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Press Conference: Eliminate the Suicide Surcharge

Where: NYC Hall

When: December, 5, 2018

Time: Noon

On December 5, 2018, taxi medallion owners and drivers will be holding a press conference on the coming January 1st implementation of the state's \$2.50/ride congestion surcharge. The owners and drivers will be calling for a delay on any implementation until all sectors of the industry-especially including FHV's like Uber and Lyft-are connected electronically to an independent monitor just as the TPEP system connects all taxis. https://nypost.com/2018/11/28/cabbies-warn-uber-and-lyft-will-try-to-skimp-on-their-share-of-congestion-pricing/?utm_campaign=iosapp&utm_source=mail_app; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/drivers-decry-nyc-congestion-fee-on-cabs-1543450865>

A delay, however, would only be a temporary relief from the suicide epidemic that has hit taxi drivers and medallion owners: a real policy shift is what is essential. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/02/nyregion/taxi-drivers-suicide-nyc.html>)

What the industry really needs is a congestion plan that properly exempts taxis, and charges for-hire vehicles in the CBD for "trawling," a term that traffic expert Charles Komanoff has put forward as a more equitable and financially more lucrative approach since taxis have already paid the MTA close to \$1 billion; and have paid substantially more for the medallion franchise. (<https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2018/10/18/leave-it-to-lyft-trust-uber-but-whos-gonna-watch-the-fhv-surcharges/>)

Anyone who is concerned with the suicide epidemic knows that the current congestion surcharge will only lead to more deaths. As medallion owner Carolyn Protz points out:

“The only real solution is radically reducing the number of FHV’s in the Central Business District. Please, no more hearts and prayers-and no more insult to injury by claiming that what medallion owners really need is mental health counseling.

When we had chaos on election day, calls for a new election commissioner were heard loud and clear; yet the death of eight taxi drivers and medallion owners is not met with any calls for the removal of the person in charge of running an industry that is in chaos.”

The press conference will also protest the “phantom pool” loophole that allows Uber and Lyft to claim any ride can be a pool ride (where the passenger only pays .75/ride) if a passenger simply requests such a ride and the car only carries that passenger.

Connecting the Ubers to an independent monitor will enable the City and State to track their vehicles movement and allow the TLC to determine how best to reduce their numbers to reduce congestion and promote driver and medallion owner equity. In addition, computer connections will also promote passenger safety since it will prevent the Ubers from withholding driver assault information from the NYPD-as Uber did most recently in a horrible gay bashing incident.

[\(https://nypost.com/2018/11/28/uber-driver-allegedly-dragged-gay-man-after-hurling-homophobic-slurs/\)](https://nypost.com/2018/11/28/uber-driver-allegedly-dragged-gay-man-after-hurling-homophobic-slurs/)

As taxi medallion owner spokesperson, Dr. Richard Lipsky, points out:

“The congestion surcharge and the lack of equitable oversight will deal a further death blow to medallion owners-and the continued jeopardy of passenger safety. We need prompt emergency action that demonstrates that elected officials and regulators truly understand the root causes of the current tragic chaos.”

Medallion owners at the press conference will also be calling on the council and/or the TLC to set Uber fares at the same rates as taxis in order to prevent the gaming of the system by the Ubers-as TLC Chair Meera Joshi has pointed out.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-taxi-chief-congestion-fee-will-hurt-1542676567>

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