

Cab Gab
by Abe Mittleman

The Real Objections

On Sept 5th and Sept 6th many taxi drivers staged a wildcat strike. Were their objections and concerns reasonable and real? The complaints of these drivers in my opinion were silly. They said they were concerned that the GPS would be used as spy ware. Nonsense! So, who cares if someone knows where your taxi is going or where it was? They complained about the credit card fees. Ok, that is reasonable. No one wants any extra operating expenses. But, they should at least give this experiment a chance. If what the promoters of the Service Enhancements are saying is true, the credit card fees will only be an expense of greater income.

The strike was aimed at the wrong people. They should not have taken out their grievances, justified or not, on the good customers we have. If any one should complain it's the owners who had to sign the contracts and will have to pay the expenses

of maintaining and operating. The things that we should complain about the most are not even being addressed.

Contracts forced on us:

Almost everyone that was required to sign a contract did so. But the manner that this was done really disturbs me. I signed one. But, I don't even know if I made the right choice. I as all of us signed under the threat of disciplinary action. What kind of a way is that to do business? Did you get to read the contract you signed with a total explanation of what you were agreeing to? Do you know now even after signing what you agreed to? I'm not sure I do. What if we later realize we made a poor choice? How will this play out if anyone contests this forced agreement? It is likely that someone will sooner or later.

They Should Not Have Been Mandatory.

If the service enhancements are such a good thing then why were they shoved on us. If the service enhancements are such a good thing then

what would have been wrong with offering them voluntarily. As any good product they would have caught on eventually.

Case in point: Perhaps some of you have been around as long as I have and remember when all the taxi meters were not electronic. Do you remember the old ticking meters that were operated with the arm. You could hear the waiting time ticking. I'm sure some of you do. It was in the mid 1970's when the first electronic meters started to appear. This innovation was not mandated. But, this was a product that was much better than what preceded it. Eventually the electronic meters caught on and all the taxis used them. We did not have to be mandated to get them. The product sold itself!

The Annoyance factor:

I don't know about you but I don't think I can stand the constant bombardment of audio advertising and other audio goodies these systems are going to produce. They should have been made to be silent. I sure hope that the TLC doesn't outlaw my

AM/FM/CD player that I have in my dash board. If the passengers don't turn off the audio my radio volume is going to be on high. I warned of this conflict. They didn't listen! Drivers went on strike. But, if the annoyance factor is what I believe it will be they will not have to strike. They will slowly quit one a t a time. Then what?

Parasite factor:

This isn't even being discussed. But it has occurred to me that the only ones that are really going to make money off these enhancements are the vendors that are going to generate millions in advertising revenue. How much is your vendor paying you? I'm laughing at the figures they have quoted me. Let's face it. This is really what this was all about. Here was an opportunity for a few to make a lot. They took advantage of it and they will now take advantage of us. I don't like it.

Having said all this I would like to say that I have yet to install mine. I am not required to do so till January.

So, if I'm wrong on about anything written here I will be the first to admit to it. But my instincts tell me otherwise.

What taxi passengers are saying:

I've been reading the blogs on the internet. From what I read so far it seems that many of the passengers are siding with the drivers who are objecting to paying the credit card fees. At the same time they welcome the opportunity to be able to use their credit cards for the rides. But overwhelmingly they object to the advertising.

If this is the case there is going to be lots of complains about the advertising just as there were about the talking taxis that were eventually removed. If the passengers are objecting to the advertising they will in most cases turn the monitors off just as soon as they enter the taxi. Eventually there will not be any advertising because what advertiser will want to pay for ads that are not being watched? Without the advertising revenue the vendors will not see the

windfall profits they were expecting to make. This whole Idea will have to be rethought more intelligently that it was thought out in the first place.

The following is a blog posting that was in the NY Times written by a passenger who used the name Copperhorse:

It is a shame that the TLC is allowing one of the few escapes from the din of city life to be invaded by irritating and insulting advertisements. Apparently my paying to be in a cab isn't enough to grant me a quiet ride? When are they going to install loud annoying panels of advertisements on the MTA buses and trains? There should be a no advertisement option, make it a 50 cent fee. Cabs should accept credit cards and charge riders the processing fees. No ads. And if there are ads my ride should be cheaper. Overall it is a small minded, not well thought out plan that will generate more money for the TLC and the company making the gadgets. The cab drivers and the fare payers get the short end of the stick. One more step in the wrong

direction. The tiny mind of greed wins again?

Who? Do you know anyone who is a member? I don't.

We need more of a say:

The reason the drivers, owners, vendors, and the TLC is at odds and arguing over this system rather than all parties embracing and giving it a fair chance is simple: there was never a meeting of the minds on this.

The dictatorial nature of the way things are done is wrong. The relationship between the TLC and the industry should be more democratic. All parties should have a say and input into major decisions such as the “Service Enhancements”. If the TLC insisted on it’s implementation then the industry should have been able to be part of the planning process. This conflict is far from being over. But it would not have been a conflict if all parties were part of the decision making

New York State Federation of Taxi Workers

