

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE

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October 13, 2022  
Start: 10:43 a.m.  
Recess: 2:25 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Selvena N. Brooks-Powers,  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joann Ariola  
David M. Carr  
Amanda Farias  
Ari Kagan  
Linda Lee  
Farah N. Louis  
Mercedes Narcisse  
Lincoln Restler  
Carlina Rivera  
Althea V. Stevens  
Nantasha M. Williams  
Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate

A P P E A R A N C E S

David Do, Commissioner and Chair of Taxi and  
Limousine Commission

Khaleel Anderson, New York State Assembly Member

Aziz Bah, Organizing Director for Independent  
Drivers Guild

Bhairavi Desa, Executive Director of New York  
Taxi Workers Alliance

Hector Ricketts, President of Commuter Van  
Association of New York

Richard Lipsky, Big Apple Taxi Management

Lateef Ajala, Executive Secretary of Commuter Van  
Association of New York and President of City  
Express Corporation

Israel Acevedo, for-hire owner/operator

Cira Angeles, Spokesperson for Livery Base Owners

Hector German, taxi driver

Richard Chow, owner/driver

Bamba Diakite, taxi driver

Anil Pradhan

Basia Osowsky

Mohammad Azizul Haque, owner/driver

Raul Rivera, Founder of New York City Drivers  
United

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Leroy Morrison, President of New York City  
Commuter Van Association

Alpha Barry, driver

Rakesh Pradhan, TLC driver

Sonam Ghising Lama, for-hire vehicle driver

Zashib Alanti

Madjed Zegrar

Rashid Awan, taxi driver

Adalgisa Payera-Diarra, UTANY

Onkar Singh, taxi driver

Anwan Azim Malik

Alieu Jabuon

Jawaid Toppa, taxi driver

Sonny Moorjani

Kehinde Kolawole, for-hire vehicle driver

Nusrat Jahan, for-hire vehicle driver

Nikolaos Skafidas, yellow taxi driver

Christopher Garcia, for-hire vehicle driver

Wilfredo Dislo, for-hire vehicles driver

Arifa Ticmizi, for-hire vehicles driver

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Diana Clemente, President and Owner of Big Apple Car and VIP Gold, and President of the Black Car Assistance Corporation

Galina Kaminker, yellow taxi owner

Michael Simon, medallion owner

Basia O., taxi driver

Kuber Sancho-Persad, taxi driver

Tashia Lerebours, Transportation Organizer at Center for the Independence of the Disabled, New York

Ibrahim Zoure, taxi driver

Basel Mansour, owner/operator

Biju Mathew, President of International Alliance of App-Based Transport Workers

Erhan Tuncel, owner/driver

Mamadou Diallo, taxi driver

Zubin Soleimany, Senior Staff Attorney with New York Taxi Workers Alliance

Larbi Aytanou, Organizer at Independent Drivers Guild

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone  
3 check for the Committee on Transportation. Today's  
4 date is October 13, 2022, located in the Council  
5 Chambers, recorded by Steve Sadowsky.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and  
7 welcome to today's New York Council hearing for the  
8 Committee on Transportation.

9 If you wish to submit testimony, you may  
10 at [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

11 At this time, please silence all  
12 electronic devices.

13 Thank you for your cooperation. Chair, we  
14 are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [GAVEL] Good  
16 morning and welcome to the oversight hearing of the  
17 Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. In  
18 today's oversight hearing, the Committee will focus  
19 on the state of the taxi and for-hire vehicle  
20 industries in our city to better understand the  
21 issues passengers, drivers, and other stakeholders in  
22 these industries are facing.

23 In addition, we will be hearing  
24 Resolution 292, sponsored by myself, calling for the  
25 State Legislature to adopt a bill which would allow

2 commuter vans to accept hails from perspective  
3 passengers in the street and Resolution 2, sponsored  
4 by Council Member Diana Ayala, which would call on  
5 the State Legislature to pass legislation extending  
6 and expanding the scope of the MTA On-Demand E-hail  
7 Power Transit Pilot Program.

