

Cab Gab  
by Abe Mittleman

## TLC Enforcement of Street Hail Pick-ups is Only a Start

Recently the TLC, now, rather than before, for reasons known only to them, decided to enforce the rules that protect us from those that would infringe on our “Exclusive” right to all the street hail business in the City of New York. I for one would like to offer my congratulations on this initiative. It was a long time overdue.

It was reported in the NY Post on June 14 that from April 1 to May 12, 1124 summonses were issued to non yellow FHV’s for soliciting passengers that were hailing taxis on the street. It was also reported that 28 cars were seized from vehicles that had no TLC credentials and attempted to pick up passengers hailing taxis on the street. It was also reported that summonses were issued to FHV drivers and private cars for soliciting walk out business at hotels in midtown. Even some hotel doormen, who have become notorious for taking bribes from FHV’s to direct business their way was summonsed. Yes, this is a great start.

But it’s just a start, the tip of the iceberg! The Post quoted TLC Chairman Matthew Daus as follows: "I am pleased, overall, with the impact that our zero-tolerance operation has had on the problem of illegal street hails by for-hire vehicles," But I'm dismayed," he added, "that our numbers suggest a more prevalent problem than we had initially gauged."

Well, It’s not like we haven’t been telling the TLC for years that the problem has gotten out of control. But I ask, can it really be stopped? We all know that a big part of the problem is public unawareness of the rules and regulations. As long as the public is not aware that FHV’s picking up street hails is illegal the illegal operators will continue to get away with it. There is no way the situation can be totally policed. The best weapon against the illegal activities of hotel doormen and FHV’s is educating the potential passengers that would fall prey to their activities.

I read that 80% of taxi fares from airports use medallion taxis but only 40% use medallion taxis for the return trip. No doubt this is because they are being misinformed and misguided by the hotel doormen who are getting kickbacks from FHV’s. But we can stop this very easily!

We now have TV screens in the back of all taxis so why not use them to our advantage. We should use these TV screens to alert passengers arriving at the airports and taking yellow taxis that the same yellow taxis will be available to take them back to the airport. It should be emphasized that it is against the rules for non yellow taxis to pick them up. They should be informed of our rates and the practice of hotel doormen misinforming them that our rates are greater than what they are. They should be told that it is illegal for the doormen to direct them to the non yellow taxis. This can and should be done. To those who say no I ask: Why not?

But this only takes care of the hotel passengers. Remember the problem of FHV's picking up street hails is citywide! I have been writing for years about the illegal activities FHV's in other parts of the city. It would really help if there were public service announcements on radio and TV letting the other residents of the city know that the only taxis licensed to pick up street hails were medallion taxis. FHV drivers have been misinforming passengers in Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx for years. Most of these passengers don't have a clue! They have been brainwashed.

Councilman Liu of Flushing had a great idea when he suggested that other taxi stands similar to the one created at Main Street and Roosevelt Avenue in Flushing be created throughout the city. But at that time he was shot down by the very same TLC that now is finally admitting that it was wrong. So, I say it's time to take another look at this plan.

Furthermore, once and for all, when is the TLC going to stop licensing an unlimited number of FHV's? This is how the problem began in the first place! FHV's were created in the 1980's to do prearranged work that was tying up medallion taxis from picking up street hails. They were given the radio calls and other prearranged fares while medallion taxis were given the "Exclusive" right to the street hails.

There was no limit put on the number of FHV's while medallion taxis were limited in number. An overabundance of the FHV's has created a situation where in order to survive they have no other choice than to steal the business of the medallion taxis. It's time to limit their numbers to what is actually needed to do the prearranged work they are licensed to do. This would stop the problem dead!

