

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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November 26, 2012  
Start: 10:07 a.m.  
Recess: 12:45 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway  
Committee Room, 14th Floor

B E F O R E:  
JAMES VACCA  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Vincent Ignizio  
Peter Koo  
G. Oliver Koppell  
Daniel R. Garodnick  
Deborah Rose  
Eric Ulrich  
Jessica S. Lappin  
Ydanis Rodriguez  
Gale A. Brewer  
David Greenfield  
James G. Van Bramer

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Ashwini Chhabra  
Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Planning  
New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

Paul Herzan

Davin Stowell  
CEO and Founder  
Smart Design

Megan Canning  
Deputy Director  
Design Trust for Public Space

Ethan Gerber  
Greater New York Taxi Association

Vincent Sapone  
Managing Director  
League of Mutual Taxi Owners

Peter Mazer  
General Counsel  
Metropolitan Taxicab Board of Trade

David Pollack  
Executive Director  
Committee for Taxi Safety

Placida Robinson  
Founder  
Independent Medallion Owner and Driver Association

Jose Altamarino  
President  
Livery Base Owners Association

Marc Klein  
Vice President  
Clean Energy Fuels

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Ricoberto Nunez

Jonathan Jonovics

Cliff Adler

Member

League of Mutual Taxi Owners

Aaron Truesell

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2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Good morning  
3 everyone, welcome. I'm City Councilman James  
4 Vacca and I'm chairman of the Committee on  
5 Transportation. Like to welcome you all here,  
6 November 26th. And I'd like to introduce the  
7 members first that are here so far. To my left,  
8 Council Member Ignizio, and to his left, Council  
9 Member Peter Koo.

10 Today, we're going to hear  
11 testimony on three bills relating to our city's  
12 taxi and for-hire vehicle industries. We will  
13 also vote on Intro 599.

14 First we will hear testimony  
15 related to Intro 929, which would require all  
16 medallion taxi cabs to post the rate of fare on  
17 the exterior of the cab. It would also require  
18 the word taxi to appear on the vehicle.

19 This legislation is a critical  
20 piece of consumer protection. In the three years  
21 that I've been chair of the Transportation  
22 Committee, we have had not one, not two, but three  
23 separate overcharging scandals, and that was with  
24 the rate of fare on the door. Without the rate of  
25 fare on the door, how is the passenger to know

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that he or she is being charged the correct rate?

I expect TLC officials to say that it's available on the TPEP screen in the back of the cab, but does anyone honestly believe that most tourists who are the most vulnerable to overcharging scams know how to use those screens? And I don't know a single New Yorker who uses them for anything more than catching up on the latest news headlines.

To this day, there are dozens of hearings a week at the TLC's OATH tribunals on Rate 4 violations. This scam is years old now and it still happens regularly. Yet, now TLC has decided that design trumps consumer protection and has removed the most basic, most visible, most important piece of information for the passengers--the rate of fare--and made it difficult to find.

The TLC last approved changes in the taxi logo in October of 2007. Industry stakeholders have said they were consulted during that process and came up with a logo that everyone was happy with. What's interesting about this process--or that process at that time, rather, is that the TLC appears to have rejected the very

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2 logo that now graces taxi doors, the standalone T  
3 in a circle. Back in 2007, the logo was rejected  
4 because TLC officials feared it would be too easy  
5 to confuse it with the markings for a future 2nd  
6 Avenue subway line, so in 2007, this logo was  
7 deemed too confusing, but now it's on the door of  
8 every taxi in the city. What changed?

9           This time around, the industry says  
10 they were not consulted. Earlier this year,  
11 Commissioner Yassky came before this committee and  
12 assured myself and members of the committee that  
13 he always meet with industry stakeholders before  
14 he proceeds with rule changes. And yet it appears  
15 that these meetings did not happen with respect to  
16 the decal change.

17           In addition, news reports have  
18 indicated that many drivers are not pleased with  
19 these changes. Needless to say, this is not good  
20 news and it's cause for concern.

21           In addition to what appears to be a  
22 disregard for many--input from the drivers and  
23 stakeholders, these rules were passed in a  
24 completely non-transparent manner. Rules as  
25 significant as these should have been issued

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2 separately and given their own public hearing.  
3 Instead, these rules were slipped into the highly  
4 controversial fare and lease cap increase rules  
5 and neither the industry nor the public was given  
6 an adequate opportunity to fully understand what  
7 was happening with respect to the decal. I can  
8 only believe that the industry stakeholders would  
9 have presented their opposition to the commission  
10 had they been given an opportunity. And  
11 certainly, as a Council, we will be insisting on  
12 greater transparency in this and other matters as  
13 well.

14 I hope TLC has answers about the  
15 entire process and, to be honest, I'm hoping that  
16 I don't hear we did all this because of  
17 aesthetics. We cannot have something that looks  
18 nice trump consumer protection and transparency  
19 when it comes to passengers.

20 Second, we're going to hear  
21 testimony on Intro 930, which would require the  
22 TLC to provide an annual report to the Council  
23 regarding inspections of TLC-licensed vehicles. I  
24 want to thank Council Member Cabrera and Rodriguez  
25 for all of their work on this issue.

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2 Earlier this year, members of the  
3 livery industry testified that drivers were  
4 enduring week-long waits just to get an inspection  
5 at the TLC's Woodside facility. The fact is, the  
6 amount of time it takes for drivers to get an  
7 inspection has become a major issue. If they have  
8 to wait too long, they are forced to choose  
9 between not driving, and therefore not earning  
10 money, while they wait for the inspection date.  
11 Or they choose to drive illegally without proper  
12 inspection because they need to put food on their  
13 table. Drivers should not have to face that  
14 choice.

15 The final bill we will hear today  
16 is Intro 923 sponsored by Council Member Weprin.  
17 This legislation would allow the Taxi and  
18 Limousine Commission to approve electric vehicles  
19 for use as medallion taxicabs as long as they meet  
20 the same TLC standards as alternative fuel  
21 vehicles such as hybrids. This legislation  
22 recognizes that technology in the auto industry  
23 has improved dramatically. While it may not be  
24 feasible to put an electric taxi on the road  
25 tomorrow, this legislation will ensure that once



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2 the electric cars are able to withstand the  
3 stresses of New York City streets, there will be  
4 no delay in putting them on our streets. This  
5 legislation also has major potential to improve  
6 our city's air quality by putting zero emission  
7 electric vehicles on the streets.

8 Without further to-do, I'd like to  
9 mention that we've been joined on the right by my  
10 colleague, Council Member Oliver Koppell.

11 And I do want to note that before  
12 we start our hearing today, we will vote on Intro  
13 599, which I sponsored, which requires that the  
14 screens in the back seat of Yellow cabs be  
15 accessible to people with visual impairments.  
16 Many of you may remember the press conference in  
17 April where I stood with Lighthouse International  
18 Creative Mobile Technologies and former Governor  
19 David Patterson to announce that cabs outfitted  
20 with CMT's technology were ready to begin rolling  
21 out this change. I owe all the stakeholders in  
22 this project a note of thanks to Jessie Davis, the  
23 team at CMT, for its willingness to do more about  
24 advancing this idea and I want to mention  
25 Lighthouse, in particular, Lester Marks, Karen

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2 Gorgie [phonetic], for all their hard work, Ellen  
3 Ruben and the PAS Coalition. Last and certainly  
4 least, I want to thank Lyle Frank and Jen Wilcox  
5 for their significant contributions to the bill.

6 And when we have a quorum, we will  
7 vote on that bill's passage and recommend that  
8 bill to the entire Council for approval. Okay?

9 Did I mention Oliver? I mentioned  
10 Oliver.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I did, okay.  
13 Without further to-do, I'd like to call on our  
14 first witness representing the Taxi and Limousine  
15 Commission. Would you introduce yourself, sir,  
16 and for the record and we welcome your testimony.

17 [Pause]

18 ASHWINI CHHABRA: Good morning,  
19 Chairman Vacca and members of the City Council  
20 Committee on Transportation, I'm Ashwini Chhabra,  
21 Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Planning at the  
22 New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission.  
23 Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you  
24 today regarding these three bills affecting the  
25 city's taxi and for-hire industries.

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2                   The first proposed item of  
3 legislation is Intro 923, which would permit  
4 owners of alternative fuel medallions to use  
5 commission-approved electric vehicles as taxis.  
6 Currently, the City's Administrative Code  
7 specifically restricts these 272 alternative fuel  
8 medallions to use with hybrid electric or CNG-  
9 powered vehicles. As electric vehicles are  
10 becoming increasingly commercially viable and as  
11 the charging infrastructure expands to make their  
12 use a practical option, we may decide that they  
13 could be used as taxis. In that event, this bill  
14 will give the owners of alternative fuel  
15 medallions the option of going electric. The  
16 Commission wholeheartedly supports this bill and  
17 looks forward to testing this new technology in  
18 the hopes that it will provide another sustainable  
19 option for taxi owners.

20                   The second item of legislation I'd  
21 like to address is Intro 930, which would require  
22 the Commission to report to the Council on a  
23 quarterly basis average wait times for taxi and  
24 for-hire vehicle inspections. It's important to  
25 understand that, while taxicabs and for-hire

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2 vehicles are both required to be inspected every  
3 three months--every four months, the process of  
4 the two types of vehicles is different. Taxicabs  
5 have a preset inspection schedule every four  
6 months during the course of the year and all  
7 inspections are done at the TLC's facility at  
8 Woodside. The time and date of the next scheduled  
9 vehicle inspection is given to the driver at each  
10 vehicle inspection, and we can share the schedule  
11 with you, as it does not change.

12 In contrast, for-hire vehicles are  
13 only required to be inspected at our Woodside  
14 facility prior to initial licensure and then at  
15 the start of each renewal cycle, or once for every  
16 two-year license cycle. After their initial  
17 inspection is performed at our Woodside facility,  
18 for-hire vehicles are also then required to be  
19 inspected once every four months, but these  
20 inspections can be done at any local DMV  
21 inspection facility. We do not track vehicle  
22 inspection appointment statistics for FHV's as it  
23 is administratively burdensome to collect and  
24 analyze and would distract staff from the more  
25 important work of actually processing these

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2 applications, but we did generate data on this for  
3 this committee back in February.

4 As we reported at that time, an  
5 applicant will receive an inspection appointment  
6 date within three business days of completing all  
7 the necessary paperwork and notifying the TLC that  
8 they have received their DMV plates and the total  
9 process from the date the application is filed  
10 until their actual inspection appointment date for  
11 fiscal year 2013 is currently averaging only ten  
12 calendar days. In addition, segments of the  
13 process are outside of the TLC's control so this  
14 process can, of course, take longer when  
15 applications are found to be incomplete or to  
16 contain errors that the applicant needs to rectify  
17 or if the applicant takes longer than necessary to  
18 obtain plates from the DMV.

19 Given the foregoing, the Commission  
20 does not believe that collecting, analyzing, and  
21 reporting this data every three months is an  
22 efficient use of staff resources. Commission  
23 staff will be better deployed to process these  
24 applications and to further processing times. For  
25 that reason, we respectfully oppose this

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legislation.

The last proposed item of legislation, Intro 929-A, would require the rate of fare and the word taxi to be placed on the exterior of every vehicle authorized to accept a street hail. Respectfully, we disagree with the requirements of this bill.

While the Commission shares the motivation behind this legislation--the education and protection of consumers--this bill fails to achieve that goal. Instead, other current and planned innovations will better accomplish this goal than the alteration of door decals. As you certainly know, all New York City taxis are already a uniform yellow color and have identical markings, they also have distinctive roof lights which display the taxi medallion number specific to that vehicle and a medallion affixed to the hood. All of these features readily mark them as New York City taxis. This combination of uniform color, uniform markings, and distinctive roof light turn an otherwise nondescript Ford Crown Vic or Toyota Prius into that iconic symbol of New York City--the New York City taxicab. And no one

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2 seeing one of these unique yellow vehicles from a  
3 block away can have any doubt that it is a New  
4 York City taxicab.

5           The New York City taxi is one of  
6 the world's most identifiable brands and its  
7 iconic nature is a key element to the industry's  
8 success, but more than this, the Yellow taxi is a  
9 ubiquitous presence in the city. Particularly in  
10 the Manhattan Central Business District, where  
11 taxicabs are often a large percentage of the  
12 vehicles on the road. And in that environment of  
13 persistent messaging and visual clutter,  
14 simplifying and cleaning up the markings on 13,237  
15 taxis can make a real difference.

16           In 2007, the TLC introduced new  
17 exterior markings for the first time since 1970,  
18 which included a modernized fare panel and a bold  
19 T in a circle followed by A-X-I. Building upon  
20 those changes, we again engaged design  
21 professionals to help improve the taxis' iconic  
22 appearance. Based on their consult, we recently  
23 replaced the words NYC Taxi on the side doors with  
24 a smaller NYC and the letter T, and we simplified  
25 and reduced the fare information that was posted

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2 on the door of the taxi. We have not had  
3 increased complaints from passengers, neither  
4 residents nor visitors, that this change has made  
5 it harder for them to discern a New York City taxi  
6 from the sea of vehicles on our city streets and  
7 we have not had any discernible increase in  
8 complaints from passengers that they didn't know  
9 the taxi fare before entering the cab.

10 Now in contrast, cities such as Los  
11 Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.,  
12 require the word Taxi to be on the door of the  
13 vehicle. Having the word Taxi is a useful tool in  
14 these cities where taxicabs are a variety of color  
15 combinations, depending on a particular taxicab  
16 company. In New York City, that is simply not the  
17 case. The yellow exterior of a taxi makes it easy  
18 to distinguish from other vehicles on the road.

19 On the subject of displaying the  
20 rate of fare on the exterior of the taxi, this is  
21 certainly one of those ideas that made sense at  
22 one time but no longer does. And so just to  
23 provide some context, what we have here is the  
24 previous fare panel that was in place on taxis  
25 through August and the new fare information panel



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2 that's on the rear door of the taxis today. Back  
3 when the fare was simply an initial fare--the flag  
4 drop--with an additional amount per distance  
5 traveled or time elapsed, it may have made sense  
6 to enumerate that for passengers, however, the  
7 fare structure today is more complicated--bless  
8 you--with the rate of fare varying depending on  
9 the time of day and the destination. When you  
10 ride a taxi today, you can expect to pay 2.50 upon  
11 entry plus 50 cents MTA tax, plus 50 cents for  
12 each one-fifth of a mile when the cab is traveling  
13 at six miles an hour or more or for every 60  
14 seconds when the cab is not in motion or traveling  
15 at less than six miles an hour, plus a weekday  
16 peak hour surcharge of \$1 between 4 and 8 p.m.  
17 from Monday to Friday, plus a nighttime surcharge  
18 of 50 cents between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. daily, plus  
19 tolls.

20 In addition, there are different  
21 rates for trips that leave the five boroughs,  
22 different rates for Newark Airport and a flat fare  
23 between Manhattan and JFK Airport. This increased  
24 complexity, while necessary in the calculation of  
25 the fare, is potentially confusing if posted on a

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2 taxi door. Indeed, prior to this most recent  
3 change to the exterior markings, much of this in  
4 fare information, in order to fit on the door, had  
5 to be presented in a size that rendered it less  
6 than useful. So the panel that we have here is  
7 actual size and, as you can see, the font size, in  
8 order to include all the information for the  
9 surcharges and the unit cost did require that the  
10 font be rather small. It's not something that,  
11 unless you're standing right in front of the  
12 vehicle, that you're actually going to be able to  
13 discern. The fact is, we now have technology aids  
14 that we didn't have back when the exterior fare  
15 markings were originally conceived.

16           Each of the 13,237 taxis is  
17 equipped with a passenger-facing TV screen and  
18 each trip begins with the display of the rate of  
19 fare on those screens. These are screen shots  
20 from the prologue piece that plays at the start of  
21 every taxi trip, it sets forth, yeah, reminding  
22 people to buckle up, what their rate of fare is,  
23 the fact that credit card acceptance is mandatory  
24 on all fares, and so forth, and it directs  
25 passengers for more information, to go to the Taxi

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Info button that's also on the screen.

In addition, passengers have the option at any point during their trip to read a more detailed onscreen explanation of the various rates of fare and to learn about the various components of each rate of fare. This does more to educate and protect consumers than any exterior decal glimpsed briefly prior to entering a taxi possibly could.

