

December, 2023

How to Create a Run on Plates 101

In last month's column, I wrote that TLC wasn't expecting a flood of EV license applications after lifting the pause for EVs on October 18. This is because we had been messaging for weeks that there was no cutoff date; folks could take their time and make a considered decision before buying EVs. This strategy avoided creating scarcity conditions that made people feel like it was now or never if they wanted a TLC plate. It also gave TLC time to assess the rate of new vehicles that would be hitting the streets. This strategy was working great...until November 8.

On that day, NYTWA got a court order forcing TLC to stop accepting EV applications in four days. Literally overnight, license applications skyrocketed from 100-150 applications a day to 2,000, as drivers—*yes, more than 90% of applicants were drivers, not companies*—now felt forced to apply immediately or lose the opportunity to save themselves thousands of dollars in leasing and fuel costs. Many of these drivers had been stuck in predatory leases. The end result, which we are still tabulating, was around 10,000 applications, as drivers swarmed Tesla dealerships in order to obtain VINs. Ironically, NYTWA had asked for the court order in the first place because, they claimed, they wanted to *prevent* a flood of new vehicles. In a self-fulfilling prophecy worthy of Sophocles, by doing so they created one.

We will be processing all these applications and scheduling inspections for months to come. As these new vehicles gradually hit the road, we'll be doing everything we can to help fast-track more Level 3 chargers so that drivers can charge. This includes keeping the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) grants moving, helping private industry identify potential charging sites in areas frequented by TLC drivers, and working to keep drivers informed of new charging opportunities.

This journey began with a mad dash for licenses that was completely avoidable, and I apologize if you were one of those who suddenly felt forced to buy, or if you now no longer have that choice due to NYTWA's lawsuit. Despite this chaotic start, at the other end of this trip is a greener, more inclusive city with healthier air, a cleaner environment, and more economic opportunities for working-class New Yorkers.

See you out there,

David Do
Commissioner, NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission

