NEW YORK CITY TAXI & LIMOUSINE COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING

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A P P E A R A N C E S

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MEERA JOSHI, General Counsel

SPEAKERS:

MICAH KELLNER, Assemblyman
OLIVER KOPPELL, Councilman
FRED DRASNER, Vehicle Production Group
JEAN RYAN, Disabled in Action
STEVEN SCHNEIR, Manhattan Motor Cars
RONNIE RAYMOND
MARCO HENRY, The Yellow Cab Company
TERENCE MOAKLEY, United Spinal Association
PATRICK BRENT
DARREN AQUINO
CHERYL KRIST
RICHARD THALER
AZA DERMAN
EDITH PRATISS
JOANNA UNDERWOOD
CHAIRMAN YASSKY: I will just get started.

Good morning. Let me first off thank you for joining us this morning. We have particularly distinguished guests. Let me just begin by mentioning that the CART reporter cancelled. I apologize that he or she is not here.

A couple of items before we get to business. First of all, I want to start, and I think I saw her here before, by noting that we have, as every city agency does, we recently did have a customer service week, but with also kind of a general morale week. As it is the practice, we recognize one of our employees as the TLC employee of the year. This year Colette Graham is our employee of the year. One thing is of the elected officials is their politeness and good manners. Thank you. You were beginning to applaud, assembly members. Even though she does not directly deal with the customers, she is integral to our operation here. She is in the timekeeping and payroll management office and is a truly and consummate professional and even more so has the kind of the enthusiasm, energy, commitment, and willingness to pitch in as needed, that I think
defines really all of our TLC employees. But since we had to or chose to, I guess, single out one, Colette really sets a high standard that everyone can appreciate. She was honored, I will point out, at the mayoral employees of the year ceremony at Gracie Mansion, where the mayor congratulates each agency's employees of the year. So, Colette, thank you, I just want to say sincerely.

I guess among all other things is nagging me to approve the time sheets for employees who report to me because otherwise they don't get paid. So there is at least a handful of people that are distinctly grateful.

So, I also want to welcome, they're not here, but I ask you to welcome the 30 new officer candidates that began their training in early October and are already TLC employees from the day they start training and they will be out and about in the streets in December. They will continue to add to our ongoing efforts to strengthen our enforcement. And along those lines, I will note that our inspectors are doing a superb job. Again, they work hard day in and day out, year in,
year out, but recently have really been raising the bar. July through September alone, they have issued over 6,000 summonses for what we call poaching, illegal street hails, unlicensed operation. Again, speaking now directly to the licensees in the room, we know that one of our primary responsibilities is ensuring that that license means something so that people who are unlicensed cannot trench on the prerogatives that attach only to licensure. So 6,000 summonses in three months I think is just a tremendous job and seized almost 400 vehicles during that time for unlicensed operation. So I hope you will, when you see our inspectors out on the street, say thank you and good job.

Last week we asked the industry for feedback on the roof light. And I'll be very brief here because I want to get down to business. But we have, over the years, had a kind of lingering question about what the heck is that off-duty thing all about. Passengers -- as I think one of the newspapers' article put it, would be a bit of a shame if TLC got rid of the off-duty light, because then how would you know if you're a real
true insider New Yorker if you did not have the
special ability that New Yorkers have to decipher
often confusing roof-light system? But the
question that we asked is why not have a simple on
is available, off is unavailable system as
compared to the current four-state system that we
have. It can be on, off, vice versa, both on,
both off, each of which technically have different
meanings in our driver/passenger communication
taxonomy. I urge folks in the industry, because
I know that even sometimes the smallest details
people feel quite strongly about, please give us
your feedback. We are now engaged actively in
asking ourselves the question: Does that roof
light serve the purpose other than to confuse? I
guess, presumably if the answer to that was no,
then we would do away with it. So please do
respond to that.