And the taxi screens also provide popup passenger alerts whenever an out-of-town rate has been activated or when a toll has been inappropriately charged. It is important to note that in recent instances of overcharging by drivers, in one case activation of the out-of-town rate for in-town trips and in the other case improper collection of toll amounts, listing the fare on the vehicle's exterior would not have prevented the overcharging. In both those instances, it was the GPS and the taxi screen which are part of the TPEP system that allowed us to identify the instances of overcharging, to notify passengers of its occurrence, and to prevent it from happening again.

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2 As for the numerous visitors who  
3 fly into either JFK or LaGuardia airports, the  
4 Port Authority distributes fare cards to inform  
5 them what the cost of their trip could be. As you  
6 know, trips from JFK are a flat fare of \$52 to  
7 Manhattan and the rate card lists estimated fares  
8 to other areas of the city. Tourists who travel  
9 from LaGuardia also have rate cards available to  
10 them that provide estimates of how much trips  
11 typically cost to various areas in the city. This  
12 is all information that is more helpful than what  
13 could be contained on the door of the cab.

14 In simplifying the information on  
15 the exterior of the vehicle, the decal still  
16 informs prospective passengers that they're  
17 entitled to pay a metered fare and that there is a  
18 flat fare between Manhattan and JFK. We're not  
19 alone. All of our peer cities--London, San  
20 Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia,  
21 Boston--require the fare to be posted on the  
22 interior of the taxi but not the exterior.  
23 However, based on the Council's advocacy on this  
24 issue, in particular in response to inquiries from  
25 Chairman Vacca and Council Member Garodnick, we

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2 are making one significant change that we believe  
3 will further assist passengers in making sure they  
4 are being charged the correct amount. With the  
5 next generation of TPEP systems beginning in  
6 February, we will require that the taxi screens  
7 give passengers the option of viewing their own  
8 itemized fare information at any time during the  
9 trip, including the drop, the MTA tax, the time  
10 and distance portion of the fare, and any tolls or  
11 surcharges. Currently, this information is only  
12 visible at the end of the trip. With TPEP 2.0,  
13 this information will be available on demand. And  
14 the screen shot you have here is the payment  
15 screen that you see at the end of the trip. What  
16 we're going to be requiring is an easily  
17 accessible button on the taxi TV screen so that at  
18 any point during the trip, a passenger will be  
19 able to see this itemized breakdown of their fare.

20 This concludes my testimony  
21 regarding the bills being considered today. I  
22 would like to thank you again for the opportunity  
23 to testify before the Council about these proposed  
24 items of legislation, and at this time, I'd be  
25 happy to answer any questions that you may have.

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2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. I  
3 appreciate your testimony. Let me just go over  
4 several points. I still am not clear why the rate  
5 was removed from the window of the taxi. I know  
6 you say that you've implemented other measures,  
7 but why did you think it was appropriate to remove  
8 that rate that existed for years placed where it  
9 was? That's what I'm not clear on: What was the  
10 necessity of doing that. Was it harmful to give  
11 people that type of information? The only  
12 explanation I heard was that you would have to  
13 break down the fare and how much goes to the MTA  
14 and things like that. I don't think you have to  
15 do that, but I do think people are entitled to  
16 transparency before they get in the cab, not  
17 finding out what the cab's fare going to be once  
18 they enter it if they know where to look and if  
19 they think about that. They should know before  
20 they go into the cab. I go on the train, I took  
21 the train here today, I knew how much the fare was  
22 before I got on the train. I didn't get on the  
23 train and look and say how much am I going to pay  
24 for the ride. So can you let me know--

25 [Applause]

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SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --can you let me know why this had to be done? What was the necessity of doing this?

ASHWINI CHHABRA: To be honest, I don't think that the fare panel that was in place through this summer actually provides that sort of transparency. So I too know what the subway ride is going to cost before I get on the train, but nothing on that fare panel--and we can actually just bring it up front again--really tells you what you're going to pay when you get out. So I see the number three on there and I see the 50 cent unit cost, but we know that the average taxi trip actually amounts to about \$14, and if you're going a longer distance, it'll cost more; if a shorter distance, it'll cost less. Fact of the matter is people don't think in terms of one-fifth of a mile or minutes spent traveling below six miles per hour. It's really a formula and that's not as helpful to passengers and can, in instances, be misleading because I see the \$3 there, when I get out of the cab and the taxi driver says, you know, the meter says \$27, that

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can be disconcerting.

So there wasn't really--

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]

But even recognizing some of your arguments, why didn't we just update what was put on the cab? If you felt that the traditional breakdown that I see in front of me was not really giving passengers the information they needed, why didn't we just update that information and still give passengers a right to know as clearly as possible what the fare would be before they got into the cab?

ASHWINI CHHABRA: And I guess so we grappled with that thought. Back when the decal was being redesigned in 2007, quite some thought was given to what could we say on here that would actually give a passenger a clear idea of what that fare is going to be. And I have to say, I don't think we came up with--there was anything that we were able to arrive at as, okay, this really--getting into this cab, you're going to know what the trip is going to cost. The real protection, though, is notifying passengers that you're entitled to pay a metered rate of fare. A lot of our visitors, as you point out, we have to



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2 be concerned with tourists who are coming into our  
3 city, may be coming from markets where there's a  
4 negotiated rate of fare or there's not a meter,  
5 and the decal continues to convey that, we do say  
6 there's a metered fare on there.

7

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: But if the TLC  
8 is telling me that they are unable to clearly let  
9 passengers know what the rate of fare is and how  
10 the rate was arrived, I think something is wrong  
11 at the TLC. How could the TLC not be able to  
12 clearly delineate what the fare is before a  
13 passenger gets into the cab? That's your  
14 responsibility to clearly let people know what the  
15 fare is, and if that message has to be revised,  
16 you revise the message.

17

ASHWINI CHHABRA: And that message  
18 exists elsewhere in the cab, it's on a fare card  
19 that's on the interior--

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CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]  
21 It's once you get in.

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ASHWINI CHHABRA: --it's on the  
23 screens.

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CHAIRPERSON VACCA: It's once you  
25 get in.

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ASHWINI CHHABRA: It is.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: My point is I don't think it hurts to give people this information before they get in, that's the way New Yorkers have been accustomed for years. I don't understand the overriding factor that determined this had to be removed, I don't see an overriding issue that said this was bad policy. I do hear the TLC telling me that they would not be able to clearly delineate the process where the fare was arrived at, but that to me is unacceptable. That to me is unacceptable. I think passengers have a right to know before they get in a cab what the fare was, what the fare would be, and if you have to then go through a process to revise the message, then you do it.

ASHWINI CHHABRA: And I would posit that having that information and more is the best way to convey that message and we now have technology just didn't exist when the fare panel was initially conceived, and we're able to provide that messaging on the interior of the cab, much as most other markets do. But to have a sticker on there that says the taxi ride is \$3 or \$3 plus 50

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2 cents and then to have passengers have a total  
3 fare that's not in any way near \$3.50 leads to  
4 potential confusion. Most New Yorkers I think  
5 understand the taxi costs this much, we follow it  
6 very closely in the newspaper, and when the fares  
7 go up, we're very mindful of it. Tourists, as I  
8 mentioned, have their--we have consumer protection  
9 at the airports where most of the tourists are  
10 coming from and the fact that it's a metered fare  
11 and we're informing passengers that you're  
12 entitled to a metered fare, I think provides that  
13 level of consumer protection.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: How long has  
15 the fare been on the taxis?

16 ASHWINI CHHABRA: I don't know, but  
17 far as far back as I remember.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Did the City  
19 pay for the design creation?

20 ASHWINI CHHABRA: I believe we did.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And what was  
22 the cost, do you know?

23 ASHWINI CHHABRA: I can find that  
24 out for you.

25 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. This was

1  
2 put into the fare increase regulation that you  
3 voted on.

4 ASHWINI CHHABRA: Right.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Why was  
6 this put into a fare increase application, why was  
7 this not handled as a separate policy matter by  
8 the TLC?

9 ASHWINI CHHABRA: The  
10 implementation of the changing of the decals was  
11 designed to be simultaneous with the increase in  
12 the fare, that's how we've done it in the past.  
13 It's not something that really should have been  
14 seen as a surprise to the industry. We  
15 communicated it through industry notices.

16 We should step back a little. So  
17 the redesign of some of the markings on the taxis  
18 is with the Taxi of Tomorrow in mind. So that's a  
19 vehicle that's going to be arriving in a year. A  
20 lot of the design that--the design thinking that's  
21 gone into this has been in conjunction with  
22 rethinking the exterior markings when we have the  
23 new vehicle. And so this was also an effort to  
24 start changing out the decals in anticipation of  
25 that.

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CHAIRPERSON VACCA: What percentage of passengers who use cabs today do you think are tourist?

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ASHWINI CHHABRA: I don't think we have very hard data on that.

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CHAIRPERSON VACCA: But it's a very significant number I would say.

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ASHWINI CHHABRA: Yep.

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CHAIRPERSON VACCA: How are they supposed to know how much money the cab fare may run them before they get into a cab if there's no posting? How are they supposed to know? You already assume that most New Yorkers know, and I'm not saying I agree with your assumption, but let's take your assumption. How's a tourist supposed to know before he gets in a cab what the rate of fare may be and what it may end up running him without some indication on the exterior of the cab?

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ASHWINI CHHABRA: So for airport trips, the Port Authority and dispatchers there will provide materials that will inform them of that. If it's a street hail trip, that's a metered fare, I think the salient point for them is that it is a metered fare, not necessarily what

1  
2 it's going to end up costing. Because you and I  
3 both know there are going to be times when you're  
4 stuck in rush hour traffic and that's going to be  
5 a different fare total than if it were the middle  
6 of the night and there was no traffic.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I remember  
8 going away a year ago with my family into a cab  
9 and when I took the cab back, there was no one  
10 giving me information on what the cab fare was. I  
11 looked in the window, I saw a rate, and I took the  
12 cab with my wife and my daughter. So are you  
13 going to have people at the airports making sure  
14 that cab drivers give out information since you  
15 don't put it in the window? I mean, this becomes  
16 a little ridiculous. Are you telling me that the  
17 Taxi and Limousine Commission is going to have  
18 people at the airports to make sure that the  
19 drivers give out to tourists the fare information  
20 and that that is more productive for our city than  
21 having the rate on the window in plain view--on  
22 the door, rather, on the door in plain view?

23 ASHWINI CHHABRA: There is a  
24 dispatcher at the airport at all times, so that's  
25 something--

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]

There is a dispatcher, but do you know how many people are getting on cabs in the airports? And you can add the cruise lines to it. I mean, you're telling me that you're going to have people out there inspecting that the cab drivers do their job in giving the information? Why not leave a transparent message on the door updating the fare level?

This is what I'm trying to get at. This has become an issue, but there was no need for this to become an issue. I, for the life of me, the only reason the TLC gave at the initial time was aesthetics. Even aesthetically, I don't think this is an ugly thing to see, but even if it was ugly, I would rather see it. I'll look at ugly things if it helps me determine what I'm paying. I don't have to have something attractive to tell me that I'm going to be having to dig into my pocket a little deeper or a little less deep. So what was the thinking?

ASHWINI CHHABRA: You'd said earlier, Chairman, that aesthetics cannot trump consumer protection, and we wholly agree. I don't

1  
2 think they need to be mutually exclusive. The  
3 technology that's in front of us here is old  
4 technology. Putting a sticker on the side of the  
5 vehicle made sense when that's all you could do.  
6 Since 2008, we've had screens in the back seats,  
7 we've had information monitors in the front seat,  
8 we've got GPS, so TLC, when we're now faced with  
9 complaints about overcharging, we're able to see  
10 through their use of GPS data whether that driver  
11 took a circuitous route. We're able to see if a  
12 driver is not engaging--is not using EZ Pass when  
13 they're supposed to be using EZ Pass when they're  
14 going over the toll crossings. We're able to see  
15 if drivers are charging tolls when they're nowhere  
16 near a toll--

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]

18 Yes, but--

19 ASHWINI CHHABRA: --toll booth.

20 We're able to see if they're charging the out-of-  
21 town rate when they're obviously driving in the--

22 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing] I

23 understand about all the technology and I even  
24 feel a little perturbed that we're sitting here  
25 discussing this and getting rid of Taxi and



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putting T. We have bigger fish to fry. But these are things the TLC has done.

And you mention all the technology that you've implemented, yet the OATH hearings that are taking place regarding overcharges continue to take place, the OATH hearings continue to produce evidence that there is significant overcharging. How many cases has OATH heard, how many do you hear a month about overcharges? And then we have the pedicab scandal to boot.

So my only statement to you is this was something so simple to keep in place with tweaks, and instead you threw the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak, and it doesn't make sense to me.

ASHWINI CHHABRA: I could not agree with you more that if overcharge--

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]  
Then change it if you--

[Crosstalk]

ASHWINI CHHABRA: --I could not agree with you more on two things: One, there are bigger fish to fry. But that said, we do want to address this because it is important to folks.

1  
2 Overcharging is an issue. We do everything that  
3 we can, we use the technology at hand to address  
4 overcharging. I believe Commissioner Yassky, in  
5 his correspondence with you, actually outlined the  
6 instances of overcharging and what we've done and  
7 some of the numbers around those. The latest  
8 numbers that he had provided you was the six-month  
9 period from March through August, we had 1,231  
10 summonses to drivers for overcharging passengers.  
11 That amounts to just under seven instances per  
12 day, if you were to average it out per day, that's  
13 seven instances out of 500,000 trips every day.

14           So I will not sit here and say  
15 seven is an acceptable number, zero is an  
16 acceptable number, but as far as do we need to put  
17 more information on the doors or less information  
18 on the doors, that is not something that is--I  
19 don't think that is going to--that is a useful use  
20 of the resources to bring down that number. Nor  
21 do I think that the overcharging that we're  
22 talking about here is something that can be  
23 remedied by putting a price sticker on the door.

24           The Rate Code 4 violations, which  
25 you'll recall this is now two years ago, that that

1  
2 was a significant issue at the time, was drivers  
3 were using the out-of-town rate when they should  
4 have been using the in-town rate. There is  
5 nothing on that sticker that would prevent them  
6 from doing that. What would prevent them from  
7 doing that and what does prevent them from doing  
8 that is the popup messaging that we implemented on  
9 the taxi TV screens so if a driver attempts to  
10 engage that rate, the passenger gets a popup  
11 notice, they're informed. In our proposed rules  
12 around TPEP 2.0, we are making--we're providing  
13 that the City basically be geofenced so that that  
14 rate code could not even be engaged while the  
15 vehicle is in the five boroughs.

16 The toll overcharge situation that  
17 we dealt with this past August, this was where a  
18 handful of drivers were charging tolls when they  
19 were not at toll crossings. That too, we've now  
20 implemented popup notices to the passengers so  
21 that anytime a driver is adding a toll and you're  
22 not near a toll crossing, that you, the passenger,  
23 know that in real time, it's not something that  
24 the decal is going to convey. Passengers know  
25 intuitively if I'm not going through a toll

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2 crossing, I shouldn't be charged a toll. This  
3 puts it front and center on the screen for them.

4 And overcharging, whenever we get  
5 an overcharging complaint, it generally takes the  
6 form of a driver taking an indirect route and the  
7 GPS data we have allows us to drill down and see  
8 if that was the case.

9 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. I  
10 want to introduce Council Member Garodnick. We've  
11 been joined by Council Member Rose as well, and  
12 Council Member Ulrich. Right? Oh, Eric? Oh,  
13 Council Member Lappin and Council Member  
14 Rodriguez.

15 We now have a quorum, so I will now  
16 ask for a vote on Intro 599, which I introduced  
17 requiring that the screens in the back seat of  
18 Yellow cabs be accessible to people with visual  
19 impairments. I spoke about this in my opening  
20 statement. Is there any discussion?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Mr.  
22 Chairman, I could discuss it on the call of the  
23 vote if you prefer, but well I mention it now  
24 since you ask for discussion. As you know, I'm  
25 chairman of committee that includes responsibility

1  
2 for looking at disability rights, and so I  
3 certainly favor what this measure proposes to do.  
4 However, we have a major vacuum in terms of  
5 disability rights because we don't have a mandate  
6 in the Taxi of Tomorrow for fully accessible  
7 vehicles accessible to wheelchair users and others  
8 who cannot easily walk into a current or even the  
9 new taxicab, although it'll be somewhat easier  
10 than the current one. I have legislation that's  
11 sponsored by well over a majority of this Council  
12 that would require that the Taxi of Tomorrow be  
13 wheelchair accessible. The vehicles are  
14 available, we had testimony that indicated that,  
15 if mandated, the commission--mandated by this  
16 Council, the commission would alter the  
17 requirements for the Taxi of Tomorrow.

18 I think it is urgent and necessary  
19 for the Council to consider it. If it's voted  
20 down, it's voted down, but it wouldn't appear that  
21 it would be. The Taxi of Tomorrow, I think the  
22 spokesperson for the commission indicated, is due  
23 to be on the streets in about a year, so if we're  
24 going to change the design, it has to be done  
25 immediately or we'll be putting large numbers of

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inaccessible cabs on the street.

Since we're voting on an accessibility issue, I think it's relevant, and I would ask you, Mr. Chairman, to put the measure that requires wheelchair accessibility taxis on the agenda and let it be voted. If it's voted down, I accept that, I don't believe that's going to be the case 'cause we have more than the requisite number of sponsors. But not to consider that legislation when we're considering this legislation which deals with the very same subject, I believe is a derogation of our duty. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Thank you. Lyle, can you call the--Mr. Frank, can you call the roll?

LYLE FRANK: Lyle Frank, committee counsel. As to proposed Intro 599-A, Chair Vacca?

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Votes yes.

LYLE FRANK: Council Member Koppell?

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Yes.

LYLE FRANK: Council Member Garodnick.

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COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Aye.

LYLE FRANK: Council Member Lappin.

COUNCIL MEMBER LAPPIN: Aye.

LYLE FRANK: Council Member  
Rodriguez.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Aye.

LYLE FRANK: Council Member Rose.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Aye.

LYLE FRANK: Council Member Ulrich.

COUNCIL MEMBER ULRICH: I vote aye.

LYLE FRANK: Council Member Koo.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I vote aye.

LYLE FRANK: Okay. The measure is  
adopted by a vote of eight in the affirmative and  
zero in the negative.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: We'll now go to  
questions. Council Member Koppell.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Thank you,  
Mr. Chairman. I happen to agree with you on this  
issue. First of all, I think it's somewhat  
elitist and also I think misleading to talk about  
giving out the information to people at the  
airports and saying that that deals with the  
tourist problem, and that's completely contrary to

1  
2 reality. First of all, huge numbers of tourists,  
3 I mean, I haven't counted the number of airport  
4 visitors compared to the number of train visitors  
5 or bus visitors, or for that matter, airport  
6 visitors increasingly. I was just visiting my son  
7 in Phoenix, Arizona, and I left from Newark, a lot  
8 of people come into New York City from Newark  
9 Airport. Hundreds of thousands, I suspect, maybe  
10 millions in the course of a year. And in Newark,  
11 of course, they don't give out any--the Port  
12 Authority, though it runs the Newark Airport, it  
13 doesn't give out New York City taxi information  
14 because New York City taxis don't, as a general  
15 matter, go to Newark.

16           So the fact that you may give out  
17 some fare information at the airports and regard  
18 that as an important thing, that's very  
19 interesting. You cite that as something positive  
20 that you do, and yet you only do it for people who  
21 have the money or the opportunity to come into New  
22 York City by air. The less wealthy people who may  
23 be actually more concerned about taxi fares come  
24 in by bus or by train or sometimes by car and they  
25 park their car and then get around by taxis. I



1  
2 daresay many more come into New York that way than  
3 come in by air at the two New York airports. So  
4 that's not a good excuse. In effect, it points up  
5 the deficiency 'cause you say, oh, it's great, we  
6 give these things out at the airports, but so many  
7 people don't come through the airports, so you're  
8 pointing out a deficiency.

9           There is no reason why you need to  
10 put every detail of the fare on the door. You  
11 could you say, you know, the initial drop, as you  
12 always did, initial drop and then a certain amount  
13 per mile and you could say underneath that  
14 additional surcharges may apply, see screen, so  
15 that the person getting in knows the basic fare  
16 information, and also is informed that they can  
17 get the additional information on the screen. But  
18 the basic fare information should be on the door,  
19 it's always been on the door. It's on the door in  
20 many other places. And I don't think that it's  
21 not aesthetic to have that. It doesn't have to be  
22 enormous, just enough to read.

23           So it just strikes me as being sort  
24 of illogical not to give this information in  
25 advance where we've given it in advance for

1  
2 decades. And many people feel that it's useful  
3 information to have before someone steps inside a  
4 cab. I think that when I go to another city and  
5 I'm about to take a cab, I'd like to know what it  
6 costs. And to get in and then have to decipher it  
7 from the screen--and, by the way, the screen is--I  
8 have found the screens difficult to follow,  
9 difficult to focus on, especially if you're not  
10 that familiar with them. I don't think that's a  
11 solution or a substitute.

12 [Pause]

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member  
14 Koo--I'm sorry, Council Member Koo.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you, Mr.  
16 Chair, and then thank you, Commissioner. I have  
17 to agree with our chairman and the previous  
18 speaker about these proposed change--or this is  
19 not proposed change, it's going to change, right?

20 ASHWINI CHHABRA: It's been  
21 implemented.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I don't find  
23 aesthetics that much more important than the real  
24 information. Because a lot of New York City  
25 tourists, they don't speak English, they are from

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2 Asia, a lot--potentially more tourists from Asia  
3 now, and you put a T there, they don't know what  
4 that T for, you know? I mean, aesthetics doesn't  
5 help that much, you know. I don't see the one on  
6 the bottom that much prettier than the one on the  
7 top. I mean, it's quite confusing to the  
8 tourists, people from Asia, from China, from  
9 India, or from Singapore, they might think, well  
10 what is T, and they have to guess for a few  
11 minutes what is the T for.

12           And then I have to agree with the  
13 previous speakers on the fare. The basic fare  
14 should be on the door. I mean, even though you  
15 have a screen, but most people, tourists, they're  
16 older people, they have a hard time to follow the  
17 screen, the [off mic] they don't read that well or  
18 they don't know how to touch this button and that  
19 button. So we should put the fare on the door.

20           And then in addition to the screen,  
21 we should say fare amount will be given upon  
22 request on a paper like this, you can print it on.  
23 The drivers who came here, like, 20 or 30 whatever  
24 passengers they will estimate to carry, 30 of  
25 these in case people ask for it, give them a

1  
2 printed copy so this is the basic fare so they can  
3 compare the fare whether they are being  
4 overcharged or not.

5           So we give them the bill of rights  
6 in the taxi, passenger's bill of rights when they-  
7 -before they left the taxi, hand them a paper in  
8 addition to the screen. Because a lot of time,  
9 people have a hard time to read the screen.  
10 Myself too because I don't have the time to figure  
11 out which button to push.

12           So that's my suggestion. Thank  
13 you.

14           ASHWINI CHHABRA: Thank you. I  
15 appreciate the point you raised on language  
16 barriers. One thing I should point out, the--  
17 again, this is on the taxi screens--we will be  
18 implementing more portions of the screen that are  
19 bilingual. So the intro screens that you see  
20 there that provide the fare information and the  
21 buckle up information, 311, you know, use of  
22 credit cards, we're going to devise that so that  
23 it's both in English and in Spanish. Same with  
24 the payment screens. So I know a lot of our  
25 users, and this is changing demographics of the

1  
2 city, are Spanish speakers, and so we want to have  
3 that payment screen also be in Spanish. So that  
4 is one way we're going to be doing that.

5 I take your point that there are  
6 going to be people who are not as facile with the  
7 screens or because of vision issues aren't able to  
8 maneuver the screen as well, that's a fair point.

9 I do think that those same people are going to  
10 have a hard time with the panels that were--the  
11 fare panel that was there in place before. The  
12 reason we wanted this to be in the actual size of  
13 the fare panel was so that you could see how  
14 legible or not legible that is from a distance.  
15 You really do have to kind of get up close to it,  
16 crouch down, and make out what the unit costs  
17 were.

18 This is not in any way to say that  
19 you couldn't have a fare on the door that's not  
20 readable, I'm simply saying that the fare panel  
21 that was there, in order to get the information on  
22 there that at the time was thought was relevant,  
23 you had to really decrease that font. And the  
24 more data--the more information you exclude from  
25 that, the more readable it becomes, but the less

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2 useful it becomes because I took the point that I  
3 think that Council Member Koppell made that have  
4 basic fare information, flag drop and a unit cost,  
5 it's of limited use because all of a sudden you  
6 calculate a fare in your mind but it happens to be  
7 8 p.m. and so it's 50 cents more or it's a \$1  
8 more.

9           We do think that having all the  
10 information is very helpful, is meaningful, we  
11 endeavored to put all the salient points in the  
12 prologue that runs, it's not a screen you can turn  
13 off, it is, thankfully muted now so that you don't  
14 have to hear sound with it, but having that  
15 information and directing people to use it in a  
16 more user-friendly way, that could be something  
17 that we can consider. We have in the current  
18 rulemaking around TPEP actually pushed to make the  
19 buttons larger for passengers to access this  
20 information. It's obviously always a--it's a back  
21 and forth with vendors who want more screen space  
22 for advertising, but if what I'm taking away is  
23 having those buttons larger, having the font  
24 larger, having it so it's more readable is of  
25 value, that's something that we can certainly push

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2 for and to have fare information more prominently  
3 displayed on the screen, that's--I would say our  
4 preference would be to leverage the existing  
5 technology as opposed to handouts which I fear  
6 will end up as litter in the back seat of the cabs  
7 or elsewhere, I would rather take advantage of the  
8 fact that we've got these screens.

9           It allowed us to reduce some of the  
10 clutter in the back seat, we used to have the  
11 passenger's bill of rights there, it's now  
12 onscreen. If you have input for us on how that  
13 can be more user-friendly or more readable, we'd  
14 certainly welcome that.

15           COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: What about  
16 like having this as a upon passenger request, then  
17 you give them one? The passenger right of bills  
18 and all the fare information on one single piece  
19 of paper like this? This is upon request.

20           ASHWINI CHHABRA: My concern would  
21 still be the same one about killing trees, but  
22 also litter. At some point it becomes less  
23 practical to have handouts than to have the  
24 information--

25           [Crosstalk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [Interposing]

I'm not saying the driver will hand this out to every passenger--

ASHWINI CHHABRA: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: --I'm saying this is upon request of the passenger, the passenger have the right to request a copy of the printed material so they can compare the fare and compare the--or to compare information on the paper. So they can comparing if they receive the bad manners or things like that.

ASHWINI CHHABRA: Okay. No, I mean, that's--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [Interposing] It's not that they have to have.

ASHWINI CHHABRA: Certainly.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: I mean, they have the cab a supply of maybe 20 or 30 for emergency, for those people who want a copy of it.

ASHWINI CHHABRA: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: And then I have one more question. Who helped you to decide this logo change?

ASHWINI CHHABRA: We're actually



1  
2 going to hear from design professionals after I'm  
3 done here. One of the people who are going to  
4 speak actually is the company that we engaged.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: And the City  
6 is paying for or the commission is paying for it?

7 ASHWINI CHHABRA: We'd engaged  
8 them, I'm being told actually we did not pay for  
9 it. We engaged their resources without payment,  
10 but that was also with the Taxi of Tomorrow  
11 aesthetic in mind. We are redesigning the  
12 vehicle, the interior of the vehicle, it would be  
13 remiss if we did not also update the exterior  
14 image of the taxicab. It's an evolving product  
15 and I think the aesthetics of the vehicle go a  
16 long way towards securing the brand identity and  
17 the value of the New York City taxi. If we don't  
18 update that image, it runs the risk of looking  
19 stale.

20 I do like that I go to other cities  
21 and New York City taxis, in my mind, are the  
22 paragon that I compare all the other taxis and  
23 other markets to. They just don't add up to what  
24 the New York City taxi rides like, looks like.  
25 And this was--and I'm not one to place aesthetics

1  
2 over consumer protection, but I'm also not one to  
3 dismiss aesthetics, especially when you multiply  
4 those aesthetics by 13,237.

5 I think we should all strive to  
6 reduce visual clutter. At certain times of the  
7 day, you look down Broadway and it's a sea of  
8 yellow and it's a sea of very detailed markings,  
9 and anything we can do to make that look better, I  
10 think we should. I don't think we should  
11 sacrifice consumer protection to that, but I do  
12 think we can accomplish both.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Well I don't  
14 agree with you on that, I think we should have  
15 taxi on every taxi, the word T-A-X-I on them.

16 [Applause]

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Let me say  
19 this, I'm sorry, Councilman Koo, I have to take  
20 issue with even defining what was on the cab all  
21 these years as visual clutter. Really. That's  
22 not an appropriate description. I still don't  
23 know why this was removed, I still don't have a  
24 reason. You have all the technology in the world,  
25 wonderful, I congratulate you. I don't know why

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this was removed.

The only thing I'm hearing now, visual clutter, and the other thing is I hear is that the people wouldn't understand how the fare was arrived at anyway. That's a hunk of baloney. I mean, if you can't explain to the passenger how the fare is arrived at, then something was wrong with the fare being arrived at the way it was. Why can't we be thought as people who have a right to know or people who expect your agency to delineate how a fare is arrived at?

ASHWINI CHHABRA: And if that was the impression I conveyed, I apologize. We certainly believe that passengers have a right to know how their fare is arrived at, that's on the fare card, that is on the screens--

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]  
But we expect you to summarize it in a succinct way on the door of the cab. And with all due respect to the design group that you hired--and I do not know who they are, so I do not comment, I'm sure they're very good--but the only thing that was designed was it went from NYC Taxi to NYC T. Now when it comes to design, I don't know what I'm

1  
2 doing, I could've said take away the word Taxi and  
3 put T. This is not a magnificent--this is not  
4 something that a design group, in my opinion, is  
5 hired to do that could not be done in-house if you  
6 determined you were going to do it, which I still  
7 question.

8 Council Member Garodnick.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Thank  
10 you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I just want to  
11 add my voice in support of the legislation  
12 requiring these basic consumer protections to go  
13 back on the door, I'm a co-sponsor of the bill.

14 I really just wanted to make a  
15 couple of points, I'm not sure that I have any  
16 questions, I've been listening to the testimony  
17 and read all of the testimony that you offered  
18 before. But it seems that the big concern about  
19 having the fare on the door is about visual  
20 clutter and it sort of begs the question why, if  
21 that was the concern, why we didn't ask the design  
22 professionals to find a way to communicate that in  
23 a more visually appealing way, as opposed to  
24 removing it. Because that's important information  
25 that people, I think, need to have and we

1  
2 appreciate the fact that they're going to get it  
3 inside the cab, but this does not need to be an  
4 either/or scenario. If it is too complicated to  
5 communicate on the side of the door, it's probably  
6 too complicated for people to understand when they  
7 get it on the video screen. So that's the concern  
8 that we have.

9           And it's not even about necessarily  
10 the person who is boarding that taxi, it's about  
11 the person who is watching 13,000 taxis going by  
12 and standing on the street and saying, wait a  
13 minute, when I get up the courage, if I'm a  
14 visitor to New York, get up the courage to raise  
15 my hand and step out into the street and actually  
16 hail one of these taxis, what does it actually  
17 mean, how does it work. You can take a peek when  
18 one is stopped at a stop light, get some  
19 understanding, you can appreciate what it is, it's  
20 reaffirmed when you're in the cab. These should  
21 be complementary, not to the exclusion of one  
22 another.

23           And the biggest point that I really  
24 think that we should leave you with is that,  
25 obviously the City Council is now considering

1  
2 requiring the TLC to put this information back on  
3 the doors of taxis, which means that there  
4 probably should have been greater communication  
5 and conversation between the TLC and this Council  
6 about this proposal before it happened. And I  
7 also want to point out that today we are voting to  
8 actually require this information to go on to the  
9 sides of pedicabs because this Council believes  
10 that disclosing basic consumer protection  
11 information about pricing is important. So when  
12 we have this debate in the Transportation  
13 Committee about whether or not the TLC should have  
14 removed it, the Consumer Affairs Committee at 1  
15 o'clock today is going to vote to require pedicabs  
16 to put this basic information on the sides. This  
17 Council strongly believes that we should have this  
18 information available to all consumers, and that's  
19 why you're hearing some very strong voices in  
20 opposition to what happened here today.

