

Cab Gab
by Abe Mittleman

It's funny, there is a saying that what can go wrong will go wrong. That may or may not always be true. But, one of the fears the industry had when it was mandated that more medallions be issued was that it wouldn't stop at the 1300 that were approved by the state legislature. They said no. We had our doubts.

So now the following report was issued on May 23:
Following this year's medallion sale, the City Council and the Administration will work with members of the State Assembly and State Senate to fast track the sale of an additional 50 wheelchair accessible taxi medallions, and will get those vehicles on the streets in the coming months.

Wait! Let me get this straight. There are not enough wheel chair accessible taxis. Therefore they will "Fast Track" approval to sell additional medallions. We have enough taxis. We do not need anymore. It appears that the route that is being taken will only lead to more of the same. If they want 12,000 vehicles that are wheelchair accessible they may issue 12,000 additional medallions before this is over. This can't happen!

What's wrong with giving some incentives to current medallion owners? Perhaps they can be persuaded to buy vehicles that are wheelchair accessible. I'm sure an incentive program could be worked out. Perhaps if the TLC waived some licensing fees and established a surcharge to cover additional costs taxi owners may be motivated to buy accessible vehicles. There are additional costs, the vehicle for one, the extra time it takes to load and unload the wheelchairs, the maintenance of the apparatus that lifts the chairs. All this costs extra money. Let's be realistic. We may be a public service. What we shouldn't be is a public charity. Taxi owners and drivers need to earn a living. When are they going to stop taking advantage of us at every turn? When do we see some benefits for our efforts? .

Perhaps they can set up a radio network for medallion wheelchair taxis. Without one it won't work. How are the wheelchair people going to get a wheelchair accessible taxi when these taxis are busy with other fares? Most people are lucky to get the first taxi that will stop when it's busy. How in the world are they going to just pick out a wheel chair taxi on a busy street at a busy time? This will never work! We all know it's survival of the fittest out there. How are people with wheelchairs going to take taxis away from others who are quicker and more

diligent? Wheelchair people need priority status. Sure, we can have as many wheelchair accessible vehicles as what is needed. But, we need a call in service for these people. It will never work without one.

What about radio taxis? Here again is a perfect example of how crooked things are. Black Car and Livery Services are the only ones allowed to have radios. Yet the responsibility of wheelchair customers isn't being given to them. If they cannot pick up this burden then what good are they? If more medallions have to be issued to satisfy this need then why aren't these illegal taxis eliminated. This is an outrage. Either give the burden to the car services or get rid of them and let any additional medallions do the job with radios!

Here is another aspect: What about the people in the outer boroughs who need wheelchair taxis? What should they do? Should they roll their wheelchairs over the 59th st bridge to see if they can catch one of the new medallion wheelchair taxis that are busy in Manhattan with all the non wheelchair customers? Supposedly the radio taxis in the outer boroughs are responsible for doing radio calls for all the customers that need door to door service. Well, don't they think that if this is really a concern that perhaps there should be a contingency of radio taxis available for this?

When do we get a break? When do they make the playing field fair? It is reported that there is a great deal of potential business for taxis who can handle wheelchair customers. If this is true then it seems to me they could create a base of as many medallion taxis that are needed in all five boroughs that would be exclusively used for this purpose and dispatched by radio. Now, did they need me to tell them this?

Enforcement?

How hard should I laugh? I just finished watching a video on the TLC website. In this video Chairman Daus is addressing an audience of potential medallion buyers at the upcoming auction. He talks of the exclusive right medallion taxis have to all the street hails in The City of New York. About this he is 100% correct. He also talks about the enforcement of these rights that the TLC has initiated, "Operation Street Hail". I'm laughing on the outside crying on the inside. Enforcement!

Where? He talks about how this affects the value of the asset. The asset being the medallions he is trying to sell.

Has Mr. Daus been to the Delta terminal at La Guardia lately? If he has he is wearing blinders. I was there the other day. All he has to do is walk in the door and he will see as I did one or two dozen hustlers standing with their place cards as if they are waiting for prearranged calls. This is the reason that they are permitted to stand there. However, it is a charade. They have no prearranged calls! They are hustling passengers as they walk off the planes! I would also add that this is going on in plain sight while a hundred or more medallion taxis are waiting just outside in the holding lot.

I personally witnessed this happen. A hustler walked over to two women who were trying to get information where they could get the shuttle that their midtown hotel supplies. The hustler offered these two women a ride to their hotel for a mere \$40. for each passenger. They were about to go. I couldn't believe my eyes. I walked over to them and asked if they had called this man. They said no! "We were just asking where we could find our hotel shuttle." I told them how much a yellow taxi was and that the man was a hustler. I directed them to the taxi dispatcher just outside the door. I told them to ask him about the hotel shuttle and if they wanted they could take a yellow taxi for a lot less than the \$80. the illegal hustler wanted.

I'm outraged! How can they let this happen day after day after day? How can they let this happen in plain sight! How can Matthew Daus talk to a group of potential medallion buyers and tell them of the enforcement against unauthorized, illegal activity?

I would also like to ask: When was the last time Mr. Daus hailed a taxi on Northern Blvd in Queens? When was the last time he got off the #7 train in Flushing when the dispatcher wasn't there and walked to the taxi stand to get a taxi? When was the last time he went to one of the midtown hotels and asked the doorman if he could get him a taxi to go to the airport? Medallion drivers have practically given up. The doormen are getting paid bribes by the black cars and liveries for these fares. Where is the enforcement? These people should be prosecuted!

Ask any medallion driver, they will confirm these facts. We know the score. Does he? I'm sure he does. My question is when are the enforcement powers going to

get real and do what is really needed. When they do, then talk to us about enforcement!

It Had To Come From Above

It never ceases to amaze me. Every time you go for inspection how they can come up with something you never imagined to fail your taxi. .

How many Ford Crown Victorias are there with the logo of the dealer that sold it pasted to the trunk in a nonintrusive way? On the last Ford Crown Victoria that I had on the road for the full five years there never was a problem The dealer sticker was allowed. This sticker was on throughout the entire five years the vehicle was a taxi. This vehicle went to 15 inspections. The Vehicle passed inspection every time with the logo sticker. In January I hacked up a new Crown Victoria. There was no objection to the Logo sticker on the rear of the car.

I just went for inspection. On the inspection sheet the following item appeared on the visuals section: "Unauthorized Decal on Exterior Of Vehicle". The only decal on the entire vehicle was the dealer logo. Did I miss something? Did they just pass a rule prohibiting this decal? I don't think so.

Actually, I think this rule has always been there. It just wasn't enforced. But now they decided to enforce it. Why now? Here's my guess: I think that the powers in City Hall want to discourage the buying of vehicles that run on Gasoline only. They want to promote buying unproven Hybrid vehicles. I wonder how many dealer decals are failing on those cars? Don't tell anyone but as soon as I pass inspection I'm putting the decal back on!