

Cab Gab
by Abe Mittleman

Gas Crisis

Everyone wants to know what to do about the rising price of gasoline. Many feel we need a surcharge to compensate for the rising costs. I wouldn't disagree with that. Certainly we can't continue to pay for whatever the gas price is and still make a living. As the price of gas goes up all consumer prices go up with it. That is because others aren't restricted. Others charge to compensate for the rising cost. We are at the mercy of the TLC.

The TLC's solution is for us to buy hybrid vehicles. But we all know that is not a realistic solution. The cost of the vehicles and the high cost of maintenance offsets any savings in gas.

As the debate rages over what to do about the rising price of gasoline perhaps there is a solution that has not yet become apparent. According to a CBS Sixty Minute report that was broadcast on May 7 a realistic alternative could very well be replacing gasoline with Ethanol

Ethanol is a clean burning non polluting fuel that is produced from products that grow naturally. According to the report Brazil has already made the switch using Sugar Cane. Sugar Cane is in abundance in that country. In the United States corn is the product that is in abundance. There is enough corn to fill the need. However there are not yet enough facilities to produce the amount of ethanol that we will need. But that will eventually be remedied as more production facilities are built. The report also claims that any vehicle on the road today is capable of being converted to use a blend of ethanol that is know as E85. That would be 85% ethanol and 15% unleaded gasoline.

Following are some facts about ethanol

Ethanol is "ethyl alcohol," 200-proof grain alcohol. An ethanol plant produces fuel-grade ethanol, and that ethanol is then blended in a percentage with gasoline to make a finished motor fuel.

Terminology is important because the term "ethanol" means different things to

different people:

- “Ethanol” is the 100% pure ethanol coming from the production facility.
- Sometimes people say “ethanol” and mean the blend of 10% ethanol / 90% gasoline called E10.
- Sometimes people say “ethanol” and mean the blend of 85% ethanol / 15% gasoline called E85.

Different definitions of “ethanol” can lead to confusion, such as the misunderstandings that “a special vehicle is required to run on ethanol” or that “ethanol is only available at a small portion of the nation’s gas stations.” In these cases, people say “ethanol” but actually mean the alternative fuel E85.

All vehicles are “ethanol-capable” and can use a blend of up to 10% ethanol. This “E10” is a blend of 10% ethanol / 90% unleaded gasoline and is the most common way ethanol is sold to motorists. Since the 1980s, all automakers have covered the use of up to 10% ethanol under warranty, and no engine modifications are necessary to use E10. E10 is a cleaner burning fuel than straight gasoline. E85 is not gasoline, but rather an alternative fuel consisting of 85% ethanol / 15% unleaded gasoline for use in Flexible Fuel Vehicles (FFVs). These vehicles are truly “flexible” in that their owners have a choice whether to use E85, any blend of ethanol up to that 85% level, or straight unleaded gasoline. On some models this comes as an option, and on some it is a standard feature.

Although the Ford Crown Victoria is capable of running on E85, the police and taxi models that we use it is not covered by warrantee for this use. However conversion is possible and it may be possible to use a 30% blend without any conversion. Vehicle manufacturers are making more models every year that can run on E85.

So, I would suggest to the TLC that they stop trying to shove things like Global Positioning Systems and all of the useless things that go with it, down our throat to satisfy their own selfish interests and start helping us to keep this business profitable in distressful times like we have now. We can’t afford the gas we buy. What makes them think we can afford things like, GPS, that will cost several thousand dollars. Many of us don’t have the extra resources to buy this useless equipment and will have to take loans to do so. That will drive the cost up even higher. Be constructive and give us a real solution to the rising cost of fuel. If you can’t do that then let us pass the cost along to the consumer, like everyone else.

We Are the Best Drivers

Well what do you know? We hate to say we told you so. But, it has been reported in the news

that New Yorkers are much less likely to be hurt in a cab or a livery car than riding in a private vehicle. And wouldn't you know that this is explained in that we are becoming more experienced. More drivers are sticking with the job. The driver turnover isn't as great as it has been in the past. The longer a driver stays in this business the better he or she gets.

I like to think of myself as one of the better drivers. I've been driving for 36 years. But I wasn't always as good as I am now. I'm sure it is my experience that has made me the driver that I am. I can honestly say that in all the time I have been driving no one has ever been hurt in a taxi I was driving. But I have had my share of fender benders. None of us are perfect.

If experience is a teacher, then one accident I had 35 years ago has taught me plenty. We all know this turn. When we come down Broadway traveling south to the intersection on 64th Street, there is a left turn arrow. When the arrow turns to green a left turn can be made. But do we look always to see if the traffic traveling north has stopped. Well one day in 1971 I didn't. I was hit in the side by a north bound motorist. I was very lucky that neither I nor my passenger was hurt. But, to this day every time I make that turn or others like it I remember what happened.

This is not to suggest that we must get into accidents to become better drivers. But certainly the more we see, and the more we realize the accidents that could have happened but didn't the more aware we become. This awareness is something that you can only get from being in the field. But, to some of the drivers who haven't gotten it yet I would say "Slow Down." There is never a reason to hurry. Let's not do anything to disprove this finding.

City Council to Legislate Pedicabs.

It is now being reported that the City Council along with the Department of Consumer Affairs will amend local law for Pedicabs. We can only hope they do what is best for everyone.

Considering the danger and unprofessional manner in which these vehicles are operated it would not be bad idea to ban them all together. But that probably wont be the out come. It is more likely they will be licensed and required to have the proper insurance coverage.

Well, that may not be too bad. We all know how dangerously pedicabs are operated. But will the police write summonses to these drivers who don't know the meaning of a red light or a one way street sign? Will insurance companies want to take a risk on a business that is so dangerous? If the law requires them to have insurance and the insurance companies will not cover them for a reasonable rate if at all then this could be the beginning of the end for them.

I hope I'm not dreaming.