Last, what I will point out is that we have
released or will shortly be releasing --

MS. JOSHI: It is released.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: It is released. You know,
I don't think she was introduced formally. I will
make sure she's formally introduced to the
community here. Our new general counsel, Meera Joshi, which she is already I believe way, way ahead of schedule of and is really operating on all cylinders, out of the necessity, I guess.

So we have released a solicitation for what we call tow pounds, for vehicles for storage purposes, that will enable us to do an even better job of protecting licenses by seizing unlicensed vehicles. Right now, because the city is operating with extremely limited capacity at the PD-operated tow pounds, we are often unable to cease vehicles that are out on the street operating without a license because we would have no place to store them once they have been seized. The tow pound is full or really, you know, they reserve some capacity for some kind of emergencies, so they're full, as far as we're concerned. So we are seeking a provider to augment our storage capacity that will enable us to seize as many unlicensed vehicles as there are. And if any of -- the bids close, I am told November 15th, so if any of you are interested in providing tow pound storage capacity to the TLC or know somebody who is, please encourage them to bid
TLC MEETING 10/20/11

because, as always, when we procure, the more
bidders, the better deal for the taxpayers and the
licensees, or the, I guess in this case, the
owners of the ceased vehicles. So with that, we
will move to business.

First item on the agenda is the adoption of
minutes. We, the commission, have before you the
minutes of the September 15, 2011 commission
meeting. All in favor of adopting those minutes,
say aye.

(All respond aye.)

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: There are no opposed noes.
The minutes of the September 15, 2011 meeting are
adopted.

We have several base applications before us.
Director, good morning.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Good morning. I would like
to present before the commission -- my name is
Christopher Tormey, director of Applicant
Licensing. Licensing would like to present before
the commission the base with the recommendation
for approval and there is one base licensing
recommended for denial; request commission grant
an additional to 30 days so they can get their
outstanding items in order.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Are there any questions about these base applications? If not, I move that we adopt the license recommendations as to approval, renewals, and denials. All in favor say aye.

(All respond aye.)

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Oppose no.

Licensed recommendations are adopted.

Thank you, Chris.

We have two items for action by this commission today. The first is a pilot program to secure the craft and technology of electric vehicle usage of the taxi duty cycle. Deputy Commissioner Chhabra is in the house.

Yes, Deputy Commissioner.

MR. CHHABRA: Good morning, commissioners. I'm Ashwini Chhabra and I'm the deputy commissioner for Policy and Planning here at TLC. I have a brief presentation on the pilot program Nissan North America runs in operation with the TLC. I have a few slides that I'm going to go through to brief you on the program. Afterwards, I will be happy to answer any questions you might
First, I will go over the basics of the program, then I will go into more detail on the later slides. In the course of working together on the Taxi of Tomorrow project, TLC and Nissan have discussed TLC's interest in new technology. As a result of those discussions, Nissan has proposed to provide medallion owners six Nissan all-electric vehicles as taxis for a period of 12 months and would provide free of charge a one year lease of the vehicles for the duration of that pilot. Nissan will provide a charger for each vehicle. In this case of fleet participants, it will be one charger with two ports to allow the vehicles to charge at the same time, plus two quick chargers for midshift in the trunk, for owners to power the vehicle as needed. The location for those chargers, that needs to be determined. To be clear, as commissioner indicated, the goal of the pilot is not to see whether the TLC should approve the Nissan LEAF as a taxi; rather the goal here is to test the concept of the electric vehicles as taxis. This pilot enables the city and the industry to learn
about the advantages and the challenges of using electric vehicles as taxis to help the city with what needs in order to be used more broadly.

What is Nissan LEAF? The Nissan LEAF is a five-door all-electric car. It's powered by a battery pack that sits underneath the vehicle. It's charged by plugging the car in a charger, similar to how you charge your cell phone. According to EPA, it gets 73 miles on a single charge. Electric vehicles, like the LEAF, present several environmental -- just according to the U.S. Department of Environment, it's more energy efficient. Electric cars use 75 percent of their energy in their batteries to power the car and combustion engines use only 20 percent to run the car. The electrical car also emits zero from the tailpipe. The LEAF has been available, as you may well know, the retail markets here in the U.S. and Germany since 2010, also sells in Europe and Canada and has received many awards and has a five-star safety rating from the National Highway Traffic Administration.

