to buckle up when they entered the cab, and reminded them to take their

belongings and get a receipt from their driver upon exiting.



The TLC took a fresh look at the program and saw, based on a survey conducted, that it was not effective. The survey showed that not only have lost property figures remained consistent, but that twelve percent of those surveyed actually *decreased* their seat belt use because of their dislike for the program.

The TLC will develop other methods of communicating the safety messages, such as driver education, and signage in cabs replacing the safety messages.

TLC Welcomes New Commission Members

STANLEY E. MICHELS

Stanley E. Michels is a former City Council Member who served in that capacity with distinction since 1978. A lifelong resident of Northern Manhattan, he brings a wealth of environmental and governmental experience to the Commission. His chairmanship of the Council's Environmental Protection Committee distinguished him as a champion of such causes as recycling and protecting children from lead poisoning. A 1958 graduate of Hobart College, Commissioner Michels received his law degree from Cornell University Law School in 1958.



IRIS WEINSHALL

Iris Weinshall, who has served since September 2000 as Commissioner of the NYC Department of Transportation, came to that position after a career of more than 20 years in City government. Her most recent previous position was First Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services.



Commissioner Weinshall earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Brooklyn College and a Masters in Public Administration from NYU's Robert F. Wagner School.

A lifelong Brooklynite, whose father was a taxicab driver, Commissioner Weinshall has two teenaged daughters and is married to U.S. Senator Charles Schumer.