21                   And, Mr. Chairman, I don't have any  
22 specific question.

23                   CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. I  
24 want to mention we're joined by Council Member  
25 Gale Brewer. And I would like, Council Member

1  
2 Brewer, we did call the roll on Intro 599 and I  
3 ask you how would you vote on that measure.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I vote aye.  
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Thank  
7 you.

8 LYLE FRANK: Vote now stands at  
9 nine in the affirmative, zero in the negative.

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. There  
11 are no further questions of the Taxi and Limousine  
12 Commission, I thank you and we will now call our  
13 first panel. Paul Herzan [phonetic], passenger;  
14 David Stowell, Smart Design; and Megan Canning,  
15 Design Trust for Public Space.

16 The passenger too now.

17 [Off mic]

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Let me ask the  
19 passenger to speak first.

20 PAUL HERZAN: Good morning,  
21 Chairman Vacca and members of the Transportation  
22 Committee. My name is Paul Herzan, I speak to you  
23 today about Intro 929-A as a passenger and regular  
24 user of the Yellow taxi.

25 In May of 2002, I wrote a letter to

1  
2 the head of design at Ford Motor Company,  
3 essentially asking if Ford could design taxis of  
4 the future that would be designed as purpose-built  
5 vehicles for passenger transport and be safe,  
6 tough, sustainable on New York City streets. I  
7 received no reply.

8           Since that rejection, I have worked  
9 at building a consortium of organizations that  
10 captures the intense public interest in the Yellow  
11 taxi, a global icon that people value and care  
12 about. New York City's design community,  
13 including world leader Smart Design, who you'll  
14 hear from later, chose to get involved and give  
15 back to its city through a concerted effort to  
16 make things better, both visually and  
17 functionally. The TLC came on board too. Taxi of  
18 Tomorrow was launched to set a high bar for the  
19 auto industry that challenged them to invest  
20 millions of dollars in innovative, safety, and  
21 purpose-built amenities rather than the acceptance  
22 of fleet offerings.

23           Ten years ago, I began these  
24 efforts to make taxis safer, more comfortable,  
25 efficient, accessible, and environmentally



1  
2 sustainable. Collaborating with the Design Trust  
3 for Public Space, who you'll also hear from, our  
4 approach combined design studies, research,  
5 convening of stakeholders, fleet and medallion  
6 owners, drivers, planners, designers, and City  
7 officials to brainstorm and develop ideas for  
8 improving and redesigning the taxi and the system.

9           In 2007, for the Taxi Centennial,  
10 eight prototypes were exhibited at the New York  
11 International Auto Show. This design process led  
12 to an innovative RFP that resulted in a  
13 partnership with leaders at the TLC and Nissan.

14           Other cities around the globe are  
15 now considering Taxi of Tomorrow as their new taxi  
16 using the--considering the Taxi of Tomorrow as  
17 their new taxi, using the adage if you can make it  
18 in New York, you can make it anywhere. The fact  
19 is, these are other cities can imitate the Taxi of  
20 Tomorrow, but only in New York, arguably the  
21 design capital of the world, can there be  
22 collective will to create a taxi that is designed  
23 for New York City.

24           Thanks to a long history of the  
25 yellow taxi in New York City, people the world

1  
2 over recognize and can identify a yellow car as a  
3 taxi. I applaud the TLC's improvements in taxi  
4 graphics which create an even more recognizable  
5 brand identity for the New York City taxi, and do  
6 away with the antiquated fare decals, which are  
7 not user-friendly.

8 Thanks to new technologies, the  
9 passengers of the New York City Yellow cab have  
10 all the necessary information at a finger's touch  
11 inside the cab. Over 13,000 taxis shuttle 600,000  
12 passengers on 470,000 trips in a day through our  
13 city streets, and today, those users experience a  
14 clear and coherent brand message when they raise  
15 their hands to hail.

16 Thank you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GARODNICK: Thank  
18 you. Go ahead.

19 DAVIN STOWELL: Good morning,  
20 Chairman Vacca and members of the Transportation  
21 Committee, my name is Davin Stowell, I'm the CEO  
22 and founder of Smart Design, the global design and  
23 innovation firm that specializes in human-centered  
24 design. We create great brands for our clients by  
25 making products and services better and easier to

1  
2 use through design. Thank you for the opportunity  
3 to speak today.

4 Smart Design is proudly  
5 headquartered in New York City and has been  
6 collaborating with the Taxi and Limousine  
7 Commission and the Design Trust for Public Space  
8 since 2006 to improve the taxi rider's experience  
9 and elevate the brand identity of the New York  
10 City Yellow taxi to reflect the professionalism  
11 and concern for safety that it deserves as a vital  
12 part of New York City's network of public  
13 transportation.

14 And just to clarify the chairman's  
15 question earlier, we were not paid for any of the  
16 services we provided to redesign the markings on  
17 the taxi in 2007 or the application and the  
18 markings that are on the Yellow taxis today. We  
19 did that pro bono as our service to the city and  
20 concern for the city.

21 Prior to 2007, other than a small  
22 New York City haphazardly hand stenciled on the  
23 door, there was very little visual identification  
24 to differentiate New York City taxis from the  
25 similar yellow taxis from Newark. And there was

1  
2 nothing to distinguish the New York City taxis as  
3 a brand that is very well-managed for a superior  
4 passenger experience. The graphic treatment of  
5 the New York City taxi logo and the fare panel  
6 that we created in 2007 was the first step in  
7 creating a consistent identity that better  
8 represented the New York City taxi brand, but it  
9 was far from perfect.

10 As a means of public  
11 transportation, New York City provides a very  
12 simple and easy to understand service. From in  
13 most any location in Manhattan, you can just raise  
14 your hand and a Yellow taxi will stop, take you to  
15 your destination for a consistently metered and  
16 displayed fare. You can be assured that what you  
17 will be charged will be accurate and fair. But  
18 the way in which the fare is calculated is far  
19 from simple. It is a complex formula that has  
20 evolved to accommodate the needs of the industry,  
21 the drivers, the city, and to put more taxis on  
22 the street during the busiest times. It does very  
23 little to help the consumer understand how much  
24 their taxi ride will cost before actually  
25 completing the trip.

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2           In 2007, we were concerned about  
3 that and proposed a much simpler communication  
4 that displayed the average cost range for short  
5 rides in midtown and also what longer airport  
6 journeys might cost. That, and the full fare  
7 calculation panel, was shown to approximately 80  
8 tourists in Times Square area to understand which  
9 panel would be more helpful to estimate fares  
10 before deciding to take a taxi.

11           What we found was there was no  
12 difference in their preference. For the full fare  
13 panel, they had no idea what a fifth mile was and  
14 how it related to distances in the city. On a  
15 simplified panel, tourists were unsure what  
16 constituted a short ride and the price range  
17 didn't give them any better idea of what it was  
18 going to cost than they could have guessed. What  
19 was most striking though was their general  
20 indifference to the exact amount the taxi would  
21 cost. They knew that it would cost more than  
22 public transportation, but they had the confidence  
23 they'd be fairly charged and the convenience of  
24 the service was more important to them than exact  
25 cost.

1  
2 The exterior decals that were  
3 implemented in 2007 were the first step in  
4 creating a stronger brand identity and more clear  
5 communication, but the taxi system continuously  
6 evolves to provide better service. The graphic  
7 communication on the taxi's exterior also needs to  
8 evolve with that to be up to date and reflect the  
9 improvements and modernization of the system.

10 The fare calculation, which is now  
11 much more clearly explained on the TV screen in  
12 the taxi has been replaced with the information  
13 that's the most important for a first-time rider:  
14 You can hail this taxi by raising your hand and  
15 the fare will be accurately calculated by a  
16 regulated meter, there'll be fixed fares to and  
17 from JFK, a pick up location where visitors are  
18 most vulnerable to illegal practices.

19 The New York City taxi logo that  
20 was put in place five years ago was badly  
21 compromised by last minute changes to incorporate  
22 the newly-adopted New York City logo. The new  
23 version is respectful and complementary to that  
24 logo. The word Taxi has been reduced to an iconic  
25 circle T that is now readily understood to be

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symbolic of taxis and is unique in New York City.

The logo and fare information that is now in place in the vast majority of the fleet is informative, memorable, and timeless.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL:

[Interposing] Chairman, I'm temporarily the chairman. Sergeant, could you either close the door or ask people to be quiet outside? Thank you.

DAVIN STOWELL: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Go ahead.

DAVIN STOWELL: Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: We want to be able to hear you.

DAVIN STOWELL: Yeah, thank you very much.

The logo and fare information that's now in place in the vast majority of the fleet is informative, memorable, and timeless. It's a symbol that's appropriate for the greatest taxi system in the world. I respectfully ask you to please not put this bill forward. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Have the

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2 next--

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[background noise]

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MEGAN CANNING: Good morning, my

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name is Megan Canning, I'm the deputy director of

6

the Design Trust for Public Space. We are an

7

independent nonprofit whose mission is to improve

8

public space in New York City. Thank you for the

9

opportunity to appear before you today.

10

We've been working since 2005 to

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improve the taxi vehicle and also improve the

12

system, and as part of our efforts, we created the

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first ever ten-year plan for improving the system,

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which is called Taxi 07: Roads Forward, which

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presented to this very committee in 2008.

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There was a question earlier about

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the number of tourists who take taxis and I do

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have a little information, it's not the most up to

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date, but it is at-hand. TLC surveys from the

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eighties and nineties found that 71% of total taxi

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trips are taken by Manhattan residents, 10% outer

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borough, 5% suburban residents, and 14% by people

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who live outside the metro region--14%. That's

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dating from the eighties and nineties and can be

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found in this document.



1  
2 As a leading design nonprofit in  
3 New York City, we are quite taken aback by  
4 legislation item Intro 929, which we believe will  
5 adversely affect the brand of the Yellow taxi and  
6 our city as a whole. New York City's taxicabs are  
7 more than a means of transportation, they are a  
8 ubiquitous and vital component of the city's  
9 public environment. As both a public service and  
10 our city's movable public space, we believe taxis  
11 should be held to high standards, and as a symbol  
12 for New York City, the taxi should capture some of  
13 the glamour, the dynamism, the efficiency, and the  
14 no-nonsense charm that New Yorkers are known for.

15 Taxis have a profound impact on the  
16 image of the city. Just imagine our streets  
17 without that constant stream of yellow. The taxi  
18 is also recognized as a powerful icon for New  
19 York, just like the Empire State Building or the  
20 Statue of Liberty. What is perhaps most often  
21 overlooked is that the taxi is a designed object  
22 and every aspect of its design impacts the user  
23 experience.

24 The distinct yellow color is,  
25 without question, the most significant aspect of

1  
2 the taxi brand. It signals to New Yorkers and to  
3 visitors alike that this vehicle is not a regular  
4 car. In addition to its bright yellow color,  
5 other key features that contribute to the brand  
6 are physical, like the distinctive roof light and  
7 the medallion affixed to the hood. But they're  
8 also functional, like how the taxi works in our  
9 city. It is a vital mode of urban transit.

10 The fact that anyone can raise  
11 their arm in the air to hail this yellow taxi that  
12 is driving the street and be taken where they need  
13 to go is one of the most distinguishing features  
14 of the cab.

15 For these reasons, we strongly  
16 disagree with the proposed legislation to spell  
17 out the word Taxi on the outside of the vehicle.  
18 We find this to be redundant, visual clutter, and  
19 we feel it insults the intelligence of New Yorkers  
20 and visitors alike. It's very clear that any car  
21 that is yellow with a roof light that stops when  
22 you stick your arm out is a taxicab.

23 I urge you on behalf of New York  
24 City's civic and design community to protect the  
25 powerful brand of the Yellow taxi and honor the

1  
2 simplified and sophisticated exterior decals that  
3 were recently implemented by the TLC. The large  
4 letter T signifies this is a New York City taxi  
5 and all the vital consumer information that the  
6 fare is metered, it is regulated, and that there's  
7 a flat fare between Manhattan and JFK, we believe  
8 is quite clear.

9 Thank you very much.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: I have two  
11 questions. First of all, the 14% of outsiders--

12 MEGAN CANNING: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: --that's  
14 non-New York City residents who take cabs, how  
15 many is that on an annual basis, how many people,  
16 do you have that calculation?

17 MEGAN CANNING: There are 170  
18 million taxi trips each year, that's--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: So that--

20 MEGAN CANNING: --data going back  
21 to 2007, early 2008.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: --so then  
23 10% of that would be 17 million.

24 MEGAN CANNING: Correct.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: And this

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is more than 10%, so--

MEGAN CANNING: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: --it'd be over 20 million people.

MEGAN CANNING: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: That's quite a lot. And one other question, then I'll get chair go back and I'll listen to the question from my seat. Mr. Stowell, I believe you talked about going and talking to 80 people in Times Square. Did you do anything like show them the two different logos that we have here, the one that used to be on the cab and the new one, and ask them which one they prefer, did you do that?

DAVIN STOWELL: We showed them one similar to what's on the taxi today and one that had a simplified way of explaining what the fare might be. It said that short trips were, I believe, 5 to \$15 at that time, and what the estimated fare for longer airport trips would. So it'd give them a better idea of what a total range might be and then what you can get from the current--

[Crosstalk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL:

[Interposing] And they weren't interested in that?

DAVIN STOWELL: They had no preference whatsoever, they said that neither one of them really helped them determine what the fare--

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL:

[Interposing] Well that's probably true because that was so vague, but you didn't ask them about what was actually on the cab.

DAVIN STOWELL: Yes, the fare--the panel that's on the bottom here and they could not calculate a fare. For if you gave them a distance they wanted to go, they could not estimate what that would be because they did not know what a fifth mile represented in the city.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: But did you ask them whether they prefer that to what you now have?

DAVIN STOWELL: This has not been formally studied.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Huh?

DAVIN STOWELL: This has not been

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formally studied, what's on the taxi today.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: So you decided to put what's on the taxi today, which is on the top, instead of what's on the bottom without asking people which they preferred.

DAVIN STOWELL: We did that in 2007 and we learned that the information of giving the full fare breakdown was not meaningful to them, so what we gave them was--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL:  
[Interposing] When you say was not meaningful to them, what do you mean?

DAVIN STOWELL: They were not able to use that information to estimate a fare.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: Did you decide that or did they decide?

DAVIN STOWELL: They decided that.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL: They said we don't care about that?

DAVIN STOWELL: They said we cannot estimate, they could not estimate what a fare was going to cost--

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER KOPPELL:

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2 [Interposing] Well that's a different question  
3 than saying that--it's a very different question  
4 because the information on the bottom is sort of  
5 the specific metrics, they still might not be able  
6 to decide exactly how much it would be, but they  
7 know there's going to be X amount to start and  
8 then a certain amount for each segment, and that's  
9 an important thing for them to know. If I went to  
10 another country and I was just told that  
11 information on the top, it would give me no  
12 information at all. At least on the bottom, I'd  
13 have some idea, well initially I have to pay 20  
14 francs and then it's going to be a smaller number  
15 of francs for each segment, I don't know exactly  
16 how long those segments are. For my purposes, I'd  
17 prefer to have the bottom, and I don't think you  
18 even asked them that question.

19 [Applause]

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I thank you,  
21 Council Member Koppell, I apologize, I had to vote  
22 in Land Use and I've now voted, so I'm back.  
23 Okay. I want to thank our panel.

24 MEGAN CANNING: Thank you very  
25 much.

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[Crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh, I'm sorry, oh, Gale Brewer had a question? I'm sorry. Gale Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I don't, but I always do. Thank you, Oliver. My question is do you think in other places in the world where tourists are, obviously, traveling from, what exists? Do other taxis in other parts of the world have more detailed information that would help us or do you think that other parts of the world have something similar to just our T?

DAVIN STOWELL: From our surveys, we've seen very, very few examples of having the fare on the exterior of the taxi.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Anybody else? No idea, okay. One other quick question is, from a--I have a lot of respect for the Design for Public Space, but were you involved in switching from Taxi to T or is that something that the TLC did on their own?