Who will drive this? The program is completely voluntary. If the commission approves
the pilot program today, Nissan is to call for
applications and volunteer medallion owners and
drivers will be eligible to participate in the
pilot program. To get information on a variety of
prospects, Nissan will be looking to select
participants from a combination of fleets and
owner/operators. Nissan will be looking for
drivers with experience with using newer
technologies such as hybrid vehicles and
participants should be comfortable using the
Internet and should be able to spend time to be
able to provide verbal and written feedback to
back their interest in driving the vehicle. The
owner shall have space for it in their home,
garage, or in a fleet garage to charge the
vehicles. And of the owners who apply and meet
the criteria, Nissan selects final participants by
a random lottery.

Why do we need the pilot program? As you
know TLC does pilot programs to promote innovation
and demonstrations in the industry. Pilots allow
us to try things out that current rules don't
already allow. This pilot program, TLC will
provide Nissan and any instrument to deviate from
certain TLC rules. First, you are required to meet all taxi and limousine specifications. For example, leg room, trunk space and partition. Second, fleet participants in this program won't be allowed to double-shift a LEAF. Each LEAF participant will get two LEAFs. One could be in service while the other one is charging. They will in effect share a medallion. Although, I should mention again, the charger will have two ports that have the capacity to charge both of the vehicles at the same time. Most, though not all, require taxi equipment to be installed in the LEAFs, a meter and so forth. The exceptions are the vehicle camera will be required to have security. There is not a partition of the direct size for a partition. The vehicle distinguished by a unique paint job so passengers know when entering the LEAF and also have some expectation of refusal rules in certain areas. Also, to account for range limitations, they won't be required to take passengers to Westchester or Nassau or to the airports.

Finally, if a vehicle is taken out of commission in order to run the LEAF, the owner
will get a credit for that amount of a period up to one year on the life of the vehicle that was removed from service.

What will we learn from the Pilot? The goal of the Pilot is to test its being used as a taxi. So Nissan will gather data that's released for the taxi, based on a combination of driver reports and data the vehicle itself is able to collect. They will monitor the technical performance, how long it takes to charge, where and when the taxi is charging and how far the vehicle can travel on each charge. Also, monitoring the cost and use and power of the electric vehicle as a taxi. Nissan will pay special attention to how any of these vehicles differ from a taxi in regular commuter use in the city, and what special challenges or advantages we face using electrical vehicles. Nissan will also use posts, surveys, and interviews during and after the pilot program to gather information for the people who own and drive and maintain these vehicles every day. We can learn a lot about what issues we need to be considering, if the electric vehicle will be considered for a broader taxi use sometime in the
TLC MEETING 10/20/11

future.

Some of the key dates, if the commission then approves, may be followed by the program:

Released today, the call for applications, Late October and early November. There are info sessions with Nissan next month two information sessions with Nissan for the interested taxi owners, and in January Nissan will select through a lottery, and March we anticipate LEAF will hit the roads as taxis. To summarize, we believe the pilot program is an excellent learning opportunity for auto industry, the city, and taxicab cab industry. We strongly recommend the pilot program. Thank you. I will answer any questions that you might have.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you, Deputy Commissioner. Before questions and vote, I will just reiterate what Deputy Chhabra said was, to be clear, the LEAF is not an ideal vehicle for taxi in terms of spaciousness and cannot accommodate a partition. There are a number of compromises which will make up for it in make terms of quality of service. The idea here is to see how fully an electric vehicle can be integrated into the taxi
duty cycle. So for a future vehicle what operational adjustments would taxi owners have to make to be able to use the vehicle. And then the possible outcome if the pilot doesn't as a taxi, or another way to comprise, in terms of operation or if it's just too great to really work, if that makes sense. It can be done, but what has to be done here is rule changes have to be made to accommodate that. So just to be clear, the goal here isn't testing the specific LEAF vehicle as much as how do you use the vehicle that needs to be charged from three to seven hours a day; how do you use that as a taxi? That's what we're attempting to find out with this pilot program.

