

**Testimony to City Council Regarding
FY 2008 Preliminary Budget
Commissioner/Chair Matthew W. Daus
March 9, 2007**

Good afternoon, Chairman Liu and members of the City Council Transportation Committee. My name is Matthew Daus, and I am the Commissioner/Chair of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present testimony specific to the Fiscal Year 2008 Preliminary Budget for the TLC. Joining me are First Deputy Commissioner Andrew Salkin and Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Louis Tazzi.

I will begin with a brief overview of the TLC's role as part of the transportation network and a market regulator. Then I will highlight some important points in the FY 2008 budget and briefly discuss some initiatives we have planned going forward. At that point, I would be happy to take any questions you may have.

As you know, the TLC is a licensing and regulatory agency that plays an integral part in the lives of all New Yorkers. Our agency oversees the for-hire vehicle industries in New York City including yellow medallion taxis, community car, black car, luxury limousines, commuter vans and paratransit services. We are responsible for licensing and regulating over 13,000 taxicabs and more than 37,000 for-hire vehicles. The TLC also licenses and regulates nearly 100,000 drivers and 700 for-hire vehicle bases, medallion brokers and agents, and taximeter shops. Combined, TLC regulates industries that are responsible for moving over 1,000,000 passengers per day. A primary role of the TLC is to ensure that each passenger's riding experience is safe, comfortable and convenient.

The TLC's operations will be conducted within a Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2008 of \$29,904,110. Of that amount, \$21,735,288 is for Personal Service (PS) and \$8,168,822 is for Other Than Personal Service (OTPS).

I want to highlight several important adjustments to the current FY 2007 budget, which are also reflected in the proposed FY 2008 budget. In 2007 the TLC began work on the Rules Revision project, an initiative that will consolidate, bring uniformity, and streamline the rules our licensees are governed by. We will continue the process in FY 2008 and anticipate completing the first phase of the project, a fundamental re-organization of our rules within the first year of work. This will include outreach, discussions and collaboration with stakeholders throughout all of our regulated industries.

Another important initiative the TLC began work on in FY 2007 was increasing the staffing of our agency call center. Hiring new staff in FY 2008 will ensure that the call center will be better poised to handle the increasing volume of calls, and ensure that the TLC provides enhanced customer service to both passengers and licensees.

Additionally, we are working closely with 311 on several projects aimed at providing better information and service to passengers.

Through our work with the City Council, we have made important strides in a third key initiative, addressing the need for city-wide accessible service. Over the past year, TLC staff has worked closely with representatives of the City Council, the Mayors' Office for People with Disabilities, multiple industry Advisory Boards, Easter Seals, City and Nation-wide advocates, users, drivers, and owners to explore possible solutions to providing accessible service. They have traveled throughout the country meeting with vendors, modifiers, touring facilities and participated in the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association as the only governmental transportation agency. Through this work, we have gained a better understanding of the needs and challenges this project faces. Staff continues to monitor, evaluate and explore appropriate vehicles to provide the service as well as defining service models and standards that are appropriate. In the upcoming months, we anticipate a proposal that will service the entire city, set specific service levels and standards. We look forward to continuing our work with the Council as the project matures.

In addition to several large projects that I have just discussed, the TLC has several other initiatives planned for FY 2008 that I would like to share with you.

Pursuant to State and local authorizing legislation, the City is planning for a closed bid auction of 150 medallions for use on wheelchair accessible vehicles. In conjunction with identifying the appropriate vehicles for service, staff is currently working on updating TLC rules, setting a time-frame for the auction and organizing outreach. This auction will bring the number of dedicated accessible medallions to 231.

The TLC also remains committed to implementing technology that can add real value for passengers, licensees, and the City, throughout its regulated industries. The Taxicab Customer Service Improvements authorized in 2004 are moving forward. Four vendors have been approved and are in the final stages of beta testing with over 180 taxicabs on the road today, testing the systems for functionality and durability. The industry-wide roll out is slated to take place during this calendar year.

As I stated earlier, we are committed to ensuring the safety of passengers in vehicles in which they ride. To this end, we have taken aggressive steps in updating our inspection facility. This past January, TLC began conducting DMV certified state inspections at our own facility. This certification allows the TLC to improve its commitment to vehicle safety, while replacing the duplicative need for taxis to also get a separate DMV inspection.

To conclude, my testimony today is indicative of the TLC's commitment to continually challenging itself to best serve the needs of the riding public and its dynamic industries.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I would now be happy to address any questions you may have.