

Cab Gab
by Abe Mittleman

All Cars Have Safe Miles.

Following is a comment by TLC Chairman Mathew Daus in reference to a lawsuit brought by the MTBOT challenging a TLC regulation requiring vehicles bought for medallion taxicabs to be able to get a minimum of 25 miles per gallon. The hybrid cars that are available are the only ones that are capable for this.

“Considering the fact that hybrid taxicabs have logged over 70 million miles in New York City, their safety record is actually quite impressive”.....

This is an interesting statement. It would have one to believe that the vehicles in question are of a high safety standard. I beg to differ. I don't think it is the number of safe miles a vehicle has that makes it safe. Safe miles are mainly determined by the safe drivers of these vehicles. All vehicles will have many safe miles. More important is the safety of the passengers in a vehicle when the vehicle has an accident. All vehicles will sooner or later have an accident. The question is how well does the vehicle protect the passengers when one occurs?

And that is what was in question in this argument over the Hybrid Vehicles. Several points were made by the MTBOT concerning the inadequate ability of the hybrid vehicles to be safe. The following was reported in various news outlets:

A new report by a noted automotive engineer exposes several safety hazards of hybrid taxis in New York City, including rollovers as well as other safety-related concerns. The new report, by C. Bruce Gambardella, who released a groundbreaking report on hybrid taxi safety last month, focuses on a collision and rollover of a 2008 Ford Escape Hybrid that occurred in Queens, New York on September 15th, 2008 and ended with a driver hospitalized for multiple injuries and a total loss of the taxi.

Another Ford Escape Hybrid taxi rollover occurred in Manhattan on September 19th, 2008 and also resulted in a total loss of the vehicle. The rollovers come on the heels of several accidents involving Ford Escape Hybrid taxis, including a severe accident on 10th Avenue in Manhattan on August 30th, 2008 which resulted in a passenger being hospitalized and a total loss of the vehicle as well as November 2007 accident, where the L-shaped partition in the Ford Escape Hybrid

taxi was completely dislodged and ended up flush against the rear seat, where a passenger's legs could have been. The latter was comprehensively studied in Mr. Gambardella's September 2008 report on hybrid taxi safety, which was sent to the Taxi and Limousine Commission.

The point here is that these problems did not exist with the safer more proven vehicles that currently and previously have been used as NYC taxi cabs. In the same type of accidents involving Crown Victoria's it is argued that these types of accidents results in much safer conclusions.

Personally, I have had two Crown Victorias since the year 2000. Aside from the proven safety these vehicles have in accidents, I can personally report that the maintenance costs and overall condition and handling of these vehicles is outstanding. I have never had a better vehicle than a Crown Vitoria for a taxicab.

Naturally, I believe that it would be to everyone's advantage if there can be a vehicle that can give both great fuel milage and the same or greater efficiency of a Crown Victoria. I hope a car can be designed that will satisfy both needs.

But one thing to keep in mind is that all Crown Victorias 2006 and newer have flex fuel engines. This means that it can run on any combination of ethanol and or gasoline. I'm still waiting for someone to introduce our industry to a supply of this fuel so we can at least have an alternative while cars are being designed to meet all our needs of fuel efficiency and safety. There is a need for fuel efficiency. But, there is no reason to rush into vehicles that ultimately will prove detrimental to the cause we wish to achieve.

Gas Price

What's going on with the price of gas? As I'm writing this the price is almost half of what it was this past summer. I just read in the NY Daily News that regular has fallen below \$2 a gallon in New Jersey. I think it's been about 5 years since the price was this low.

I have to believe that the powers at the TLC that denied us a gas surcharge time and time again are now patting themselves on the back with joy for being so smart. But, who could have known that when all the so called experts were saying that \$3 a gallon or less gasoline would never be seen again that they would turn out to be wrong.

It's being said the reason for this plunge is that the demand for gas that is more expensive just isn't there. Many people just stopped buying gasoline for \$4. and more a gallon. I think the price is being manipulated. Knowing that high priced gas brings on urgency for alternatives the gasoline producers (OPEC) have dropped the price to a very small profit margin in hopes that we will abandon the search for alternatives. This has worked before.

But, I don't think it will work this time. We have seen the ugly face of fossil fuels and the problems it causes both financially and environmentally. This time we will not abandon more efficient ways of creating energy. They can drop the price as far as they want. It will not stop us this time.