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THE COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

REPORT OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION
Robert Newman, Legislative Director

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Council Member James Vacca, Chair

November 26, 2012

PROPOSED INT. NO. 929-A:

By Council Members Vacca, Garodnick,
James, Koo, Rose, Halloran and Ulrich

TITLE:

To amend the administrative code of the city
of New York, in relation to posting
information on the exterior of vehicles for
hire.

ADMINISTRATIVE CODE:

Amends chapter 5 of title 19 of the
administrative code of the city of New York
by adding a new section 19-538.

INTRODUCTION

On November 26, 2012, the Committee on Transportation, chaired by Council Member James Vacca, will hold a hearing on Proposed Int. No. 929-A. This legislation would amend chapter 5 of title 19 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York (the Code) by adding a new section 19-538. This bill would require that vehicles authorized to accept street-hails be equipped with decals indicating rate of fare information as well as the word “TAXI”. This is the first hearing on this legislation. Expected to testify are representatives of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) as well as interested stakeholders and community leaders.

BACKGROUND

TLC is the main regulatory body of the for-hire car industry in New York City. TLC licenses and regulates 13,237 medallion taxicabs, 40,532 for-hire vehicles, 2,435 paratransit vehicles, 433 commuter vans, and 110,111 drivers.¹

On July 12, 2012, the TLC amended its rules enacting a taxicab rate of fare change and designating new procedures for the placement of required exterior markings on all taxis. This rule change took effect on September 4, 2012.² On July 20, 2012, the TLC issued an industry notice announcing the new taxicab rate of fare, which also specified that a new exterior taxicab decal would be placed on all taxicabs concurrently with the implementation of the new rates.³ The new decal uses a similar design scheme to the previous decal, with two noticeable exceptions: a bold yellow T in a black circle has replaced the word “TAXI” on the front doors and the detailed fare information panel has been removed from the rear doors in favor of an icon

¹ Mayor’s Management Report, September 2012, page 203.

² Amendments to subdivision (a) of section 58-32 of Title 35 of the Rules of the City of New York, found at http://www.nyc.gov/html/tlc/downloads/pdf/taxi_fare_rules_passed.pdf

³ http://www.nyc.gov/html/tlc/downloads/pdf/industry_notice_12_25.pdf

indicating simply “Metered Fare” and “Flat Fare JFK”.⁴ The TLC required that all vehicles have the new design in place by their next scheduled inspection on or after September 30, 2012, with a partial exception designed for retiring vehicles.⁵

The removal of rate information from the exterior of taxicabs raises potential consumer protection issues. Illegal overcharging of customers by taxi drivers is a persistent issue that the Bloomberg Administration and the City Council, including the Transportation Committee, have repeatedly taken measures to address. Specifically, the Council passed, and the Mayor signed, Int. 521/Local Law 35 of 2011 which increased penalties imposed on drivers found to be in violation of various regulations, including charging a fare above that set by the TLC, partly in response to reports of widespread overcharging of passengers.⁶ This bill is designed to guarantee passengers and potential passengers the opportunity to be informed of the rate of fare before choosing to enter a taxicab.

In the same vein, the potential for confusion about which vehicles are licensed medallion taxicabs authorized to pick up street hails is an issue which New York and many other cities recognize and attempt to address. For example, in Los Angeles, the riding public is told to look for the standard City seal with the word “TAXICAB” on it in order to identify authorized taxicab vehicles.⁷ Similarly, in London, taxis (also known as black cabs) are the only vehicles authorized for street hails and can be identified by the light on the front of the vehicle which displays the word “TAXI”.⁸ Under the TLC’s mandated new design, the word “taxi,” which is recognizable

⁴ <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/08/22/taxis-lose-their-axi/>

⁵ Owners could choose to replace just the fare decal, and leave the “TAXI” decal, for up to a year.
http://www.nyc.gov/html/tlc/downloads/pdf/industry_notice_12_30.pdf

⁶ Committee Report, New York City Council Committee on Transportation, 5/11/2011

⁷ http://www.ladot.lacity.org/tf_Taxicab_and_Vehicle_Regulations.htm

⁸ <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/gettingaround/findaride/default.aspx>

across cultures and languages⁹, is completely removed from the exterior of yellow medallion taxicabs.

ANALYSIS

Section one of Proposed Int. No. 929-A would amend Chapter 5 of title 19 of the Code by adding a new section 19-538. Subdivision a of new section 19-538 would mandate that the TLC require that one decal displaying the rate of fare be placed on each exterior rear door of any vehicle authorized to accept a street hail. Subdivision b of new section 19-538 would mandate that one decal containing the word “TAXI” be placed on each exterior front door of any taxicab.

Section two of Proposed Int. No. 929-A states that the local law would take effect immediately upon enactment.

⁹ <http://www.buala.org/en/ill-visit/safari-de-taxi>

Proposed Int. No. 929-A

By Council Members Vacca, Garodnick, James, Koo, Rose, Halloran and Ulrich

A LOCAL LAW

To amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to posting information on the exterior of vehicles for hire.

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 5 of title 19 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 19-538 to read as follows:

19-538. Posting of information on the exterior of vehicles for hire. a. The commission shall require that one decal displaying the rate of fare be placed on each exterior rear door of any vehicle authorized to accept a street hail.

b. The commission shall require that one decal containing the word "TAXI" be placed on each exterior front door of any taxicab.

§ 2. This local law shall take effect immediately.