8           Each of the TLC-regulated sectors face  
9 unique challenges, and I'm excited that we have  
10 representatives of many of the industry's key  
11 stakeholders today with us to discuss the road  
12 forward.

13           Now that we've moved beyond the worst  
14 days of COVID-19, taxi and for-hire vehicle trip  
15 numbers are continuing to recover, but they remain  
16 down from pre-pandemic levels. Thriving taxi and for-  
17 hire vehicle sectors are an important piece of the  
18 city's transportation network, and it's vital that  
19 that the TLC works with stakeholders to chart a  
20 comprehensive vision for the future.

21           Today, we will be focusing on a number of  
22 important issues. First, I hope to hear from the TLC  
23 about the ongoing work to mitigate the debt burden  
24 faced by taxi medallion owners, including the  
25 Medallion Relief Program and the Medallion Relief

2 Program Plus. These critical programs represent a  
3 long overdue response to the medallion debt crisis  
4 and are a direct result of the tireless efforts of  
5 advocates. We must ensure that these programs have  
6 the maximum possible reach because no medallion owner  
7 should be forced to deal with overwhelming debt. We  
8 also hope to hear testimony regarding the TLC's newly  
9 proposed rules to increase the taxi fare for the  
10 first time in many years and to adjust the for-hire  
11 vehicle minimum pay standard to account for the  
12 effects of rising inflation. These are big measures  
13 that should bring relief to taxi and high-volume for-  
14 hire service drivers, but since this means higher  
15 cost for passengers it's important that we've  
16 considered all implications these changes may have to  
17 ensure that these policies are designed for the best  
18 possible effect on driver pay. While we don't yet  
19 have all the details from the State on what  
20 congestion pricing will look like, I also welcome  
21 comments from drivers and the industries today on the  
22 impacts of the new congestion charges, potentially in  
23 addition to those already paid on TLC licensed  
24 vehicle trips.

2 We will also hear today about the recent  
3 agreement between one high-volume for-hire vehicle  
4 service, Uber, and Yellow Taxis. In March, Uber  
5 announced that it's customers will soon be able to  
6 order a Yellow Taxi on the Uber app. In accepting  
7 passengers through the app, Yellow Cab drivers will  
8 use Uber pricing and policies. We are interested in  
9 gathering information about the state of this  
10 partnership and in hearing from Yellow Cab drivers  
11 about whether they believe it will be fruitful.

12 The Committee also plans to question TLC  
13 on its recent announcement that it will release as  
14 many as 1,000 new for-hire vehicle licenses. In 2018,  
15 the Council acted decisively to support the stability  
16 of our taxi and for-hire vehicle industries, creating  
17 a moratorium on the issuance of new for-hire vehicle  
18 licenses. This policy has been a resounding success.  
19 TLC's latest report on the license pause shows that  
20 trips and driver pay continue to rise while passenger  
21 wait times across the boroughs remains steady.  
22 Meanwhile, many existing TLC vehicles remain off the  
23 road. I hope TLC will explain today why it believes  
24 adding new licenses will benefit TLC drivers and New  
25 Yorkers more broadly.



2 It's also important that we remain  
3 focused on issues of safety, both for TLC drivers and  
4 passengers. I'm interested in how the new TLC Chair  
5 plans to address safety concerns in TLC vehicle and  
6 in hearing from advocates regarding ways the Council  
7 can help. Confidence in the safety of our TLC  
8 vehicles is critical for the success of this  
9 industry.

10 Finally, as Committee Chair, I plan to  
11 ensure that the conversation around TLC issues  
12 includes services that have long acted as critical  
13 transportation lifelines for neighborhoods in areas  
14 of the city like my District, commuter vans and  
15 traditional livery services. These services provide  
16 options to connect New Yorkers in transit deserts to  
17 transit hubs and other destinations, and we can't  
18 leave them out of the conversation. I hope to hear  
19 from our TLC Chair about the ways the Commission  
20 could act to support these vital sectors.