MEGAN CANNING: The Design Trust was brought on as an advisor, a voluntary advisor to the Taxi of Tomorrow project, first by the TLC,



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2 and then we continued on with--once Nissan was  
3 selected as the winner. So although we have been  
4 part of several conversations, we have visited  
5 Nissan's design headquarters in La Jolla on two  
6 occasions and have seen the car here on a third.  
7 So we have been part, we weren't on the day-to-day  
8 kind of looking at various designs, but we have  
9 been part of the process since the beginning of  
10 our work, and then which led directly to Taxi of  
11 Tomorrow.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

13 MEGAN CANNING: So we have had the  
14 opportunity to have this discussion many times  
15 with both Commissioner Yassky and many members of  
16 his staff along with Davin from Smart and Nissan  
17 representatives. And we felt that the most vital  
18 piece of information that you need to know as a  
19 consumer before you get into the taxi is that this  
20 is a regulated fare, that there is a city  
21 department or agency that is regulating the  
22 service and has your best interests at heart. And  
23 then we felt that once you entered the cab, both  
24 having the printed fare card that will be standard  
25 in the new partition in the new Taxi of Tomorrow

1  
2 in addition to the video screen that plays that  
3 you cannot stop, both telling you the fare, that  
4 that was the moment when you really got the  
5 detailed information. It's very rare, I think, to  
6 see anyone standing outside of a taxi on a New  
7 York City street reading the fare card before they  
8 decide to enter.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I just hope  
10 that--I know this is an aside, Mr. Chair, but I  
11 hope we can still turn that television off, you're  
12 not advocating keeping it on, are you?

13 MEGAN CANNING: No, no, no, I'm  
14 saying the--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:  
16 [Interposing] I might break it.

17 MEGAN CANNING: I always turn it  
18 off, but the initial information about the fare,  
19 you cannot--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

21 MEGAN CANNING: --turn off.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I  
23 know that.

24 MEGAN CANNING: Yes.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right,

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thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: We've been joined by Council Member Greenfield, and I will now ask for your vote on Intro 599.

COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Aye.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: What's the new total?

LYLE FRANK: Vote now stands at ten in the affirmative, zero in the negative, zero abstentions.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: All right. Council Member Rodriguez.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Yes. So in your design, that design in the bottom, is that removable?

DAVIN STOWELL: It is removable. Yes, it is removable.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: So if there is a change of a fare a year from now, like they can just make the change to one--that particular area.

DAVIN STOWELL: Yeah, it can be changed, not always easily if it's been on the taxi for a longer period of time.

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COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: What is

3

it?

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DAVIN STOWELL: The adhesive starts

5

to hold onto the taxi and is more difficult to

6

remove the longer it's on.

7

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

8

Where does the industry stand on this new change?

9

Did you get the feedback when you come out to this

10

proposal?

11

MEGAN CANNING: That's a question

12

for the TLC actually.

13

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But do

14

you, when you work with the design, did you also

15

involve the industry and the--

16

[Crosstalk]

17

DAVIN STOWELL: [Interposing] We

18

worked with the TLC.

19

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: The TLC.

20

[Off mic]

21

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But what

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about the other player, like the Yellow industry,

23

the unions, like the workers, were they part of

24

this?

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MALE VOICE 1: No.

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MALE VOICE 2: No.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Let the gentleman answer, he is on the stand. Go ahead, sir.

DAVIN STOWELL: In 2007, when the first one was created, we were in attendance at the public hearings; in this last version, we worked directly with the TLC.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Will they come--were you any close to the Yellow taxi drivers with this if this change is made?

DAVIN STOWELL: Did we show it to the--

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ:  
[Interposing] Not you, for the design, and I don't believe any one [off mic], I know that we have good New Yorker but especially in the [off mic] industry when someone doing it pro bono, later on you come out on presenting the design, that pretty clear that there's other interests involved.  
Mean, like a--but if we go along with this change, will they come with any cost, extra dollar for the Yellow taxi drivers or the industry?

DAVIN STOWELL: This is already in

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place on the majority of the fleet right now.

COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.

Thank you, panel. Our next panel is David Pollack, Committee for Taxi Safety; Peter Mazer, Metropolitan Taxicab Board of Trade; Vincent Sapone, LOMTO; and Ethan Gerber, Greater New York Taxi Association.

[background noise]

DAVID POLLACK: Hello.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I'll call upon Mr. Gerber first.

ETHAN GERBER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've learned a lot today. I've learned about design that I didn't know about. So my first suggestion is that we remove the Council of the City of New York, behind your plaque, it's insulting to our intelligence because we already know we're in the City Council, we already know we're in the City of New York, so we don't need it, and it's redundant, and I learned from Design Trust that we don't want any of that, so please take that off.

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[Applause]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet down,  
please.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: And I think it  
takes away from my purple tie.

[Laughter]

ETHAN GERBER: Exactly right.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Aesthetically.

ETHAN GERBER: I want to point out  
a couple of things just based on testimony I heard  
today so far before I get to my statement. But  
you pointed out, Mr. Chairman, correctly, that  
neither the stakeholders nor the industry had a  
chance to weigh-in on this radical change of New  
York City taxicabs. And it is a radical change  
indeed. I brought as part of my handout, which  
I'll be submitting, photographs throughout the  
ages of the New York City taxicab and what you  
could see is, going back before there was a New  
York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, when it  
was called a Hack Bureau, and before, in fact,  
when there was such a thing as the New York City  
Council and it was called the Board of Alderman,  
they had the New York City taxicabs had the rate

1  
2 of fare clearly marked on the door and said  
3 taxicab. And that goes throughout the 1920s, the  
4 1930s, the 1940s, and 1950s, right up until a few  
5 months ago.

6 But what you did--but you omitted  
7 something, Mr. Chairman, which is when you said  
8 that the industry and the stakeholders didn't have  
9 a chance to weigh-in, I'll point out that the  
10 commissioners themselves did not have a chance to  
11 weigh-in. The section that gave the commission  
12 the power to change the decal was part of a rate  
13 of fare increase, as you pointed out--a very  
14 voluminous document containing thousands of words,  
15 but the few words that were dedicated to this  
16 simply gave the commission the ability to change  
17 decals. If I were a commissioner, one of the nine  
18 members of the New York City Commission and I had  
19 a bill before me, a measure before me that said  
20 the commission can change the rate, I would assume  
21 it meant me. I would assume it meant the  
22 commission itself can vote to change the decals  
23 and that I wouldn't be actually voting to change  
24 decals. There was nothing in the rules that said  
25 we're taking off the words, A-X-I. There was



1  
2 nothing in the rules that said we're taking off  
3 the rate of fare. There literally was nothing  
4 that the commission voted on, it was simply an  
5 edict by the TLC acting in and of itself. So I  
6 think it should be pointed out that not even the  
7 commissioners voted to do this and there was no  
8 public hearing about it whatsoever.

9           Some of the things that were  
10 pointed out by the Taxi and Limousine Commission  
11 today was that they found that because the font  
12 was so small, it was cluttered. It should be  
13 pointed out, because of the Design Trust people in  
14 this room, the font was changed four years ago.  
15 The size of the decal was cut in half four years  
16 ago. So now that we've cut the decal in half and  
17 we've changed the font, apparently it's too small  
18 to accommodate what was accommodated four years  
19 ago before we changed the font. I think if we  
20 simply went back to the old decal before Design  
21 Trust got involved, we would have plenty of room  
22 for that information.

23           The argument that because the fares  
24 are too complicated, less information is necessary  
25 is just preposterous on its face. Perhaps, I

1  
2 think as you pointed out, and as Council Member  
3 Koppell pointed out, if the fares are all that  
4 complicated, maybe the Taxi and Limousine  
5 Commission should worry about how to simplify  
6 fares. But the idea that it's so complicated that  
7 we can't spell it out and explain it to people  
8 before they are a captive audience in the car, and  
9 that is the important part, before we have a  
10 captive audience in the car, before we sit down  
11 and start trying to read a screen, we should know  
12 what we're getting into. We do not want arguments  
13 with the cab drivers, we do not want people having  
14 saying just hold on a minute before you turn it on  
15 because I want to read this and decide if I'm  
16 going to go. It doesn't make sense.

17           Finally, one of the things that  
18 kept on being told is that we have to elevate the  
19 brand and that this is an iconic image that is  
20 unique and is something that is well-known  
21 throughout America and throughout the world.  
22 Doesn't that belie the very position that we need  
23 to change it? I mean, it is an iconic image known  
24 throughout the world, it's on tourist t-shirts,  
25 it's on, if you go to any shop, any tourist shop

1  
2 in New York City, in the airports and the bus  
3 stations and the bus terminals, even at basketball  
4 games, they sell imagery of the New York City  
5 taxicab, it is an iconic image that we do not need  
6 to change. It's one of the few things that's  
7 actually working, so why get rid of it?

8 The Greater New York Taxi  
9 Association supports both Intro 923-12 and Intro  
10 929-12--I'm sorry, we support both Intros--that's  
11 not me.

12 I'd like to get a little bit into  
13 923-12 which states that has the approval of  
14 electric vehicles, which we heard very little  
15 about today, although I was very pleased to hear  
16 the TLC say that they would support this bill.  
17 Importantly, this bill also says that the TLC  
18 shall approve one or more hybrid electric vehicles  
19 for models to use as taxicabs. This is very, very  
20 important. One of the little things that got cast  
21 aside in the recent melee of bills that just  
22 passed by the TLC is that the Taxi and Limousine  
23 Commission has proposed a rule, the so-called Taxi  
24 of Tomorrow, which would eliminate over 6,000  
25 hybrid taxicabs from New York City.

1  
2 I had a lengthy statement, I'll  
3 give it out to you, but I don't need to go there.  
4 What I will say is that we just suffered through  
5 an incredible storm in Hurricane Sandy that  
6 disabled New York and is still disabled in many,  
7 many communities. Gasoline was at an incredible  
8 shortage, specifically, it was virtually  
9 impossible to get within the five boroughs, it was  
10 particularly hard to get in Queens and Brooklyn  
11 and Staten Island. We are eliminating by  
12 commission vote 6,000 cars, many of them are  
13 Prius' that would get twice the amount of gasoline  
14 per miles-per gallons rather than the so-called  
15 Taxi of Tomorrow. A Prius operating or a C-Max  
16 which is the Ford model which just recently hit  
17 the streets of New York and hit the streets of the  
18 U.S., gets over 55 miles per gallon, the current.  
19 So in other words, the taxicab is going to be  
20 operating--in another gas shortage, would be  
21 operating half as long. This is a travesty. It  
22 makes absolutely no sense.

23 If we're going to approve a so-  
24 called Taxi of Tomorrow, legislation like this  
25 that says, you want the Taxi of Tomorrow because

1  
2 some Design Trust said it's a good idea, that's  
3 great, that's great. But if you want to put on  
4 hybrids, if you want to put on clean air cars that  
5 protect New York, if you want to put on cars that  
6 have good value and good gas mileage and if you  
7 want to put on cars that are accessible to the  
8 disabled, you should have a right to do that. And  
9 notwithstanding what a Design Trust thinks a  
10 taxicab should look like. If this serves a better  
11 public a greater good than any kind of Design  
12 Trust and if we truly value New Yorkers and we  
13 truly value customer service, then we should start  
14 putting New Yorkers, the environment, and the  
15 disabled ahead of what a Design Trust comes up and  
16 designs.

17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Mr. Sapone.

19 VINCENT SAPONE: Good morning,  
20 Councilman. My name is Vincent Sapone, I am the  
21 managing director of the League of Mutual Taxi  
22 Owners, known as LOMTO. My credentials are my  
23 father, I have his hack license, drove in 1938 or  
24 before that on, he drove for about 30 years or so.  
25 My first hack license was issued in 1964, so I'm

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kind of a--one of the young guys here.

Anyway, you know, there's something going on that I don't think the City Council knows or we don't know with the TLC, what is the agenda to remove the word Taxi. There must be a reason. Not because there's too much clutter on the car, that's baloney. There's got to be a reason for them working on something that's going to do something that they want where--I can't say because I'm not 100% sure, but I know the reason why they want to just put T on the door instead of New York City Taxi. You know, Design Trust is a nice company, but I don't think they ever drove a cab in their life and I don't know who they spoke to. I speak to hundreds of drivers a week and they said they are getting nothing but complaints from customers about this new signage on the door, they're very confused.

Anyway, what their agenda is, I don't know. If the TLC would have spoke to drivers, Yellow drivers about the door signage, it would have cost them nothing. The Mayor says we're going broke here, I'm sure it cost something for Design Trust, big bucks to get this design on,

1  
2 and they're going to do whatever the TLC tells  
3 them to do because they're a customer. These  
4 drivers would have done it for free. That's all  
5 they had to do was ask drivers what's your  
6 opinion. You know?

7                   Anyway, so I believe in going back  
8 to the original signs on the doors, that word New  
9 York City Taxi should be there.

10                   And as far as the hybrids, I  
11 believe if someone wants to buy a hybrid and not a  
12 Nissan, they should be able to.

13                   And thank you.

14                   CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Peter, Peter  
15 Mazer.

16                   DAVID POLLACK: Hello, hello.

17                   PETER MAZER: Oh, it works? Okay.  
18 Good morning, Chairman Vacca and members of the  
19 Transportation Committee, I am Peter Mazer,  
20 general counsel to the Metropolitan Taxicab Board  
21 of Trade, a 60-year old trade association that is  
22 comprised of 37 taxi fleets that operate more than  
23 5,000 Yellow cabs throughout Brooklyn, the Bronx,  
24 Queens, and Manhattan--more than 60% of all  
25 corporate medallions.

1  
2 MTBOT fleets lease taxis to more  
3 than 20,000 drivers and employ thousands of  
4 mechanics, dispatchers, managers, and other direct  
5 and indirect employees that ensure taxi service is  
6 provided to the riding public 24 hours a day, 7  
7 days a week, and 365 days a year, including during  
8 Hurricane Sandy, when every one of our garages  
9 remained open for business.

10 Today I will be testifying on two  
11 of the bills on the committee's agenda: Intro  
12 929-A and Intro 923. MTBOT fully supports  
13 reinstating the posting of rate information and  
14 other important verbiage on each exterior door of  
15 New York City taxis, as outlined in Intro 929-A,  
16 despite the expense that it will have on our  
17 fleets.

18 Rate of fare decals have been a  
19 ubiquitous feature of the iconic New York City  
20 taxicab for decades. By clearly displaying the  
21 cost of a ride, these decals provide important  
22 consumer protections to riders, particularly the  
23 millions of visitors to our city. For example,  
24 the exterior rate decals inform riders that it  
25 costs \$3 just to open the door, more than a subway



1  
2 fare. This is good for passengers and good for  
3 drivers who want to avoid payment disputes.

4           While it is true that the taxi  
5 screen digitally displays the rate of fare once  
6 the meter is engaged and the trip begins, the  
7 passenger is already on the hook for the drop  
8 charge. The same goes for the rate card, but that  
9 is also inside the taxi and could be easily  
10 overlooked. Every passenger has a right to know  
11 the fare before he or she enters the taxi, not  
12 just the savviest or the most frequent taxi  
13 riders, but the first time taxi rider and the  
14 infrequent taxi rider.

15           Furthermore, the exterior and  
16 interior display of a rate of fare is necessary to  
17 prevent overcharging and fraud. While the vast  
18 majority of taxicab drivers are honest,  
19 hardworking New Yorkers, there are always bad  
20 apples, as recently witnessed in the Rate 4  
21 scandal where drivers were illegally charging out-  
22 of-city rates for in-city fares. If that scandal  
23 showed us anything, it showed us that the more  
24 consumer protections that are in place, the better  
25 we are equipped to fight fraud. Why then take

1  
2 away a consumer protection like the exterior  
3 posting of a rate of fare decal?

4 In addition, one of the great  
5 ironies of the new decal is that it was after the  
6 rule took effect, taxicabs were actually failing  
7 inspection for displaying the word taxicab.  
8 Replacing NYC Taxi with NYC and a T was a mistake  
9 and we need to correct it immediately. In this  
10 instance, less is not more.

11 Passengers need to be able to  
12 clearly identify New York City Yellow medallion  
13 taxicabs in a sea of competing vehicles that  
14 include Yellow taxis from places like Yonkers and  
15 Newark, which now look almost identical to New  
16 York City taxicabs.

