

Cab Gab
by Abe Mittleman

Outer Borough Taxi Stands

It hasn't passed yet. But, it has been reported that there is a move in City hall to create two taxi stands with dispatchers, similar to the one at Main street in Flushing, in each borough including upper Manhattan. I think this is very good news.

We all know how much taxi business there is in The City of New York. This street hail business belongs to us. But much of the street hail business outside the central Manhattan business district goes to illegal vehicles every hour of every day of the week. So, is City Hall finally bringing us a plan that will put this business in the back seats of medallion taxis, where it belongs?

Lets. Face it. The city sold more medallions. This certainly should enable the medallion industry to service more passengers. But I have said many times before that unless the city helps enforce the rules and cleans up territory that is infested with illegal vehicles it is difficult for us to service these locations. The illegal competition outnumber us. And to make matters even worse, the public is brainwashed by the drivers of these illegal cars. They are repeatedly told by these drivers that it is ok for them to hail them on the street. This legislation introduced by Councilman John Liu of Queens to create taxi stands in all the boroughs should be a good initiative in correcting this situation.

So where should they put these taxi stands? I would like to make some suggestions:

Lets start with upper Manhattan. Without hesitation I would recommend the Hospital complex by Columbia Presbyterian Hospital on 168th and Broadway. Every day of the week people travel to this complex to visit patients that live in the metropolitan area. Taxi passengers travel far and wide to all locations including Westchester and New Jersey. For too long they have been victims of illegal livery cars that solicit this location and charge prices far above what we would consider fair and legal. Other upper Manhattan locations I would recommend would be the following: The Metro North train station on 125th street and Park Ave, and the Port Authority North Bus Station at 178th street and Broadway.

Next we can go to Queens. Thousands of taxi fares are generated every day of the week in Queens. We already have a successful program at Main street and Roosevelt avenue in Flushing. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. I have in the past and I will again suggest the following locations: The entrance to the Queens Center Mall. Hundreds of taxis are needed at this location every day of the week. Other locations where there are many fares generated in Queens are the corner of Queens Blvd and 71st ave, 31st street and Ditmars Blvd in Astoria, Queens Blvd in Sunny Side and all along Northern Blvd and Roosevelt avenue in Jackson Heights. No doubt many taxis are also needed at the Long Island Railroad station in Jamaica, The long Island Rail Road station in Woodside located at the corner of 61st street and Roosevelt ave. This location is infested with illegal vehicles. Medallion taxi service is a must at this location.

Ok Brooklyn! Brooklyn has long been a “pet peeve” of mine. When I first started driving in 1970 I would work Brooklyn my entire shift. There are thousands of fares in Brooklyn every day of the week. Here are a few locations where there should be round the clock medallion taxi service: The junction of Flatbush and Nostrand avenues, Flatbush Ave from Grand army plaza up to the Manhattan Bridge. This stretch includes The Long Island Railroad station and the Mall at Flatbush and Atlantic avenues. Kings Plaza Mall at Flatbush avenue and Avenue U is another location where there is a need for taxi service. Taxi service is needed throughout the borough of Brooklyn. Having taxi stands at a few of these key locations will increase the presence of medallion taxis throughout the borough.

As for the Bronx, There also are thousands of fares generated in this borough every day. A good location for a taxi stand would be the traffic circle where the number 6 train runs through Parkchester, on Westchester Ave just north of White Plains road. Another location would be a three way intersection in Mott Haven known as the “Hub” at 149th street, Third avenue and Willis avenue. Add to that 230th street and Broadway and 242nd street and Broadway in Riverdale. It also would be a good idea to have a taxi stand at or near Yankee Stadium.

As for Staten Island, which is also included in the plan, it is being suggested that taxi service be established at the Staten Island Ferry terminal in St George and on Hylan Blvd in New Drop.

Councilman John Liu of Queens is leading this legislation to create taxi stands at a minimum of two locations in each borough through out the City of New York. Councilman Liu is responsible for re-establishing the taxi stand at Main Street Flushing, and giving incentives to drivers to come to the stand by getting the “shorty” ticket program passed. Councilman Liu had done this after I made the suggestion for the ‘Shorty Ticket’ program. Councilman Liu wants the TLC to reinvest five million dollars of the money they took in during the recent auction on this project.

It will be tricky to get medallion taxis to come to these locations. But Councilman Liu points out that they are coming to Flushing and the program there is working. He does however admit that the stand is subsidized and it may take other monetary incentives to motivate the drivers. Can we take this as a hint that maybe help is on the way for the high expenses we have been enduring lately? Well, let’s hope so.

However, I would point out that this plan will never be successful if there is not a major plan to enforce against all the illegal vehicles that make it impossible to work in the outer boroughs. Along with this enforcement there has to be a major campaign to inform the public that these vehicles are not licensed by the City of New York to do street hail work. It would also be wise to determine how many livery vehicles are actually needed to do pre-arranged radio work. The number of licenses issued for this should be limited to only what is needed.

No Gasoline surcharge! So what’s next?

When will they get it? We need help. It was totally irresponsible for the TLC to deny us a gasoline surcharge. They say we are making more than \$12. per hour. This trivial amount of money is what they say is a “Living Wage”. Don’t make me laugh!

Has any one of these people ever tried driving a taxi for 12 hours a day 6 or 7 days a week. Well that's what one must do in order to have this "Living Wage" count enough to buy the bare necessities of our society. I would also point out by the time these bare necessities are paid for there is not enough left over for health insurance. It also is above the amount allowable for Family Health Plus for a family of four. Healthy NY is available for this family of four but rates range between \$600 and \$800 a month depending on what insurance company you purchase from. Besides, even if one can pay for this, no one should have to work 12 hours a day 6 days a week in order to do so. If you want to weigh this expense in relation to the rising gas price you can easily see that \$150. a week more for gas that drivers are now paying over two years ago could have easily gone for health insurance. It would appear they don't see this, or do they?

They can help us! They can create an atmosphere where we would make more money without charging more. How? They can enforce the rules and stop the illegal vehicles from stealing business that should be ours. That would help us to earn the difference. But they don't.

They want us to buy hybrid vehicles. Well maybe we all will eventually buy hybrid vehicles. But certainly this will have to be a slow change over. If we had to purchase a vehicle within the last year or two, hybrid vehicles weren't yet available. So we are not going to ditch a vehicle that we paid for and are still paying for before it's time to do so. That would be throwing money away. We need to make more money now.

They got what they wanted. They sold 1300 medallions that they were authorized to do. They want to add another 150 and it appears that they may be able to do that. They want us to spend thousands of dollars on GPS and it appears that will happen also. So why do they sit on us and not let us make what is really a "living Wage". It's all political. What ever puts them in a better light with the public is what they will do. They don't care one bit about us. If they did we would have what we needed!

