

Cab Gab  
by Abe Mittleman

### **Flushing Voucher Program A Major Success:**

I am very happy to report that (based on the numbers for the first three weeks) the Flushing Voucher Program is a smashing success. Here are the numbers:

Week beginning Monday Oct 31 (one week BEFORE the voucher program began): 240 trips

Week beginning November 7 (first week of voucher program): 365 trips; 204 vouchers issued; 163 vouchers turned in at both airports (85 at LGA, 78 at JFK)

Week beginning November 14: 462 trips; 387 vouchers issued; 285 vouchers turned in at both airports (144 at LGA, 141 at JFK)

Week beginning November 21: 474 trips; 400 vouchers issued; 357 vouchers turned in at both airports (130 at LGA, 227 at JFK)

Total 11/7 – 11/26: 1,301 trips; 991 vouchers issued; 805 vouchers turned in at both airports (359 at LGA and 446 at JFK); 186 vouchers unused

### **Are Shorty Tickets In Flushing Fair?**

During my Inquiring Photographer sessions last month, I met a driver who thought that that giving shorty tickets to drivers who pick up fares at the Main Street Flushing stand was not fair to drivers at the airport. I strongly disagree. Here is why...

People in Queens desparately want medallion taxi service. Why are hundreds of taxis sitting for hours at the airports wasting time while illegal liveries are infesting the streets and stealing fares that should be ours? We can work Queens and still service the airports. The shorty program in Queens is designed to get our taxis out of the airports and onto the streets where they will be picking up fares and making money. I hope this program is just the beginning of a development that will spread through Queens to many other taxi stands and eventually spread into Brooklyn where the livery infestation is also rampant.

But here is a question to ponder: How did gypsies take over Queens in the first place? Why do hundreds of yellow taxis rot at the airports while livery cars take all the street hail business that by law should be ours? I think a big part of the problem is that the drivers don't know their way around Queens well enough to feel comfortable working the streets. Most of the drivers are from foreign countries and find the streets a bit confusing. Perhaps these drivers need some training. Perhaps it would be a good idea to require these drivers to take some classes on the geography of Queens and Brooklyn. This would go a long way in benefiting the public and returning the business to the medallion industry.

Another reason may be that drivers think it is worthwhile to sit at the airports for a

couple of hours to get a fare for \$45. This could not be further from the truth! They can make \$25-\$35 an hour on the streets of Queens and still go to the airports and get a fare. If more cabs are on the streets then the wait at the airport would be minimal. All this can be done with a steady stream of taxis at both airports servicing the passengers there with little wait for either the passengers or the taxi drivers.

### **Airport Hustlers**

As many readers here may know, aside from writing this column I also go to La Guardia Airport each month to do the "Inquiring Photographer" for our newspaper. Drivers often offer me suggestions for columns. Following is a subject that I was asked to write about.

I suspect that the following occurs in more places than the Delta terminal at La Guardia where I have personally witnessed this many times:

Many limousine drivers hold up signs to solicit unsuspecting passengers for rides to the city at exorbitant rates compared to our yellow cab rates. Even if they were charging the same as a yellow taxi, the practice is illegal and should not be tolerated.

What's really amazing is that they are doing this in full view of the authorities with no enforcement officers stopping them. They are stealing business that belongs to us and getting away with it. And what's even more amazing is they are doing this in a place where security and enforcement should be at it's highest level. Shame on those who allow this to happen!

### **They Have Nerve**

It's mind boggling sometimes. On Nov 16 The TLC issued the following industry notice:

***TLC REMINDS MEDALLION OWNERS THAT COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLE TAX STAMPS MUST BE DISPLAYED BY DECEMBER 1***

*The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) reminds all medallion owners that Commercial Motor Vehicle Tax (CMVT) payments take between **three and four weeks to process**. Bills for the period December 1, 2005 through May 31, 2006 were mailed by the New York City Department of Finance (DOF), to which the payments are due, on October 27, 2005. While payment is technically due no later than December 1, 2005, payment on that date will not result in your having a valid sticker in time to comply with TLC regulations, requiring that a valid CMVT stamp be displayed by December 1, 2005.*

***Display of a receipt for payment does not represent compliance.***

*In order to ensure on-time delivery of stamps, and guarantee compliance with TLC regulations, medallion owners are strongly urged to remit payment as soon*

*as possible.*

How do they expect us to comply? I can surely report that notices for payment were not received until the second week in November. As of December 7, I have not received my sticker (after promptly mailing in my payment). My bank records confirm my check was paid on Nov 14. My sources inform me that they do not know of any stickers being issued to this date. Where do they get the nerve? Who's running this ship?

As I look around at taxis on the street I see that almost all of them have the paid receipt displayed. This is precisely what the notice warns against. I wonder how many summonses are being written?

### **Sunday Parking**

I'm outraged! I drive every Sunday. Now that the City has made the metered parking spots free again I can't find a place to park and take a break! All the spaces are being hogged by cars that are parked for the day and will not move. What's even worse is that we are losing places where we can park and take breaks. The Green Kitchen Restaurant on 77th and 1st Ave (where for years I could either park at the taxi relief stand or a close by meter if the two taxi spaces were filled) is now closed indefinitely for renovations. For years I've used the facilities at this location with no objection from the owners of the restaurant. But what good is a taxi relief stand if there is nowhere to relieve yourself? On 16th Street and Union Square West there are two relief stands on the south and north side of 16th Street. There is room for many taxis at these two stands. A few restaurants there will not object to us using the facilities. However, because parking has become so scarce, unauthorized private vehicles park illegally in all the available taxi relief spaces. They do this with impunity. They are blatantly laughing in our faces. I would love to see these cars towed. That would teach them!

We lost the Munson Diner. We lost the gas station on 59th and 11th. We lost the gas station on Houston and Lafayette. We have lost other places. Now we have lost places to park. With accessible parking we could at least try to find other places that will allow us to use the facilities. Sometimes I wonder how some other taxi drivers are dealing with this problem. If you have any ideas or comments on this you can email me at [minifleetnyc@aol.com](mailto:minifleetnyc@aol.com). I would be very interested in your suggestions.

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