17 Drivers need to be able to  
18 confidently drive taxicabs without passengers  
19 asking them where to find a taxi, as media reports  
20 showed.

21 Lastly, New York City should be  
22 proud of the singular iconic status of the New  
23 York City Yellow taxicab. A quick flip through  
24 the television channels or the aisles of gift  
25 shops in Times Square clearly indicate the New

1  
2 York City Yellow taxicab is on par with the Empire  
3 State Building and the Statue of Liberty as a  
4 symbol of New York City, so let's celebrate it,  
5 not minimize it. Replacing NYC Taxi with NYC T is  
6 doing exactly that. It hurts this unique brand  
7 that taxi owners, drivers, and passengers take  
8 great pride in. We need to reverse this before  
9 lasting damage is done to the Yellow taxi brand.

10 To that end, we not only support  
11 the bill's requirement that the word Taxi be  
12 reinstated to the exterior decals, but the words  
13 NYC Taxi in full.

14 Additionally, we suggest that the  
15 bill be amended to specifically provide that  
16 Yellow taxicabs are the only vehicles in the city  
17 of New York that are licensed to pick up street  
18 hails. As you know, a judge found the law that  
19 created the livery street hail category to be  
20 unconstitutional on three separate counts, voiding  
21 that law.

22 Finally, with respect to the other  
23 bill, Intro 923, MTBOT fully supports the  
24 provisions of the bill, allowing the TLC to  
25 diversify the availability of fuel efficient

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2 vehicles. This bill will provide passengers and  
3 owners with choice and we fully support it.

4 We thank you for your time and  
5 we'll be happy to answer any questions that you  
6 may have.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.  
8 David Pollack.

9 DAVID POLLACK: Good morning,  
10 Council Members, my name is David Pollack, I'm the  
11 executive director of the Committee for Taxi  
12 Safety. We represent leasing agents and fleets  
13 totaling about 2,200 taxis and all the drivers.

14 Happy Thanksgiving to everyone.  
15 And I'm especially glad to see that Councilwoman  
16 Brewer is here because she has self-proclaimed  
17 more than once she takes more taxis than any other  
18 councilperson.

19 I'd like to complement, echo, and  
20 reinforce the comments of my colleagues here. In  
21 the TLC's mission statement, they state that they  
22 do what's best for the public we serve. Is doing  
23 best for the public they serve not being  
24 transparent? I agree with your comments, Mr.  
25 Chairman, transparency is of the utmost necessity.

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2 We saw what happened in the pedicab scandals and  
3 tourists are entitled to know before they get into  
4 the cab what the rates are. Councilman Koppell  
5 hit on it, you don't have to spell out every  
6 little thing, for every 600 feet while vehicle in  
7 motion under six miles an hour, we had it before.  
8 And what got lost, I think Mr. Gerber alluded to  
9 it, what got lost also is there was a change in  
10 the rate sticker a few years ago. There was never  
11 a hailing man until a few years ago, and it's very  
12 possible the TLC paid some other design company to  
13 design that as well.

14 I mean, it's almost as though that  
15 we have an agency that is running out of control.  
16 They do things because they can. Not to include  
17 industry participants and industry members in a  
18 decision, an iconic decision of the Yellow taxi  
19 and the rates, include us. You know, each one of  
20 our individual association members probably has  
21 more years than every employee of the TLC put  
22 together in this industry.

23 Rates should have never been  
24 removed in the first place. And drivers deserve  
25 compensation for the stickers and for the time

1  
2 they wasted removing the old stickers, putting the  
3 new stickers on, and they'll probably have to do  
4 it again because of this, you know, misguided  
5 removal of the rates of fare.

6           And lets take an agency,  
7 everybody's cutting back, almost every agency is  
8 cutting back, the TLC gets a 25% increase in their  
9 allocation and can hire an additional 100  
10 employees? They can certainly afford to pay back  
11 medallion owners or drivers and drivers for the  
12 time they lose replacing these stickers. And I  
13 have members who had to repaint their entire  
14 vehicle because when the stickers are removed  
15 after a couple of years, sometimes there's a  
16 shadowing in the paint job. Who pays for that?

17           The TLC made some comments, they  
18 said there were no public complaints about the new  
19 T? Well let me ask you something, were there any  
20 public complaints about the rates of fare when it  
21 was on there? Put everything on the screen?  
22 Yeah, let's put everything on the screen the same  
23 way, you know, oh, we don't want to kill trees.  
24 All the notification to owners and drivers and  
25 everyone in the industry is now on their website.

1  
2 Do you know how many calls and letters I get from  
3 drivers who do not have computers and they need to  
4 know what's going on or they want to write a  
5 letter in my newspaper, for example? Okay? Not  
6 everyone has computers today. Oh, I have access  
7 to my daughter's once a week.

8 And GPS, by the way, was not  
9 created to see the rates of fare. You can ask  
10 former employees and present employees. Was that  
11 one of the reasons the screen in the back was  
12 created, to see the rate of fare? I think not.

13 Once again, why was it removed?  
14 Because they can.

15 And there's--let's see, oh, I hit  
16 on all the points, but getting to the Taxi of  
17 Tomorrow, I thought that was going to be a  
18 separate discussion, but since Ethan mentioned it  
19 and others have mentioned it too, the initial bill  
20 called for all electric cabs, if I recall, to  
21 replace upon retirement Yellow taxicabs. And if  
22 I'm wrong, I'm sorry, but I would have been  
23 against that. Choice?

24 MALE VOICE: Hybrid.

25 FEMALE VOICE: Hybrid.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: You meant  
3 hybrid, not electric.

4 DAVID POLLACK: Okay. But choice  
5 is a great thing. I think we're putting the cart  
6 in front of the horse. As you've stated, the  
7 infrastructure is not in New York City yet, we  
8 literally don't have enough electric juice if the  
9 entire fleet would have become electric. There  
10 are other problems with distance and fast charging  
11 and just a multitude of problems. But choice is a  
12 great thing, and that's also one of the Committee  
13 for Taxi Safety's arguments regarding the Taxi of  
14 Tomorrow. The industry needs choice, the public  
15 deserves choice, and taxi owners and taxi drivers  
16 are entitled to choice, even if this Taxi and  
17 Limousine Commission doesn't want to include us in  
18 simple discussions like a rate of fare sticker.

19 Thank you, I'll answer any  
20 questions.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you. Do  
22 the members have any questions? Council Member  
23 Greenfield, I think you had a question, Council  
24 Member?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank



1  
2 you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for  
3 your testimony.

4           It's so bizarre, I have to tell  
5 you, just sitting here, it's like you would almost  
6 expect the opposite, right? You would expect the  
7 industry to say, you know, let's get rid of all  
8 the information, sort of let's do whatever we  
9 want, right? And you would expect the TLC to say,  
10 well, you know, it's important for the customer  
11 that we have the information on the outside. And  
12 it's so strange, I mean, and I sat through many of  
13 these hearings, it's so strange to have a hearing  
14 where it's like we're in Bizarroland, right? It's  
15 like the industry is coming here and saying we  
16 want more transparency, we want more  
17 accountability, more information and less fraud;  
18 and TLC is saying, you know, we're going to play  
19 Sesame Street's letter of the day by throwing up  
20 the letter T. What is the letter T? You know, I  
21 have a 5 -year old son, the last time I saw Sesame  
22 Street, I think the letter T of the day stood for  
23 tree.

24           And my point actually is, and which  
25 relates to this as well, is that, you know, I

1  
2 don't know if it was addressed, but a lot of folks  
3 who use taxis come from different countries and  
4 they don't speak English very well, but they know  
5 what the word taxi means, right? In fact, in some  
6 languages, in Spanish I believe, taxi actually is  
7 taxi, right? They don't know what the letter T  
8 means, right? And if you just see a car, and just  
9 think about this, right, I don't know if any of  
10 you on the panel have ever traveled to a foreign  
11 country, I have and I look at it, you know, when I  
12 travel to a foreign country, if someone, you know,  
13 I imagine what would happen if someone from  
14 outside of the U.S. is now traveling to New York  
15 City? I find it difficult to figure out in some  
16 cities, you know, who's really a cab and who's not  
17 a cab, right? And especially, I would think, with  
18 the amount of illegal cabs that we have on the  
19 street, do you think that would be a concern,  
20 especially for foreign tourists, inviting them  
21 potentially to get ripped off by not clearly  
22 labeling the cars as taxis?

23                   ETHAN GERBER: Sure. Absolutely,  
24 Council Member. One of the things that was  
25 pointed out by Mr. Chhabra when he testified is

1  
2 that the New York City taxicab is noticeable  
3 enough because it's yellow. I don't know if he  
4 knows this, but there's no law against being a  
5 yellow car or having a yellow car. In fact,  
6 yellow is a popular type of paint.

7           Also, there is nothing that  
8 prevents anyone from putting a T on their car.  
9 There is a rule that says you can't hold yourself  
10 out as a New York City taxi if you're not one. So  
11 why don't we make it clear what a New York City  
12 taxi so people--so, you know, Tom with the yellow  
13 Corvette can't put his initial on it.

14           And you're right, in my travels--  
15 and I'm fortunate enough to have traveled fairly  
16 widely--the word taxi has--the English word taxi  
17 has become ubiquitous all over the world. It  
18 means what it means because we had them first and  
19 it's, you know, it's an old word from actually  
20 from English, from London, but the word has become  
21 synonymous with the vehicle that picks up for-hail  
22 people and all over the world, they know what a  
23 taxi is and they do not know what a T is supposed  
24 to symbolize.

25           COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank

1

2 you.

3

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member  
4 Gale Brewer, and then Council Member Rodriguez.

5

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you  
very much. I mean, it's been clear I guess that  
nobody was consulted at all, even peripherally, is  
that correct, in terms of these changes?

9

[crosstalk]

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And  
the second question I have is, do you have a  
position on--there's a third bill that we've been  
considering, 930 has to do with the wait times, is  
that something that you took a position on or you  
may not have.

16

[Off mic]

17

18

DAVID POLLACK: It doesn't affect  
the Yellow part of the industry--

19

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

20

21

22

23

DAVID POLLACK: --for the reasons  
Ashwini had stated, you know, we are--we're  
regimented, we can go online, it's on our rate  
cards, we know when our next inspections are--

24

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

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[Interposing] Okay. So there are no issues there

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is what I wanted--

DAVID POLLACK: --and we don't have--I don't have--the committee doesn't have an opinion on that legislation.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And--

ETHAN GERBER: [Interposing] The only thing I would say, Council Member Brewer, is that the bill, as I understand it--and I didn't study it because it wasn't about us--is a reporting requirement to you--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Correct.

ETHAN GERBER: --I'm all for it.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

ETHAN GERBER: I think the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission should report to this committee and to the City Council often and it should be controlled by this committee and by the City Council.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. I just wanted to check. And then my final question is, the issue of explanation. On the outside, I don't think it's so complicated, but do you think it would be easy to make it clear to the

1  
2 public? I mean, even if it's not crystal clear  
3 because people don't know what a fifth of a mile  
4 is, but they can get a sense by looking at the  
5 previous clarification that we were familiar with.  
6 Do you think it would be complicated to outline  
7 the current system?

8                   And then, finally, who does pay for  
9 if this bill passes taking off the T and putting  
10 on the new information, is that your  
11 responsibility, the driver's? I just don't know  
12 that.

13                   PETER MAZER: I'll address the last  
14 point, it's generally the medallion owner's  
15 responsibility to replace all of the stickers.  
16 And the--

17                   COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

18 [Interposing] What's the cost--

19 [Crosstalk]

20                   PETER MAZER: [Interposing] The  
21 check, yeah, it's about \$6.50 per car to replace.

22                   MALE VOICE 3: No, no.

23                   MALE VOICE 4: It's 100, it's about  
24 100 by the time--

25 [Crosstalk]

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PETER MAZER: Sixty-five?

MALE VOICE 4: Plus 20 to \$25 to

have the--

[Crosstalk]

PETER MAZER: Well I'm not talking about installation, just the actual price of the--

MALE VOICE: [Interposing] I would say \$22--

[Crosstalk]

PETER MAZER: [Interposing] All right, so you've got the answers, so--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

[Interposing] It's somewhere between 22 and 65.

PETER MAZER: Sixty-five--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

PETER MAZER: --plus the cost of installation if you don't--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

PETER MAZER: --do it yourself.

DAVID POLLACK: If I may--

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:

[Interposing] I'm sorry, you pay that also? In other words, who pays whatever the amount is?

1  
2 PETER MAZER: The medallion owner  
3 would pay all of it.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

5 DAVID POLLACK: However, there are  
6 situations, most of our medallions are long-term  
7 leases with drivers and many times the driver,  
8 unless mandated by the TLC, must pay for the  
9 stickers, but they will certainly be the ones  
10 losing the time because not everybody has a  
11 garage, they would usually go to the meter shop,  
12 is that correct, drivers?

13 [Off mic]

14 DAVID POLLACK: Okay. So, you  
15 know, how do you put a price on that? Maybe they  
16 should put a price on lost time.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you  
18 very much, that's very helpful.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Council Member  
20 Rodriguez.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: So going  
22 back to--you say that the reso related to--or the  
23 Introduction related to the inspection is  
24 something that doesn't affect the Yellow taxi,  
25 right?



1  
2                   DAVID POLLACK: All Yellow cabs are  
3 inspected, okay? If we want to get technical, I  
4 guess it does affect Yellow cabs because it's the  
5 same venue, the Woodside inspection site. I don't  
6 know if it's going to take away or add to times,  
7 but certainly, as was stated here before, the City  
8 Council is entitled to know the waiting times of  
9 not only the for-hire industry, but the Yellow  
10 industry as well.

11                   COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Say in  
12 your case, like the drivers, they know or the  
13 owners of the medallion, they know when they are  
14 better--they accommodate, right? Like--

15                   PETER MAZER: Well they know when  
16 they are coming in for inspection, but that  
17 doesn't mean that they don't have a waiting time  
18 too because a lot of times they show up at their  
19 scheduled inspection time and they could still  
20 have a significant wait. I--

21                   COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ:  
22 [Interposing] So how is it that it doesn't affect?

23                   PETER MAZER: Because the bill only  
24 calls--well because in the--and I believe in the--  
25 with respect to the medallion owners, the amount

1  
2 of waiting time and the amount of time that it  
3 takes to go through an inspection is presently  
4 reported in the Mayor's Management Report, it's  
5 one of the few--very, very few items that the Taxi  
6 and Limousine Commission has tracked and reports  
7 public--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ:

9 [Interposing] And I think that we're looking in to  
10 address the waiting time, so that my question is,  
11 does the inspection process as it is right now,  
12 does that affect the Yellow taxi drivers when it  
13 [off mic] to be the--

14 [Crosstalk]

15 PETER MAZER: [Interposing] Yeah,  
16 definitely.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But you  
18 say it doesn't affect, so how is it that--

19 ETHAN GERBER: [Interposing] No,  
20 the bill--

21 PETER MAZER: The bill--

22 ETHAN GERBER: --the bill doesn't  
23 affect, but the waiting time certainly affects us.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: But the  
25 bill is addressing that, the bill is addressing--

1  
2 ETHAN GERBER: [Interposing] The  
3 bill is addressed to reporting--

4 [Crosstalk]

5 ETHAN GERBER: --times.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: In order  
7 for us to have a clear idea on how much--

8 [Crosstalk]

9 ETHAN GERBER: [Interposing] Which  
10 is fine, which we agree with.

11 PETER MAZER: Yeah.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: So and  
13 you agree like or any design should have the New  
14 York City taxi, right?

15 ETHAN GERBER: Yes.

16 PETER MAZER: Absolutely.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: And then  
18 we talk about the expenses of the [off mic]  
19 sticker especially assuming that it will go  
20 through, which we don't know, and it will  
21 establish, like, each Yellow taxi that will have  
22 the fare, when the new fare is taking place so  
23 that sticker--the expenses of the stickers go and  
24 the drivers, they're the one who cover the  
25 expense.

1  
2 ETHAN GERBER: No, it's the owners.  
3 The owners of the medallion are the ones required  
4 to change the decals and undergo the expense.  
5 It's an expense we are willing to undergo, it's an  
6 expense we think is necessary, and it's an expense  
7 we've always had, it's part of operating a  
8 taxicab. When the rates of fare have changed,  
9 we've had to change the stickers.

10 DAVID POLLACK: I stand corrected.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank  
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I think I  
14 should read into the record that we received a  
15 letter from the Livery Roundtable in support of  
16 Intro 930. The letter is submitted by Carolyn  
17 Castro, who is the director, and they say they are  
18 in favor, it's a welcome addition to streamline  
19 the appointment process and assist bases and  
20 drivers receive inspections in a timely manner,  
21 and that they support Intro 930.

22 Okay. I want to thank our panel.  
23 And our next panel will be Marc Klein, Clean  
24 Energy Fuels; Placida Robinson, Independent  
25 Medallion Owner Driver Association; Jose

1  
2 Altamarino, with the Livery Base Owners  
3 Association; Jenofix Jonathan [phonetic], who  
4 represents himself. I would ask Placida Robinson  
5 to please lead off.

6 PLACIDA ROBINSON: Hi, good  
7 morning, Chairperson Vacca and members of the  
8 Committee on Transportation. I am Placida  
9 [phonetic] Robinson, I am a New York City Hybrid  
10 Medallion owner, a Columbia University Public  
11 Policy graduate, and founder of IMODA, the newly-  
12 formed Independent Medallion Owner and Driver  
13 Association. Some of our members are with us  
14 today--Mr. Jonathan Jonovic [phonetic]. Our  
15 stated goal is to effectuate policy change that is  
16 accountable to the needs, recommendations, and  
17 requirements of small, independent owners and  
18 operators of this industry.

19 The electric vehicle policy is the  
20 top concern on our agenda. In 2005, New York City  
21 initiated one of the most irresponsibly crafted  
22 policies when it granted the TLC unilateral  
23 approval to mandate hybrid electric vehicles for  
24 use as medallion taxicabs. From the Ford Escape  
25 to the GM Saturn Vue, the Taxi and Limousine

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2 Commission has inexplicably resisted protection of  
3 its licensees and the public in not testing or  
4 reviewing these vehicles for their catastrophic  
5 safety, operational, and financial performance.

6           Despite personally advising the  
7 commission via written and verbal complaint both  
8 in 2007 and again in 2012, and again at the  
9 commission's public hearing this past June 1st,  
10 presenting them with personal and publicly  
11 documented evidence of the catastrophic financial  
12 and operational burden of purchasing, operating,  
13 and maintaining these vehicles, citing power  
14 steering failures, highway and city traffic loss  
15 of acceleration, engine stalls, battery drains,  
16 fires, and expensive \$10,000 per part electric  
17 part failure, the commission has mysteriously  
18 refrained from acting on or considering these  
19 facts. Shirking its public responsibility to  
20 protect owners and its ridership through industry  
21 notice, public hearing or otherwise.

22           Since the current regulatory policy  
23 has been reticent to relieve hybrid medallion  
24 vehicle owners of the financially destructive and  
25 tortuous mandate to repeatedly buy, repair, and

1  
2 replace these routinely defective vehicles, we are  
3 directly appealing to you to carefully review and  
4 consider all current and proposed electric vehicle  
5 policy and implementation before instituting any  
6 more regulation.

7           We have paid for the current  
8 electric policy through millions of dollars in our  
9 personal equity destruction and direct cash  
10 transfer directly back to the manufacturers over  
11 the past seven years. I might as well set up an  
12 EBT transfer directly from my corporation checking  
13 account right back to the manufacturers Ford,  
14 Toyota, and GM, and then just annually transfer  
15 them tens and 10 and 20 and \$30,000 a year for  
16 these expensive hybrid defective parts. Consider  
17 our bankruptcy, medallion foreclosure, yes, equity  
18 destruction, income and vehicle property losses as  
19 I have to hack up and replace, not only one, but  
20 two, but three vehicles in one seven-year  
21 eligibility lifespan. Consider our increased  
22 sticker expenses, loss of our retirement savings,  
23 and inability to barely meet medical expenses,  
24 family needs, home mortgages, and rent.

25           So we now ask the City Council to

1  
2 pause in its consideration of electric vehicle  
3 technology at this time and to contemplate any new  
4 fuel efficiency and emissions policy with the  
5 aforementioned financial and operational damage in  
6 mind.

7           After personally exhausting  
8 \$156,000 in my own refinanced equity on my  
9 medallion to buy, repair, and replace two--three  
10 different hybrid models from 2006 to 2012. Well I  
11 was told by the commission simply, buy another  
12 hybrid or sell your medallion. Of course, what  
13 they're not telling you is that when I go to sell  
14 my medallion after having exhausted my \$156,000 in  
15 equity, I will be upside-down on my payments  
16 because the federal government will come with  
17 their capital gains taxes and I will hardly be  
18 able to repay.

19           Over 600 estimated and accompanying  
20 hybrid medallion owners like myself, one of them  
21 whom is here today, individual and corporate, with  
22 another 5,000 hybrid driver-owned vehicle cars  
23 have transferred millions in cash equity and  
24 income directly back to the vehicle manufacturers  
25 over the past seven years. Despite writing the



1  
2 TLC in 2007 and 2012 and again publicly providing  
3 them at their June 1st hearing with information on  
4 nationwide NHTSA hybrid failure data and court  
5 filings on the Toyota Highlander, Prius, the  
6 Camry, the Ford Escape, the Honda Civic, and GM  
7 cars, the TLC refuses to take corrective action on  
8 any of the evidence presented by summarily voting  
9 to adopt the even more expensive to purchase and  
10 repair Lexus RX 400h. However, the policy could  
11 not escape federal judge Paul Crotty's 2008  
12 opinion injuncting the City from mandating more of  
13 these hybrid vehicles fleetwide, citing the  
14 irrevocable non-recuperable compliance costs that  
15 I as a medallion owner have already realized.

16 In sum, it's the hybrid owners who  
17 are paying to be driven from this industry while  
18 simultaneously, it is us who is footing the bill  
19 for this city's obsolete and now passing hybrid  
20 policy phase itself because the 2013 Taxi of  
21 Tomorrow is not a hybrid. Well what happened to  
22 us and our loss equity as we go out of business?

23 As it is principally, if not  
24 legally, unfair to compel our continued  
25 competitive disadvantage with non-hybrid medallion

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2 owners who don't have to hack up hybrid vehicles,  
3 we compel you to rescind the current constraint on  
4 us hybrid medallion owners to hack up hybrid  
5 vehicles in perpetuity and consider other policy  
6 alternatives. While we understand what the  
7 Council would like to achieve in setting  
8 innovative fleet policy, this is an historic  
9 opportunity to course correct in a win-win  
10 opportunistic direction not addressed by the bill  
11 today.

12 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]  
13 I'm sorry to interrupt, and, you know, I have not  
14 imposed a time limit, but could you conclude in  
15 respect to the other people that are--

16 PLACIDA ROBINSON: [Interposing]  
17 Last paragraph.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: I appreciate,  
19 you know, your thoroughness though.

20 PLACIDA ROBINSON: Thank you. We  
21 then ask you to review electric prospects going  
22 forward, especially given President Barack Obama's  
23 already increased 35.5 mile per gallon EPA fuel  
24 efficiency standards for conventional gas cars,  
25 meaning that conventional gas cars are now getting

1  
2 35.5 MPG without having to be hybrid, and allow us  
3 to purchase those. Gas vehicles already on the  
4 road with new and improved emissions will allow us  
5 all to achieve the same goals with greater  
6 flexibility while giving the Council time to truly  
7 transform New York and the nation's crown jewel of  
8 the taxi fleet transportation into something more  
9 enviable than it already is.

10 On behalf of my organization,  
11 IMODA, and fellow effected owners and industry  
12 participants, I look forward to working with you  
13 on making an acceptable and technologically  
14 efficient world-class taxi fleet a dream come  
15 true. I thank you for your time, attention, and  
16 consideration of my comments.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.  
18 Jose, would you like to go next?

19 JOSE ALTAMARINO: Sure.

20 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Can you  
21 introduce yourself for the record first?

22 JOSE ALTAMARINO: Mr. Chairman,  
23 members of the committee, industry colleagues, my  
24 name is Jose Altamarino, I'm the president for the  
25 Livery Base Owners Association, composed of 125

1  
2 base owners with approximately 12,000 affiliated  
3 vehicles throughout New York City. I'd like to  
4 thank you for the opportunity to testify on Intro  
5 928--929-A, 923, and 930.

6 First, we support the passage of  
7 Intro 930. We believe in full disclosure. We  
8 believe the City Council should receive, as the  
9 Intro indicates, all the proceedings of the  
10 commission and all documents and records in its  
11 possession shall be public records and the  
12 commission shall make an annual report to the City  
13 Council on or before the second Monday of January  
14 and every year.

15 To the extent that the Taxi and  
16 Limousine Commission provide information to the  
17 City Council, it will be providing information to  
18 all of us. Today we have an excellent working  
19 relationship with the TLC under the leadership of  
20 Commissioner David Yassky and our relationship is  
21 strong because the commissioner believes in full  
22 disclosure.

23 We support Intro 930 because it  
24 also addresses the issue and concern to our  
25 industry, base owners and drivers alike, vehicle

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2 inspections. Intro 930 calls on the commission to  
3 make quarterly reports to the City Council on an  
4 average waiting time by drivers to secure a  
5 vehicle inspection at the assigned inspection  
6 facility as required under the rules of the  
7 commission. Such reports shall be disclosed any  
8 instance when the wait for an inspection exceeds  
9 four weeks. All information shall be  
10 disaggravated by the vehicle type. We, of course,  
11 are very interested in this because it is in our  
12 best interest to have support because most of our  
13 drivers and bases complain because of waiting  
14 times. We also take this opportunity to support  
15 the City Council's attempt to move the industry to  
16 the 21st century and to join so many other  
17 attempts to be environmentally friendly and  
18 conscious as well providing service to all New  
19 Yorkers.

20 Intro 923 calls for at least 9% of  
21 our taxis shall be issued subject to the hybrid,  
22 either a compressed natural gas or electric or to  
23 be hybrid electric vehicles. We support the City  
24 Council's Intro 923, but urge you to add financial  
25 incentives and financial support to these

1  
2 mandates, otherwise, the industry may end up  
3 bearing costs that are unaffordable.

4 Finally, we support Intro 929-A  
5 that calls for the posting of information on  
6 exterior vehicles, in other words, the word Taxi  
7 shall be placed on the exterior front door of any  
8 taxicab. Any attempts for the industry to be  
9 transparent with the public it serves must be  
10 applauded, this Intro does that.

11 Again, thank you for allowing us to  
12 share our thoughts on these three pieces of  
13 legislation.

14 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you,  
15 thank you very much for your input. Oh, Mr. Marc  
16 Klein, Clean Energy Fuels.

17 MARC KLEIN: Good morning, Chair;  
18 good morning, Council Members. Hello? Hi, good  
19 morning, Chairman; good morning, Council Members.  
20 Thank you for the opportunity to speak. Brief  
21 introduction, my name is Marc Klein, I'm a vice  
22 president at Clean Energy Fuels and also co-  
23 founder of the Vehicle Production Group, which  
24 makes the purpose-built American made commercial  
25 duty wheelchair accessible MV-1 that runs on clean

1  
2 burning domestic compressed natural gas, also  
3 known as CNG.

4 Natural gas fuel for transportation  
5 is cleaner, cheaper, abundant, and all American.  
6 Using domestic natural gas fuel in the taxicab and  
7 for-hire industries will support President Obama's  
8 goal of ending our dependence on oil imported from  
9 the Middle East and will enhance U.S. energy  
10 security policies.

11 In addition, natural gas vehicles  
12 are green, since they reduce greenhouse gas  
13 emissions by up to 30% over their gasoline  
14 counterparts and reduce particulate matter, a  
15 component of smog, by up to 90%. Importantly,  
16 natural gas fuel is selling for about \$1.50 less  
17 per gallon than gasoline, so people who pay for  
18 fuel, such as taxicab, livery, and black car  
19 drivers, like natural gas vehicles because they  
20 save them money. In addition, the lower cost of  
21 natural gas fuel acts as a hedge against runaway  
22 gasoline prices.

23 Notably, the local CNG vehicles  
24 performed extremely well after Superstorm Sandy,  
25 in sharp contrast to the long lines at gasoline

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2 stations that crushed the for-hire industry  
3 vehicles and kept them off the road. There were  
4 several new stories about CNG continuing to fuel  
5 vehicles when gasoline vehicles were stuck waiting  
6 on long lines with no fuel. CNG is piped  
7 underground direct to fuel stations and does not  
8 require trailer shipments over the road, as  
9 gasoline and diesel do, so CNG was flowing  
10 immediately after Sandy was over.

11 As an aside, two weeks ago I saw  
12 Mike Hobson, who is director of Nissan's--director  
13 of fleet division, at the annual Taxi Regulator  
14 Conference, with respect to Nissan's NV200 Taxi of  
15 Tomorrow. Mike confirmed to me that Nissan is  
16 investigating CNG for potential future  
17 enhancements.

18 Some background, Clean Energy is  
19 the largest provider of natural gas fuel for  
20 transportation in North America. We fuel refuse  
21 trucks, transit buses, city vehicles, more than  
22 28,000 daily, and operate more than 300 CNG  
23 stations, including JFK, LaGuardia, and Newark, as  
24 well as here in Brooklyn, and the other boroughs.  
25 In addition, Clean Energy is building America's



1  
2 natural gas highway, which supports 18-wheeler  
3 trucks through interstate highway fueling,  
4 including the I95 corridor. Importantly, we plan  
5 on adding CNG stations to all of the boroughs,  
6 including New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut to  
7 support CNG fueling throughout the region.

8 In addition to CNG MV-1 taxi use,  
9 as well as for Access-A-Ride, the CNG Ford Transit  
10 Connect is now operating in the black car  
11 industry, so we're seeing an immediate improvement  
12 in the air quality from these vehicles with 100%  
13 displacement of gasoline, a true alternative fuel.  
14 And that's the connection to Intro 923 because  
15 you're talking about electric vehicles, which will  
16 also be 100% electric, displacing 100% of gasoline  
17 use. And that is in the definition of electric  
18 vehicles, quote powered exclusively by  
19 electricity.

20 I respectfully suggest that if a  
21 vehicle is both truly alternative fuel, using no  
22 gasoline and wheelchair accessible, under the  
23 Americans with Disabilities Act at the same time,  
24 then that vehicle should be granted an additional  
25 year or two of age life known as an extension of

1  
2 the retirement period under the New York City  
3 Administrative Code. Indeed, the Natural Gas MV-1  
4 is a commercial duty vehicle designed to last much  
5 longer than simple consumer vehicles, like the  
6 hybrid vehicles that were complained about. It's  
7 clean burning and green since it runs on dedicated  
8 compressed natural gas, and it meets or exceeds  
9 the vehicle requirements of the Americans with  
10 Disabilities Act. Therefore, the CNG MV-1 should  
11 be granted an additional year or two of age life  
12 since it's specifically designed to have so many  
13 benefits for the riding public and the citizens of  
14 New York. For example, there is a CNG MV-1 on the  
15 streets of New York today that is owned by a  
16 medallion owner named Mr. Singh [phonetic]. While  
17 Mr. Singh can utilize that vehicle for seven  
18 years, since it is wheelchair accessible, he would  
19 get that benefit even if it ran on gasoline. That  
20 anomaly is not consistent with the electric  
21 vehicle amendment that is before you today. Since  
22 Mr. Singh's MV-1 uses no gasoline whatsoever and  
23 is improving the local air quality with every  
24 ounce of alternative fuel, an additional year or  
25 two of vehicle age life would be a great incentive

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for other medallion owners to follow his lead.

As you are aware, there is an incremental cost that is associated with purchasing alternative fuel vehicles that can discourage vehicle owners from acquiring such vehicles. Notably, such an age extension to an eighth year or a ninth year for a commercial duty vehicle will be very powerful when the new 2,000 wheelchair accessible medallions are eventually auctioned and issue. There is no doubt that 2,000 CNG wheelchair accessible taxis will be better for New York City's air quality than 2,000 gasoline wheelchair accessible taxis.

