

Cab Gab

**Enforcement Personnel-Yes,
There Are Enough**

Taxi drivers have been crying to the TLC for the longest time that doormen and Livery taxis have been illegally conspiring with each other to cheat them out of the good fares that originate at the hotels. The TLC does not deny that this illegal practice takes place. But they are excusing themselves from taking any punitive action by saying: “There Are Not Enough Enforcement Personnel.”

I’m sick of hearing this meaningless excuse. What good is a license if there are no teeth to enforce the privileges of that license? With “Congestion Pricing” dead, now is the perfect time for the Mayor and his administration to prove that they can still reduce traffic with the laws that are already on the books.

Elsewhere in this newspaper is an article referring to Bill # A8868 that is before the New York State Assembly. This bill should be amended to

include all vehicles that illegally solicit transportation in the City of New York. We in the taxi industry know that hundreds of vehicles, illegally soliciting passengers for hire clog our streets every day. Let’s start by getting rid of these parasites.

Legally licensed Medallion Taxi drivers have been crying out for years that something should be done about these vehicles that steal their passengers at all the hotels, the Javits Center, and in many cases right in front of their noses on the city streets. But all we ever hear from this administration is “There Are Not Enough Enforcement Personnel.” This is a poor lame excuse.

The hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines and penalties enforcement would bring would be enough to hire enough enforcement personnel to get the job done! Also, it should be pointed out that there was more than enough enforcement personnel for operation “Street Hail”, an operation directed specifically at medallion taxi drivers. There is more than enough

enforcement personnel for other nit pick, so called violations by medallion taxi drivers. They have no problem finding enough enforcement personnel these trivial matters. The TLC's priorities are just a little bit misdirected. These enforcement personnel should be targeting the cars illegally taking business away from taxi drivers. The drivers of these vehicles are ripping off the public, endangering the public and contributing to traffic congestion.

The \$1. Surcharge.

Well, what do you know? Congestion pricing is dead. But we learned a little lesson here. That lesson is that they were more than willing to add a \$1. surcharge to the taxi fare for their own selfish reasons. They were more than willing to take this \$1. and give it to Mass Transit. Imagine that! They wanted to take this \$1. that we so desperately need and use it for their own selfish reasons. Since when does one business make money for another?

Ok, so now we know that this \$1 surcharge is doable. Well, has it occurred to them that

the Price of gas is now close to \$3.50 a gallon and getting higher every day? We need this dollar for ourselves. We should demand that this \$1. be added to the taxi fare at once. This has been done in other cities, including our sister to the south, Philadelphia! Let's keep our taxis rolling! Let's get rid of the vehicles that illegally steal from us. With our full fleet on the road, with additional money to encourage drivers to work we can get the job done!

Service Enhancements

Following are my personal opinions and not that of the Mini-Fleet Association:

I have now had the "Service Enhancements" in my taxi for more than two months. I must admit that it's not the monster that I thought it would be. There are some things that I like about it. On the other hand it's not the wonderful innovation that the TLC played it up to be.

Let me start by saying that I like being able to log onto my computer and see where my

taxi is at any given time. Although this is what many have referred to as spying, I don't really see it that way nor do I think this is something that is at all necessary. However, this power does have some merit. I like that I can check to see that my driver made it home safely by seeing that the car is in its proper space when his shift is ended. I also can think of times in the past that I could have used this power. Especially when I once or twice had my taxi stolen, it would have saved me a lot of time, money and aggravation.

As for the credit card transactions, I find it near impossible, despite having asked for help from both the merchant banks and my service provider, to keep track of each individual transaction from when it was charged to when it was paid. Despite this I can affirm that in the end all the money due is being deposited into my merchant bank account. I wish somehow they could simplify this process so that I have a way to easily see when a particular transaction is paid.

That being said, I personally have not lost any money due to Credit cards not being accepted or the signal being lost. I had previously heard drivers complain that this was a problem. They may have been truthful but I can't say that this has happened to me.

Now for the negatives: There is no arguing that any unnecessary expense is counterproductive in our business. The hype that was presented to us about larger tips for credit card service in my opinion have not materialized. Therefore the 5% credit card fees that drivers are being forced to pay is unfair. If anything drivers should be paid extra for the service.

The passenger screen is, as I predicted it would be, annoying. Not only this, but I find that the passengers don't really know how to turn it off. In a recent article in the Daily News the following was written:

Well, the public has spoken and the verdict is in: Taxi TV is just awful, representing the latest in a series of flea-bag

marketing platforms the city's Taxi and Limousine Commission has attempted to foist upon paying customers over the years under the guise of "interactive information and entertainment."

Information? That's reading a book or newspaper.

Entertainment? That's choosing to turn on the TV or go to a concert. No, this is captive, cacophonous commercialism that robs drivers and passengers alike of one of our last remaining sanctuaries of peace and quiet in this city.

I suspect that sooner or later this screen will have to go. Well, at least the part that is displaying the advertising and news content. The screens are fine for the Credit Card transactions. They should be left just for that there is no other way.

The TLC said that we would have more business and that credit card users would tip more. Well from my stand point I don't think this is the case. I think I'm making just about the same as before and I don't think that credit card uses are tipping any higher

than they would have if they used cash.

