

September 2026 Commissioner's Corner

Remembering The Contributions of TLC Drivers After 9/11

As we mark the 25th anniversary of the September 11 attacks on our city, it's worth remembering a little-known and largely unreported event that took place in the days immediately afterwards, as our city was still reeling from unimaginable loss: Dozens of drivers began contacting TLC, asking what they could do to help the city during this terrible time.

In response to the flood of inquiries, TLC launched "Operation Free Transportation" — an initiative that connected TLC drivers with stricken families, emergency workers, and blood donors to provide free rides as needed. Working closely with multiple city agencies and industry leaders, the city set up temporary taxi stands at various locations, and gave taxis, liveries, black cars, commuter vans, and paratransit vehicles special access to restricted parts of lower Manhattan near Ground Zero.

In all, more than 1,000 drivers volunteered their time, providing over 5,000 trips to those in need and taking an active part in New York City's recovery. These contributions become especially poignant when you consider that many TLC drivers also experienced unfounded hate at the time due to their appearance, religion, or nation of origin—and still they volunteered.

After the operation wound down, TLC gave the participating drivers a certificate, designed a commemorative medallion, held a ceremony, and then Operation Free Transportation settled into the footnotes of history. But it's a history we should all remember and recognize, and testimony to the character of so many of our drivers and the important connectivity they provide to our city, especially in the worst of times. To all the Operation Free Transportation drivers who are still with us, and those who've passed on, *thank you*.

In more recent news, we held a Public Hearing on August 13 about proposed rules intended to eliminate several unnecessary fees and fines drivers face, as well as enable Medallion Relief Program (MRP) members to transfer medallions to family members and still have them covered under MRP. The feedback we received at this hearing was invaluable. Many drivers shared personal, emotional experiences, which is why there is no substitute for public in-person hearings. Taking time out of the day to give public testimony is time that drivers aren't doing trips and making money, and I am grateful to all who attended and made their voices heard.

I know there is more work to do, and rest assured we are just getting started.

Midori Valdivia

Commissioner and Chair

Taxi and Limousine Commission