Are there questions before the vote? All in favor of approving the pilot program, say aye?

(All respond Aye.)

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Opposed no.

The question is: Who will be using the vehicles? We're going to be soliciting and we hope to find, assuming there are sufficient both owner/operators and fleets to test out work on two different -- those two different business models, assuming interest, and I'm confident that they
will be, whether owner/operators and fleets
drivers. Thank you very much.

The next item on the agenda is Amendment to
our accessible taxicab vehicles specifications.
Meera, are you in charge of this?
MS. JOSHI: Yes.
Before the commission today are proposed
rules that would alter the TLC's wheelchair
accessible vehicle specifications. It would
permit the use of the MV-1, a demonstration model
which is downstairs, an all-purpose built
wheelchair accessible vehicle for use as a
taxicab. Disability advocates are proponents of
the vehicle. The rules were published first in
the city record on September 16th. Comments were
due October 17th. One comment was received and it
was distributed to the commissioners. The staff
recommends that today the commission adopt the
rule as it was proposed.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you.
We now have a public hearing. The first
speaker is Fred Drasner of the Vehicle Production
Group. We will also then hear from Councilman
Koppell, then Asseblyman Micah Kellner. There are
TLC MEETING 10/20/11

15 people signed up to speak.

Mr. Drasner, before you commence, let me just say, I suspect that, maybe I'll be wrong, I suspect most of the speakers or all will be testifying in favor of approving the specification changes that are before us, but we also want to address what other actions should be taken on wheelchair access. I welcome that and am happy to hear those comments.

I also know that some of our commissioners have time constraints and we really need to vote by 11:20, so that gives us 25 minutes. What I would like to do then is ask people to limit their remarks to a minute, and if people then want to have -- we will close the hearing and vote -- but I know people want to be heard, so I will be happy to stay. We will then, as many people want to speak on other issues including disability issues, as much as you'd like, in order to close the hearing and vote on the MV-1, I want to finish by 11:20.

Mr. Drasner, thank you.

MR. DRASNER: Commissioners. I'm from Brooklyn, so I'll go very fast. Five years ago we
started a project to build the best taxicab and
the best accessible taxicab was started with a
clean sheet of paper. We invited in major taxi
fleet owners to the Crown Victoria which was the
taxi of choice and about 50 focus groups within
the disabled community. The result is
downstairs. It's the MV-1. It's a body-on-frame
vehicle. It's the only one manufactured in the
U.S. since the Crown Victoria and Town Car. It's
the strongest way to build a car. The car is
produced to run on compressed natural gas and
gasoline. The CNG version is a rating of 300
miles which solves the duty cycle issues with the
100 miles. It's built like a truck. It rides
like a Rolls Royce. It's best for taxi riders.
It's best for disabled taxi riders. That was the
goal and I think we've achieved it.

On the issue of taxi accessibility, if you
provide these accessible taxis to riding
consumers, it saves money for the city. On top of
that, we're made in America. We're union-made in
Mishawaka, Indiana. We created 900 jobs. This is
exactly what the country has to do. The president
of UMW said if we can't prove that an industrial
company can start up and succeed in the United States, we've got a big problem. With that, I trust and hope for your approval today. Thank you.

    CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you very much for setting that standard.
    Councilman Koppell.
    I'm sorry. I ask that the commissioners recognize that the gentleman that just spoke is the entrepreneur -- is the founder and the owner or chair I guess of the company that manufactures.
    MR. DRASNER: I'm just the chairman.
    MR. KOPPELL: Good morning.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, we worked together in the city council for many years and I have the highest regard for you. I have heard your comments with respect to time and I won't give the whole introduction. And just say that I'm strongly in favor of having the accessible model. I looked at the one downstairs and it seems to be a very suitable model. It's much more comfortable for me, as a large individual, than the ordinary cab, and putting the wheelchair user right next to the driver doesn't seem to be a problem at all
and, in fact, it solves one of the issues that the
mayor raised. Incidentally, I might say, that the
mayor's concerns are totally off the wall. But
one of them is that you couldn't talk to a
wheelchair user because he would be too far back,
but this solves that problem. So I strongly urge
the amendment of the rules. And I'm not going to
take more time, but just say 37 members of the
city council believe that we should have an
all-accessible fleet. The U.S. Justice Department
believes it is. The governor apparently believes
it is. And it's long past time for this
commission to move in that direction. And I
cannot have -- I had just been in London in August
and seen every cab accessible and comfortable and
durable. I cannot understand why the City of New
York isn't doing what it should be doing. 25
years ago in the state legislature I voted to
spend literally hundreds of millions of dollars to
make every bus in the City of New York and in the
state accessible. Every cab should be
accessible. That's part of your obligation,
members of the commission, and I hope you
reconsider how you configure the taxi of
TLC MEETING 10/20/11

tomorrow. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you, Councilman, for your continued leadership on this issue and many issues. Thank you.

MR. KELLNER: Good morning, Chairman and members of the commission. I'm Assembly member Micah Kellner. Today I'm just here as an advisor/connoisseur of the care of new quality taxi riders, more importantly for the people with -- as an advocate for people with disabilities. As you are all well aware less than two percent of the taxi fleet is wheelchair accessible. I personally spent a lot of time, pushing, prying, throwing pulling, drilling the other 80, 90 percent of the industry into using a wheelchair accessible vehicle. What I'm constantly told in response is the vehicles on the road just can't hack it, no pun intended. But, you know, I think we have the opportunity with this vehicle, with the MV-1 for this rule specification to change that. You know, we have an opportunity to change the way people with disabilities get around the city. We have the ability to reduce the cost of Access-A-Ride. We have the ability to put a body
on a framed vehicle, that from what I understand, has a terrific suspension on the road today. I think you should approve this rule. You know, personally I don't care what the taxi of tomorrow is because I think at the end of the day the Justice Department is going to decide that for us. But when the time comes, I think you should vote for this rule because this vehicle does work. It's proven it's up to the New York City taxi and it's going to work, not just for some New Yorkers, but all New Yorkers. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: The next speaker is Jean Ryan followed by Steven Schneir.

My sheet gives organizational affiliations for people, but I guess I would ask you that before you speak, if you wish to have your organization noted, please do that at the beginning of your testimony. Thank you.

MS. RYAN: I'm Jean Ryan. I'm with Disabled in Action. We wholeheartedly support this new regulation of having the person in a wheelchair be able to sit in the front next to the driver. It's really easy to get into this cab. It's really
easy to get out and side roads are safe. Contrary to what the mayor said, it's easy to get in and hail a cab from the sidewalk or on the street. It's safe and we can certainly communicate with the driver, so can the people sitting in the back, and it has comfortable seats. If they couldn't, they can just raise their voice a little bit. We need all the cabs to be accessible. The reason we can't hail a cab now is because there is so few of them. We can never see them. The stickers are in the back, so they pass us. By the time we see they are accessible, if we ever see them, it's like an Elvis sitting. Thank you.

MS. RYAN: Thank you, Ms. Ryan.

Steven Schneir, and then Ronnie Raymond.

MR. SCHNEIR: Good morning, Chairman. My name is Steven Schneir. I'm the general manager of MV-1 of New York City, Connecticut, and Long Island. Thank you for this opportunity. I'll be very brief. I just want to say that I fully support the changes, not just because we are the dealer of the vehicle, but because of all the things that the young lady just said previously. It's time for New York to step up and provide
services for the handicapped. I know you're pressed for time, so I'll keep this short. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you, sir.

Ms. Raymond followed by Marco Henry.

MS. RAYMOND: I'm not going to be like everyone else and talk about the politics of this and why it is important. I would like to speak as someone who is fortunate enough to spend weekends traveling around in one of these vehicles. We traveled on New York City's streets, on the Henry Hudson Parkway, on the New York Thruway and on local roads in upstate New York. The vehicle itself is so spacious, so comfortable traveling up all those different roads. It is the most comfortable experience I've had, not even in the taxi, in any kind of vehicle since I've been in a wheelchair. My son is 6'2. He was sitting in the back. He stretched out his feet and he could not touch the driver's seat. So the spaciousness of the inside is unparalleled. The vehicle is so smoothly riding and so sturdy. I have no idea how long it would last on New York City streets, but my guess is that it would out
surpass any of the approved vehicles that are currently on the road, and I'm very, very strongly recommending this without reservation.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you, Ms. Raymond.

Next up is Marco Henry and the following speaker will be Terence Moakley.

MR. HENRY: Good morning. My name is Marco Henry. I'm the president of the Yellow Cab Company in Brooklyn and Connecticut. When I started this business 30 years ago, the company that it purchased was Checker Cabs. Checker Cabs was a taxi designed very vaguely. Since then, the last 30 years, I'm lucky to find any to replace Checker Cabs. Today you have the MV-1. MV-1 was basically built on all the footprints of Checker Cab. My company intends to appraise all fleets, which I will give the public the same access of transportation not everybody else. Some strongly suggest you approve the change and let's do this type of thing, New York City.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you.

Next up is Terence Moakley followed by Patrick Brent.

MR. MOAKLEY: Good morning. My name is
TLC MEETING 10/20/11

Terence Moakley. I'm with the United Spinal Association and I was chair of the Taxi For All Campaign in 1996 and 2006. I was wondering if I can give you a handout out for each of the commission members.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Certainly.

MR. MOAKLEY: I appreciate it. I just want to also say that we support changes in rules here. And I think the handwriting is on the wall. We have history. I was a plaintiff in a lawsuit that Council member Koppell was a member on the mass transit and you all know that that resulted in accessible buses and some access to the subway system. I believe this will happen in New York State. The law is on the side of people with disabilities. I urge you to adopt the rules, too, requiring that all future taxis be accessible to for people who use wheelchairs and they be clean vehicles as well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you.

Patrick Brent followed by Darren Aquino.

First of all, I just want to say congratulations to the major trade associations. I don't know if any of the members of industry are
here. I should note that the industry continues
to do a remarkable job in serving customers. I
know that this issue is before us and we need to
figure out a better solution than the one we have
today. What I want to point out, that yesterday
for the first time ever, a pair of two medallions
sold for $2 million dollars. That's $1 million
each. And I think that is a sign that New Yorkers
remain in this industry and continue to bring them
customers and that the people buying them believe
that the city is fundamentally helping; that
passengers, business people, tourists, New Yorkers
will continue to want to use the service. I think
in many ways it contributes to the hard work of
the industry members, and frankly, the TLC and the
regulatory regime keeps the service strong.

I also, to make note of the industry
organizations that are signed up to speak on this
topic, I would invite you if you are -- not just
on this vehicle, but on the broader issue.
Commissioners and I will tell you, we invited the
trade associations to come in to meet about this.
Unfortunately, they all indicated that they
weren't actually available to speak with us on the
issue of disability. Some industry leaders, I know have recently funded advertisements calling for greater access for people in wheelchairs. There seems to be some kind of change of permanent within the industry. And I should tell you that there are active conversations within the administration about what the next step needs to be on the disability issue. So noting that there are trade association representatives here, if you wish to speak about what direction you think the industry should take on accessibility, you're very much welcome to do so.

Mr. Brent.

MR. BRENT: Thank you.