Greenhouse gas reduction, smog reduction, less expensive CNG fuel for drivers versus gasoline.

As such, I respectfully request that the Administrative Code be amended to economically incentivize the for-hire industries to purchase wheelchair accessible vehicles that do not use any gasoline and are, therefore, 100% truly alternative fuel. Such a rule would also support disaster preparedness since those new wheelchair accessible taxis, assuming they are

1  
2 CNG, will not be stuck waiting for gasoline in the  
3 event of another storm similar to Sandy.

4 Thank you for your consideration.

5 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you,  
6 panel. Our last panel is Cliff Adler,  
7 owner/driver, LOMTO; Aaron Truesell, LOMTO; and  
8 Ricoberto Nunez [phonetic], who represents  
9 himself, New York City taxi driver.

10 JONATHAN JONOVICS: What about me?

11 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Did you--

12 [Crosstalk]

13 JONATHAN JONOVICS: I don't know.

14 [Crosstalk]

15 MALE VOICE: --called for the last  
16 panelist.

17 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Oh, we called  
18 you for the other panel and you didn't come up,  
19 you want to go up now?

20 JONATHAN JONOVICS: Yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Come up,  
22 of course. Why don't we start with Mr. Nunez?

23 RICOBERTO NUNEZ: Good afternoon,  
24 my name is Ricoberto Nunez, I've been driving--

25 [Gavel]

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CHAIRPERSON VACCA: [Interposing]

Have your attention, please, everyone. Let's hear the witness.

RICOBERTO NUNEZ: I've been driving a Yellow taxicab for 15 years. I'm here to totally be in support of the bill of bringing back the old decals. I think it's so much needed to bring back the old decals and I'm in total support of it.

But at the same time, I will like to say that the reason I support it is because, as a driver, I find that the passengers that come into your cab always they come in and they feel and they question you, and I think that the sense of security that it adds to them to see the decal on the outside of the cab is very important when they see it instead of seeing it just on the screen and it gives them a sense of security, add into the transparency of it. So I believe that the more transparent that we are to the consumer, the better it is.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.

Sir, would you introduce yourself, please?

1  
2 JONATHAN JONOVICS: Yeah, my name  
3 is Mr. Jonathan Jonovics, I'm an owner of a  
4 medallion Yellow cab. And for the past six years  
5 I run on CNG technology and I want to testify to  
6 the CNG technology is pure--I'm sorry about that--  
7 pure garbage because I encounter so many problems  
8 and hardship, first of all, financial hardship  
9 where New York City implemented at the beginning,  
10 they had about 100 Yellow cabs on the CNG. The  
11 technology was so faulty, it wasn't run through  
12 the manufacturer originally, it ran by a  
13 aftermarket company out in Texas that they  
14 converted these vehicles and each one of them,  
15 every one gave up because there was tremendous  
16 amount of mechanical defaults and every one just  
17 gave up, [off mic] just abandoned the car, they  
18 didn't have no choice, they went to the hybrid.

19 I'm the only one and another guy  
20 out of 13,000 Yellow cabs that we still have CNG  
21 because I didn't want to give up on the car, I  
22 told it I can cure it, yeah, I cured it already  
23 but it cost me tens of thousands of dollars to fix  
24 it. I'm in debt, I'm in debt with my credit  
25 cards, close to--you can guess the figure--it's

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close to \$80,000 because of this vehicle.

This vehicle, as far as you got to redo an engine job every 110,000 miles that no one knows it about it. You got to because the gas that goes into tank is a dry gas without air and it's not lubricant like a gasoline, that's why it burns up the heads, you got to go for a complete engine job that costs close to three to three and a half thousand dollars. I'm going into my third one, I just replaced a third engine the last week, and still, once you do that, you got to have a special program to reprogram the computer because otherwise the check engine light comes on and then the vehicle don't pass inspection.

That's what happened to me two inspections ago, my check engine light was on, I used to go just about banana crazy, I went to every mechanic in New York City, every garage, no one could fix the problems. I mean, I went to one garage, literally they change every component in the front in the engine, also some sensors, MEP sensors, throttle body, EGR valve has cost me thousands of dollars, they couldn't figure--by the end they said to me it's a computer problem.

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2                   So I had to go to the manufacturer,  
3 I said to him, listen, why didn't you warn me  
4 about these things, he says, oh, we didn't know.  
5 The check engine--because of that check engine  
6 light I didn't pass inspection, I had to lay the  
7 car for 80 days, I was out of work 80 days, 2 1/2  
8 months I was out of work. I put my medallion into  
9 storage. Cost me, just that burden cost me close  
10 to \$20,000. I had to pay my mortgage and I  
11 couldn't work, I didn't even make \$1.

12                   Okay. That's as far as the engine.  
13 And this gentleman that was just testifying, he  
14 says the MV-1, yeah, I don't know about MV-1, but  
15 MV-1 is also running the CNG. That vehicle by  
16 itself just to purchase \$57,000. And this person,  
17 he doesn't know it, just bought this thing, he  
18 doesn't know what's lying ahead of him as far as  
19 repairs because he didn't experience on his flesh  
20 and blood.

21                   Okay. As far as the CNG. Now the  
22 hybrid vehicle, what I'm saying, I'm just saying  
23 that all these hybrid vehicle and alternative fuel  
24 medallion should be struck down, the owner should  
25 have his own choice about purchasing whatever he



1  
2 wants to purchase. You [off mic] you want to  
3 introduce the electric, the electric cars, the  
4 electric cars are not proven yet, they're small  
5 cars, the public--a lot of people in the public,  
6 they don't want to go into this small vehicle,  
7 they want a bigger vehicle. These small vehicles  
8 cannot hold a lot of luggage, you know, you're  
9 sitting over there like, you know, in the solitary  
10 confinement all the time.

11           The hybrid vehicle, as Ms. Placida  
12 said, costs also thousands of dollars over the  
13 period of their lifetime. You got to replace the  
14 battery, the battery only on the Toyota Camry goes  
15 for about close to \$5,000. The Toyota Highlander  
16 is close to \$8,000. The inverter, the mechanical  
17 part that transfer every second from gasoline to  
18 electricity, that costs close to \$6,000 on the  
19 Toyota Camry, and on the Toyota Highlander, it  
20 costs to 12 to \$13,000 just that you need to  
21 replace.

22           So this is financial burden, it  
23 doesn't justify as far as the income for a cab  
24 driver. The income for a cab driver after all the  
25 expense, is not more than \$12 an hour. How can

1  
2 someone--if I didn't have credit cards, I would be  
3 completely out of business. And the mathematical  
4 issue of all these introduction of all these  
5 alternative fuel medallions doesn't add up to the  
6 income for a Yellow cab--for the regular taxi  
7 driver.

8           So if I didn't have that credit  
9 cards, you know, that credit cards [off mic] ahead  
10 of me, I would be completely out of business now.  
11 So you got to take this into your dearest decision  
12 to reverse that law as far as hybrid alternative  
13 fuel medallions. I should be able to as an  
14 independent owner after I suffered extreme  
15 hardship all these years to go and choose maybe to  
16 go into less headache of the car. You want to  
17 introduce electric vehicle? We don't know what's  
18 going to be ahead, what's lie ahead as far as  
19 financial burden and mechanical problem and  
20 enormous headaches and time lost and everything.

21           So, you know, as far as gasoline  
22 cars, all them are manufactured by the original  
23 companies and they've proven themself more or less  
24 so they're going to be less headache for the  
25 average cab drivers. I'm going every day to work,

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2 I'm not going over there every day to spend weeks  
3 upon weeks in mechanical shop, spend days upon  
4 days fixing the cars, knowing you fixing the car,  
5 you come back, you come back, oh, this component,  
6 this is no good, this is no good. And by the end,  
7 meantime, you know, if you're an owner/driver, you  
8 got to pay mortgage, as Priscilla says, you got  
9 all the other expenses, you know. You're supposed  
10 to go out to start the car to go work, not to go  
11 on an experimental, you know, journey because the  
12 TLC wants to introduce all these beautiful  
13 technology. I mean, if they want to do it, let  
14 them test it to begin with and, you know, let them  
15 see for themselves.

16 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Okay. Thank  
17 you. Thank you, sir.

18 JONATHAN JONOVICS: Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Introduce  
20 yourself, please.

21 CLIFF ADLER: Mr. Chairman, Cliff  
22 Adler, I'm an owner/driver and member of LOMTO,  
23 the League of Mutual Taxi Owners.

24 First of all, since the previous  
25 gentleman was talking about the hybrids and

1  
2 electric cars, I'd like to mention, I know the  
3 lady before spoke about how the Lexus is terrible,  
4 the Lexus hybrid is a terrible vehicle. I've had  
5 one for almost seven years, and I just had to  
6 replace the batteries, and I didn't do new ones, I  
7 didn't have to, the dealership changed used ones  
8 for me, and the total for the batteries and the  
9 labor came to something less than \$1,500, and I  
10 have 200 and, I think, 18,000 miles on the car, I  
11 think that's not bad so far. Okay? So I am  
12 absolutely thrilled with my vehicle.

13           People who have spoken earlier who  
14 have talked about having the opportunity to use  
15 different types of vehicles. You know, the TLC  
16 made rulings a long time ago about you need so  
17 much leg room, so much head room, so much knee  
18 room to have in the back. And they talk about, I  
19 believe it's with partitions since most cabs have  
20 a partition, I don't, they went against their own  
21 rulings to allow the Ford Escapes to go on the  
22 road with partitions because they demand that you  
23 put a partition in the Ford Escape, there's no leg  
24 room, there's no knee room, there's no foot room.  
25 People complain like crazy getting into a Ford

1  
2 Escape. So I don't understand how they make rules  
3 on one side and they turn around and break them  
4 themselves on another. This, I don't understand.

5 I know they went through a federal  
6 case where the federal government said the City  
7 cannot say that everyone has to have a hybrid or  
8 whatever, maybe 'cause that's what Mayor Bloomberg  
9 wanted to do. I like what he wanted to do, I  
10 didn't like the way he went about it, and  
11 consequently, of course, we lost out. I think if  
12 it was pushed to tell people for those who would  
13 like to get any alternative vehicles, especially  
14 owner/drivers or small fleets, if they think it's  
15 to their advantage, let them try it, as long as  
16 they have sufficient room for the passengers and  
17 other basic TLC requirements.

18 As far as the signage on the door  
19 goes, I think people know where I stand on that.  
20 Something nobody has mentioned that we actually do  
21 still have two taxi signs on the Yellow cabs. I  
22 don't know if you're aware of that.

23 And just in case you don't  
24 understand, Mr. Chairman, can you read that? It  
25 says taxi, okay. It's not very big and this is

1  
2 the same size as taxi written on the front license  
3 plate and the rear license plate. So that's all  
4 we're left with right now, okay? So I definitely  
5 am one of those people who agree we should go back  
6 to the signage before.

7           Concerning the monitors in the  
8 back, I've had--and then I'm not even going to go  
9 into what tourists and locals alike have  
10 complained about, not having the prices on the  
11 doors and all that recently, 'cause they really  
12 have. As far as the passenger TV screen goes, the  
13 advertisers want their time, they want to have the  
14 screens on, I understand that. The money doesn't  
15 go to us, we've never seen a penny of it. I'm not  
16 interested in the money, I'd rather not even have  
17 the screens, but we have the screens and,  
18 unfortunately, even though they have a button to  
19 press the screen off, there are people who get  
20 sick in the back of a cab or the back of a car who  
21 cannot watch TV in a car, they cannot videos or  
22 DVDs, they cannot read in a car 'cause they get  
23 physically sick. The people that tell me, can you  
24 turn that thing off, please, and I'm reaching  
25 around 'cause I have no partition, I'm reaching

1  
2 around like an idiot say, well there's a button  
3 down there near the corner somewhere, you know, to  
4 help them press a button to turn it off.

5 Otherwise, we listen to the same--and it's not  
6 news reports, trust me, it is a commercial  
7 certainly with the ones that we deal with, it is  
8 one repetitive commercial all day long. Okay?

9 That makes no sense, all right? Whether you've  
10 got ABC or NBC, I strongly urge the Council to ask  
11 the TLC to put in a button where they just have a  
12 flat screen and if somebody wants to add to see  
13 what their average price for this or the distance  
14 or where they are, whatever, you hit an on button  
15 and see it up there, very clearly marked. And  
16 when you're tired of it or if you're not  
17 interested anymore, you hit an off button. Very  
18 simply big enough letters marked and big enough  
19 buttons so that people can see on, off. But it  
20 shouldn't go on, you know, moving, visually and  
21 sound wise without the passengers turning it on  
22 because people could go crazy and then they turn  
23 around and they think sometimes I'm playing games  
24 with them, that a driver's not doing, you know,  
25 what they should do. Okay?

1  
2 It's been a long morning and I  
3 thank you for your attention. Thanks,  
4 commissioner, ladies and gentlemen.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I like that  
6 guy.

7 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.  
8 Boy, thank you so much, you're very nice. Sir,  
9 would you introduce yourself, please?

10 AARON TRUESELL: Yes, good morning,  
11 Chairman Vacca and Council Members. My name is  
12 Aaron Truesell and I've been driving a New York  
13 City medallion taxi for over 14 years. Thank you  
14 for your time.

15 New York City medallion taxis,  
16 first of all, I mean, I had a prepared testimony  
17 which been repeated by many, many people. I like  
18 to give credit to where it's due and that's credit  
19 to TLC for trying to make public aware of the fare  
20 structure and where they are within the interior  
21 of a taxicab, but I question their sincerity when  
22 they took it off the doors, the sign taxi and the  
23 fare structure, I seriously did.

24 New York City medallion taxis have  
25 had the rate structure posted on their doors and



1  
2 the word Taxi visible to the riding public for  
3 almost 100 years. And finally in 1967, the City  
4 ordered all licensed taxis to be painted yellow to  
5 make them even more recognizable, or should I dare  
6 say, more distinguishable from illegal taxis.

7 That's why I was surprised when Commissioner  
8 Yassky and all of a sudden decided that New  
9 Yorkers and the city's tourists no longer needed  
10 to be informed. He decided in effect that the  
11 riding public did not need to know--did not need  
12 to be reassured that they were getting into a  
13 licensed taxi with a regulated fare structure,  
14 that they did not need to know what that fare  
15 structure was before they got into a cab.

16 Back in 2006, a JFK flat rate was  
17 applied to return trips as well, and it was posted  
18 on taxi doors, along with the rest of the fare  
19 structure. Ever since thing, I've never had  
20 anyone ask me until recently how the meter works  
21 or how much the ride to JFK is. But now that's  
22 been happening quite frequently, ever since the  
23 TLC took the fare structure off the doors and I  
24 believe the majority of my passengers also wonder  
25 who was the word Taxi hurting. They have said to

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me, if it's a taxi, it should say so.

Clearly, to me, it would seem logical to reverse the TLC's recent decision and I urge you to consider the same logic as you vote. It's logical and it's the right thing to do. Our taxi doors should say it's a taxi, and our taxi doors should inform the riding public what our regulators allow us to charge them.

Thank you very much for your time.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Thank you.

Thank you all. I'd like to thank everyone for coming today, and I think our hearing was quite informative on many levels and I hope to be able to advance these bills in the coming months.

Without any further to-do, the time is now 20 to 1, I will leave the record open for ten minutes so that members who are not here who wish to vote on the Intro 490--

MALE VOICE: Five nine nine.

CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --599, got my numbers all mixed up, will be able to do so, and they'll be able to vote on 599. I will leave the record open until 10 to 1, or 12:50.

There being no other comments or

1  
2 testimony, this hearing is now adjourned, and  
3 we'll be officially adjourned within ten minutes.

4 [Gavel]

5 MALE VOICE: Go ahead.

6 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Yes, okay. I  
7 would now like to call upon Council Member Van  
8 Bramer to vote on Intro 5--

9 MALE VOICE: Nine nine.

10 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: --99.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: I vote  
12 aye.

13 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Please announce  
14 the roll.

15 LYLE FRANK: The final vote on  
16 Intro 599-A, 11 in favor, none opposed, no  
17 abstentions.

18 CHAIRPERSON VACCA: Now it is 10 to  
19 1, 12:50 and this hearing of the Transportation  
20 Committee is officially adjourned.

21 [Gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature *Tammy Wittman*

Date December 10, 2012