

Cab Gab
by Abe Mittleman

More On Restrooms

In last months edition of Mini-Press I challenged our new TLC Chairman to organize a committee of experienced taxi drivers to brainstorm ways the TLC and The Dept of Transportation could make it easier for taxi drivers to have access to restroom facilities in the City of New York, especially Manhattan where it is near impossible in most sections of the borough.

As much as I would like to see this happen and as much as I would like to be a member of this committee, I must admit that I don't really see this happening. So, I would like to use this forum to express what my ideas are.

It's ironic that we are not alone in this. Millions of tourists and everyday New Yorkers have similar problems of this nature. The only difference is that those on foot, do not have the added problem of first having to park legally in order to find help.

In one important way this problem has been addressed. There are actually web sites on the internet listing hundreds of locations in Manhattan where someone can find a restroom when needed. But this part of the solution is mainly for those who are on foot. It does not address the taxi driver's situation of first having to find legal parking.

One such web site <http://www.nyrestroom.com/> lists several hundred places where it's possible to find a rest room in all sections of Manhattan. Another web site http://www.ehow.com/how_2323378_find-public-restrooms-new-york.html gives tips on how to find rest rooms. Using these two sources of information it should not be that difficult to make a list that can be carried with you or even accessed through devices that are portable and can connect to the internet.

Following are the tips:
1. Spend a little time preparing a credit-card sized list you can slide into your wallet. After reading through the information in this

article, check out the sites listed in the Resources section and then type up a list of possibilities that would be of help.

2. Plan to take advantage of midtown stops at Rockefeller Center, the United Nations Building and Grand Central Station where there are multiple restrooms available, some around the clock

3. Find the locations for the new glass and stainless steel toilet kiosks. You pay a quarter and an automatic sliding glass door opens and admits you for fifteen minutes. As these are a recent innovation for New York, you will probably need a little last minute online searching to find out the newest location.

4. Consider stopping by a police station. Officers will not bat an eye if you simply stop at the desk and make a request. People do it all the time.

5. Stop by a museum. Of course, all museums will have restrooms, but here are some with no admission charge:-Forbes Magazine Galleries 62 Fifth Avenue (at

12th Street)-Museum at Fashion Institute of Technology (Seventh Avenue at 27 Street)-National Museum of the American Indian-George Gustave Heye Center-Goethe Institut (across from the Metropolitan Museum (1014 Fifth Ave)-Sony Wonder Technology Lab (56th Street and Madison Avenue)

6. Stop by a department store or other large store. Here are a few possibilities:-Bloomingdales (59th and Lexington) -Macy's Herald Square (34th and 35th on Broadway) -Barnes and Noble (various locations around the city)

7. Stop by a hotel. You won't get past the doorman in many of these, but there are some where, if you are dressed reasonably well and look confident, as if you know where you're going, you can just breeze in and look for a sign somewhere near the lobby. Other extremely large hotels—like the Marriott Marquis in Times Square—are used to hordes of tourists streaming in and out. Check the websites in the Resources section for details.

8. Stop by a restaurant—but be prepared to be refused admittance to a restroom with the caution “For customers only.” If you are desperate, of course, you can always become a customer, but if a café or deli has take-out you can just buy a single item and be on your way after your restroom stop. There are some exceptions, of course. Starbucks, located all over Manhattan, will usually have restrooms open to anyone.

It should be pointed out that <http://www.nyrestroom.com/> is the source referred to in item 1 above. Also, the toilets that are mentioned in item 3 to our knowledge only exist in one location, Madison Ave and 24th street.

It’s good to know that there are hundreds of locations in Manhattan that can be taken advantage of. But it does taxi drivers no good if legal parking can’t be found. So it’s not so much that toilets aren’t available but rather parking isn’t available even where there are toilets.

So, my suggestion is that all of the locations, (several

hundred) listed in <http://www.nyrestroom.com/> should be checked out. If these are businesses then the owners of these businesses should be questioned to see how hospitable they would be to us. If necessary they should be given incentives to allow drivers access. Suggestions for these incentives can be made during a committee meeting as it may take some brainstorming to think of incentives that are appropriate. Perhaps some sort of discounted taxi fare can be given to these people. After it is known where these locations are, then a list should be made available for drivers.

Along with the above all “Taxi Stands” that are better served as “Relief Stands” should be converted to such. But that is not nearly enough. More “Taxi Relief Stands” should be created, even if the time limit is only 30 minutes. If necessary special paid parking just for taxis should be created on all avenues where there is metered parking. This way the city doesn’t have to lose any parking revenue. I know there are some in our

industry that may object to this. But, if you asked any taxi driver I'm sure they would gladly pay the metered parking rate as a guarantee that there would be enough legal parking available when desperately needed!