Many of us are here for the same reason, obviously for more accessible taxis on the road and I applaud some of those and the everyone else that worked towards that. With that being said, what I'm about to say may not be popular. I think that in the rush to get more accessible vehicles on the road, it is important to take into account that New York City has the safest and most reliable vehicles on the road. The thought of approving the vehicle that's not proven
immediately for use on the streets, they potentially represent a setback for the accessible taxis if this vehicle fails. It's similar to the side entry vehicle that was originally approved. It turned out to be a bit of a mockery. I would request that a pilot program instead be proposed for the MV-1. Like I said, it's an exciting vehicle. I think it looks great, but in the interest of not taking a step forward or two steps back in terms of getting more accessible taxis on the road, I think it's important to look at.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Do you have an organizational affiliation?

MR. BRENT: Freedom Motors. Of course we manufacture the Siennas on the road today. I admit, there is a little interest here, but I think the other thing is that the manufacturers that are making Siennas right now -- it's not just us. We aren't the only provider. There's a potential suit within Department of Justice and the demand could increase pretty rapidly in terms of what vehicles need to be built and how many need to be built, and why I encourage and absolutely commend VPG and everyone else in the
industry that's advancing. I think that the TLC should potentially be working with the current manufactures and develop programs for the background.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you. Your comments are welcome. I think they are important to be heard. I do want to remind you that we are -- that legislation is pending in Albany to put at a minimum of hundreds, potentially thousands, more accessible taxis on the street. We will need all providers is the truth of it, if that happens, to be able to do that with any, if at all.

I also want to note for the commissioners, of course, the rule change does not require the MV-1. If the medallion owners, both wheelchair accessible medallions and all medallion owners will be able to choose whether they want to purchase this vehicle or any of the other approved medallions. Your comments are welcome. Thank you.

Darren Aquino, and the next speaker will be Cheryl Krist.

MS. DERMAN: Good morning, good afternoon, whatever time of day we consider it. I'd like to
make a point. My point would be that you're expecting disabled men and women at this conference, but your podium is very high, so that's one thing. Darren Aquino could not be here. His disability prohibited him from being here. I'm speaking in his place. I am the assistant to the deputy chief of our organization.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: What organization would that be? I'm sorry, ma'am, and can you give your name, please, for the stenographer?

MS. DERMAN: Yes. My name is Aza Derman. The organization is the Advocates for Disabled Americans, Policemen, Firefighters and Families. And that is my organizational affiliation. I am a disabled American. And I would wager that there is more room for corpses in a coffin in a back of a hearse than there is for a person in a wheelchair in the typical Manhattan cab. So, you know, we're not going to grow wings. I am in support and in favor of the MV-1. We do not want to wait any longer for any accessible vehicles. We are tired of waiting outside trying to call Access-A-Ride. Most of us call it Stress-A-Ride.
We are tired of being discounted. Unless we grow wings, the MV-1 seems to be the best mode of transfer and transport. And a small note -- I apologize, I know I am over time -- A small note on the percentages of the accessible cabs, almost two percent; my grandmother has better odds at a roulette table in Las Vegas than one of these ladies and gentlemen hailing a cab and being able to get in it. So please approve the accessible vehicle. Please approve the MV-1. These people are your pilot program. They already tried it out and they are very happy with it. Thank you very much and have a good day.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Cheryl Krist and the following speaker will be Richard Thaler.

MS. KRIST: Hello. My name is Cheryl Krist and I'm a member of the Disabled in Action and I have seen the car downstairs and I can get in with my dog and he has a place to be and he's safe and it's important you get these cars out on the road as soon as possible so that I have a chance of hailing a cab because I cannot, at the moment, hail a cab. I would like to speak to you after the vote on another topic. Thank you.
TLC MEETING 10/20/11

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you, Ms. Krist.

Richard Thaler followed by Edith Prentiss.

MR. THALER: Chairman, I will pass.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you, Mr. Thaler.

Ms. Pratiss.

MS. PRATISS: Edith Pratiss. I'm the chair of Taxi For All Campaign as well as the vice president of the Disabled Americans. It seems as though we've been discussing and trying -- I understand that MV-1 has a picture of me or a tape of me trying every single version, going back to the auto show many years ago. We're very happy with it. I think that it's a great move. It will open the door for the cause as well, if that ever happens. I think that we have -- I'm speaking to the gentleman from Freedom Motors -- you know, I hate the Sienna, to be really honest, it's just not working for us. I think the rule change is very important, and I really look forward to this. We've had many discussions about the issues of taxis and the problems with taxis. And I really hope that we can see the same concept happening for the deliveries as well. We need accessible delivery as much as we need accessible
TLC MEETING 10/20/11

Taxis. As those of the central business district, we still need service. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you. Absolutely.

Just before -- that's the exhaust of our list of people who requested to speak. I will again invite the major trade associations, but before that we will call for a vote. Before that, today, I want to acknowledge a couple of people. Jason Rochelle (phonetic) is here representing the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and Commissioner Sapolin, who has advocated on this issue in particular with just extraordinary passion, power, and intelligence, even while struggling with quite a serious illness. He is not able to be here in person due to his illness today. You know, all of our thoughts and prayers are with Matt. I just want to pay tribute to his work and your work, Jason, as part of that team. This admittedly is a small step that we take today as part of that. I just want to note your presence. All of the folks here who are in the room who have advocated on this, we've talked in person, on the phone, in meetings many times.

Before we give a vote, I just want to say, I
do think we are moving in the right direction. I understand the frustration at the speed. I would note that some of the speakers say this -- that -- I mean, if the commission snaps its fingers as such, so to speak, today, and say every taxi should be wheelchair accessible, what would happen on the ground would still be a slow, messy, frustrating process. That's not to say we shouldn't demand a policy as you are. But, you know, as your comments as always about the current vehicles that are on the road reflect that reality can only follow our dictate at the pace it's going to follow it. So we are making a policy herein, mindful of the vehicles that are out there, mindful of what the auto industry has put forward today. And I just want to remind people that we can't have instant availability of enough taxis that are accessible that people would be happy with. We will continue to do the best that we can.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Chairman, can you take one question before you take the vote?

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: I'm certainly happy to do that. Let's have your comment. We will then have
the vote. We've had the public hearing.

I just want to reiterate and I want to underscore the industry folks' active discussions within the administration about what is necessary on the disability issue. As folks noted, the Justice Department has weighed in. The governor has made his comments. Again, I've seen on TV, ads funded by the industry that say accessibility with people are left by the side of the road. So I really would encourage you if you want your voice to be heard, this is a good time. With the industry-supported fully accessible fleet, what percent fleet would the industry like to see; this really would be a good time to make your voice heard.

Yes, ma'am.

MR. UNDERWOOD: I'm Joanna Underwood, president of Energy Vision, a national environmental organization. We have been studying fuel for the future for transportation for the last 20 years. I want to say from the environmental point of view, this vehicle is the taxi of the future, the taxi of tomorrow. It's not only clean, reducing particulates and nitrogen
oxides. It's good for the drivers. It's good for the customers. It's good for the people who live in the city. It is a drastic one, one of the biggest obstacles that we have, which is getting this country unaddicted from its oil and its dependence on foreign oil. It's very dangerous.
It offers drivers a cleaner, better vehicle. They save money on fuel. And I think putting 1,000 of these on the street for starters would be terrific. I'd like to say that at a time when corporations that are often held as being very narrow in their interest and their concerns about society. Here is a group of business experts that have gotten together and understood a real need in this society, gone out and worked on it for years, and they have put out there an extraordinary vehicle. I'd like to congratulate them all.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN YASSKY: Thank you.

With that, let's call for a vote -- well, I'm sorry. Are there any comments or questions for the commission? If not, I move that we adopt the change of rule before us. All in favor, say aye.

(All respond Aye.)
The rule change is adopted. I would
epect to see the vehicles on the road not too
long. Thank you, commissioners, for your time and
commitment.

Before I formally close the hearing, do any
of the industry trade associations wish to be
heard on the broader topic of what I think we
should make requiring medallion -- require
additional requirements on medallions for
accessibility, whether that's a sound idea or
not?

I hear none. The meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 11:30 a.m., the above matter
concluded.)