



# TLC TIMES

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Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor      Matthew W. Daus, Commissioner/Chair



By Matthew W. Daus

There are so many topics to discuss that have occurred since our last newsletter, but I will focus on the two primary events and issues that surfaced over the Winter season: (1) the city-wide **transit strike** of 2005; and (2) NY State county border licensing issues and **reciprocity** legislation.

### 2005 New York City Transit Strike

It is no secret that New York City weathered an unexpected illegal transit strike in December 2005, where unions walked off the job leaving all public buses and subways behind. During my almost 10 years of service at the TLC, I have participated in planning for several transit strikes that had thankfully never happened. After all those years of planning, I will never forget awaking at 3 a.m. on the morning of the strike to television reports of a work stoppage.

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## 2006 TLC DRIVER RECOGNITION CEREMONY



In a day to be remembered, the Taxi and Limousine Commission, along with its partners, NYC & Company, paused to recognize the best of its regulated industries at its 2006 Annual Driver Recognition Ceremony.

More than one hundred honorees, industry leaders and dignitaries shared the rarified air of Tishman Speyer's amazing venue "Top of the Rock," enjoyed magnificent catering from the world famous *Cipriani* restaurant, and generally celebrated the meaning of customer service. Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg marked the occasion with a special proclamation naming March 29, 2006 as "Taxi Driver Recognition Day." Commissioner Matthew W. Daus named Hossam Abdalla as our "Driver of the Year," while his fellow principal honorees Virendrakumar Shukla, Paul Hintersteiner, Charles Jeune, Aboulaye Mbow and Serigne Tall were lauded in such categories as "Customer Care", "Professionalism" and "Humanitarianism."

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## The Medallion Sale is coming in June



The TLC is deep in the planning stages for the next – and final – sale of new taxicab medallions. A total of 308 medallions will be offered for sale – by sealed bid auction – this coming June. The 308 medallions will include 62 to be used with alternative fuel vehicles, 54 to be dedicated for use with wheelchair accessible vehicles, and 192 unrestricted. We are in the process of ramping up our outreach efforts, and have once again scheduled a number of our popular informational seminars. These will be held May 15 (11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.) at Queens Theater in the Park; and May 18 (11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.) at 40 Rector Street, 6th Floor (Office of

Administrative Trials and Tribunals – OATH – Hearing Room). We invite you to call 311 for more information (and to be placed on our mailing list), and to watch our website at [www.nyc.gov/taxi](http://www.nyc.gov/taxi) for more details as they become available.

# 2006 DRIVER RECOGNITION CEREMONY

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TLC Board Member Howard Vargas (left) presents the "Humanitarian Award" to proud honoree Charles Jeune.



Fred Dixon, VP of Tourism Development for NYC & Company presents the "Professionalism Award" to longtime taxi driver Paul Hintersteiner (in cap).



Commissioner/Chairman Matthew W. Daus honors Hossam Abdalla as the TLC's "Driver of the Year."



Josh Sirefman, Chief of Staff to Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding Daniel L. Doctoroff (left), presents TLC Commissioner Matthew W. Daus with a proclamation from Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg officially acknowledging March 29, 2006 as "Taxi Driver Recognition Day."



TLC First Deputy Commissioner Andrew Salkin (at podium) honors taxi driver Virendrakumar Shukla (center), who returned a lost video camera and tape chronicling 11-year-old Meaghan Collins' battle with cancer to her grateful family, who participated in the ceremony (at right).



Tom Madden, Managing Director of Tishman Speyer, which donated the venue and superb catering from famed restaurant Cipriani, welcomes honorees and guests to the company's fabulous "Top of the Rock" attraction and event space.

## ***NYC Taxi Industry Steps up to Benefit Colon Cancer Awareness***

While colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in the United States, it is also highly preventable thanks to such measures as colonoscopy. The delivery of this serious message on 100 New York City “taxi tops” donated by ClearChannel Taxi Media was announced in early March by Dr. Mark Pochapin, director of the Jay Monahan Center for Gastrointestinal Health; TLC Commissioner/Chairman Matthew W. Daus, Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Freiden, and New York Presbyterian Hospital CEO Dr. Herbert Pardes.

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## ***Commissioner’s Corner***

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I immediately slipped into some clothes and joined Mayor Michael Bloomberg at his Office of Emergency Management under the Brooklyn Bridge. The Mayor spent the night at the command center and walked with New Yorkers across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall, as the City put into motion its multi-agency strike contingency plan.

New York City successfully implemented a contingency plan to transport millions of displaced commuters, and the TLC’s portion of the plan emphasized “simplicity” and “efficiency” as its primary goals. The plan permitted “group riding” and provided additional economic incentives for drivers who picked-up extra passengers, promoting the most efficient use of for-hire ground transportation services. The plan also included a simple “zone fare” system that was the same for for-hire vehicles and taxicabs.

The plan worked very well, with the TLC’s licensed industries transporting more people per day during the strike than in any comparable period in the City’s history. While we had the utmost confidence in our plan, it was untested on a citywide basis. We had successfully implemented similar and more limited contingency plans to help commuters stranded by private bus line labor actions, but never on this grand scale.

We anxiously watched and waited during the morning rush-hour, and we were pleasantly surprised that both passengers and drivers were out in force, and making the best of the situation. Overall, the issues that developed during the strike were relatively minor, and focused mostly on two issues. First, some drivers did not understand the access points and times during which they could enter Manhattan, and the requirement of carrying multiple passengers to gain access. We were quickly able to correct this issue on the first day of the strike by reinforcing these transportation restrictions with drivers through communication and field staff deployment efforts. Second, there were allegations of some limited overcharging of passengers by a handful of drivers. Most of the reports in the media about “price-gouging” turned out - after further investigation - to have been a small number of passenger misunderstandings about the new fare structure.

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## ***Hailing the Hybrids!***



The popularity of hybrid-electric taxicabs is on the rise in New York City, as this photo attests. Pictured here, individual owner/driver Cliff Hammond-Adler hacks up a 2006 Lexus RX-400H, to join the 23 Ford Escape and Toyota Highlander and Prius hybrid models already serving the riding public. Several new hybrid models joined the seven already approved models this year, including the 2007 Saturn Vue and Toyota Camry models.



**Commissioner's Corner** *Continued from pg.3*

As the strike progressed, New Yorkers – including our licensed drivers and industries – pulled together in typical New York fashion to make the best of the situation and adapted well. In my view, the best measure of success for the TLC's plan was the nature of the media inquiries after the strike, which focused primarily on whether we should continue certain aspects of the plan in the future (such as group riding) as part of ordinary daily transportation options. It is nice to hear such compliments, but we were glad when the subways and buses started running again.

**Border Issues & Reciprocity**

There are other important issues that we have been addressing regarding our neighbors in Nassau and Westchester Counties. A trend appears to be emerging towards additional for-hire vehicle regulation in New York State, including the recent formation of a TLC in Nassau County, and serious consideration of the formation of similar regulatory bodies in Suffolk and Rockland Counties.

Westchester formed a TLC several years ago, modeling its structure and regulations after our TLC. A so-called "border war" had developed between Westchester authorities and New York City licensees several years ago - where vehicles were being stopped and seized by Westchester police at border checkpoints for not bearing Westchester permits. We were able to resolve this conflict by intervening and reaching a reciprocity agreement, which has successfully ensured peaceful inter-county transportation through the mutual recognition of our licenses. This accord serves as a model for setting and enforcing uniform minimum safety and service standards for vehicles transporting passengers from their neighboring county to destinations in their own licensed county.

Over the last year, the creation of a TLC in Nassau County has caused tension between the black car, limousine and livery industries in New York City and government officials in Nassau County. In order to respond to concerns and to live-up to my promise to do everything within our power to prevent "border conflicts," we intervened by pledging our assistance to mediate and attempt to resolve any issues – as we did with Westchester.

After several meetings and discussions with the Nassau County TLC, it seems clear that the best solution would be legislative in nature. We are discussing the possibility of introducing legislation to formalize the intra-State recognition of for-hire licenses by local governments in accordance with criteria similar to the terms of the reciprocity agreement between Westchester and New York City. This would ensure that the issue is resolved definitively and state-wide for years to come. So far, we have had several positive and productive meetings with both Nassau and Westchester Counties about the possibility of enacting such legislation. Government should do everything it can to encourage intra-state and inter-state for-hire vehicle commerce, higher uniform minimum safety standards and less bureaucracy and paperwork for all. We must remember that we are regulating businesses that serve people who wish to exercise their freedom to travel wherever they want to go – and as long as the service is good, and the vehicles and drivers are safe, everyone benefits from a free and safe flow of for-hire transportation.

**Colon Cancer Awareness** *Continued from pg.3*

**Call 311 for a for a colon cancer screening referral**



Commissioner Matthew W. Daus (at microphone) thanks MTBOT member Allen Kaplan for his dedication in helping to spread the word about preventing colorectal cancer. They are flanked by Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Freiden (at right), and (from left) MTBOT Exec. Director Jeanne Barrett, Jay Monahan Cancer Center Director Dr. Mark Pochapin, and NY Presbyterian Hospital President Dr. Herbert Pardes.