21 We will now turn to testimony from TLC,  
22 but, before we do so, I will now have our moderator  
23 and Committee Counsel call on the administration to  
24 testify and administer the oath.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you,  
3 Chair. I'm Sam Breidbart, Counsel to the  
4 Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the  
5 City Council.

6 Our first witness will be from the New  
7 York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, Commissioner  
8 and Chair David Do. I will now administer the oath.  
9 Please raise your right hand.

10 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
11 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this  
12 Committee and to respond honestly to Council Member  
13 questions?

14 COMMISSIONER DO: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
16 You may begin when ready.

17 COMMISSIONER DO: Good morning, Chair  
18 Brooks-Powers and Members of the Transportation and  
19 Infrastructure Committee. I am David Do, the  
20 Commissioner and Chair of the Taxi and Limousine  
21 Commission. Thank you for giving me the opportunity  
22 to testify before you today.

23 Thanks to the leadership of the Mayor,  
24 the Deputy Mayor, and the Taxi and Limousine

2 Commission, and the entire TLC team, we're making  
3 great progress on our goals.

4 To begin, I'd like to give you an  
5 overview of the state of the for-hire industry. As  
6 the city and the nation recovers from the COVID-19  
7 pandemic, our industry is coming back to life. Trip  
8 volumes are up. Since the beginning of the pandemic,  
9 Black Car and livery trips are up 59 percent, high-  
10 volume trips such as those in Uber and Lyft are up  
11 242 percent, and taxi trips are up an astounding  
12 1,247 percent. These trip volumes are still below  
13 pre-pandemic levels, but the increase is encouraging.  
14 We are also seeing more drivers and vehicles getting  
15 back on the road, and, importantly, driver earnings  
16 for both taxi drivers and high-volume drivers are  
17 above where they were pre-pandemic. We expect this  
18 growth, trends in trips, vehicles, drivers, and  
19 income to continue at pace with the city's recovery.

20 Now, I would like to share something that  
21 makes us extremely proud. As I said at my  
22 confirmation hearing, TLC's first priority was to  
23 fully implement the Medallion Relief Program, which  
24 supports small taxi owners with the interest in five  
25 or fewer medallions. Under this program, principal

2 loan balances were reduced to 170,000 dollars from  
3 balances as high as 750,000, and loan payments are  
4 capped at 1,234 dollars a month. This is down from an  
5 average monthly loan payment that was 2,200 dollars.  
6 Importantly, this program replaces personal  
7 guaranties with a City-funded guarantee, meaning no  
8 medallion owner risks losing their family home if  
9 they cannot make the payments.

10 Council Members, I am happy to report  
11 that MRP+ has been an astounding success. In four  
12 months, this first of its kind program has helped the  
13 owners of more than 1,100 medallions close on loans,  
14 resulting in over 240 million dollars of debt relief.  
15 During the week of September 19th, we were closing on  
16 loans one every three minutes. It is hard to  
17 understate the importance of this program. MRP+ not  
18 only brings back taxis and ensures that the riding  
19 public has access but also provides a lifeline for  
20 thousands of drivers who lost income during the  
21 pandemic. The very nature of their business meant  
22 that they could not work from home and often not work  
23 at all. MRP+ is more than dollar amounts. It is about  
24 families, food on the table, and the future of  
25 hardworking people who help make this city run. Many

2 of our drivers provide critical services during times  
3 of crisis, like those who have been donating free  
4 rides to migrants that the Texas Governor is  
5 cynically busing into our city. People like Richard  
6 Chow, who is in this room today, support those  
7 efforts, an owner-driver who has been driving for 17  
8 years. Four years ago, his little brother Kenny, also  
9 a driver, was one of nine drivers who committed  
10 suicide. This was during a time when drivers,  
11 including the Chow brothers, were losing everything  
12 to predatory medallion loans. As Richard recently  
13 said when we hit the 225 million dollar debt  
14 reduction, "Now I can make a livable income, bring  
15 the food to the table. All the drivers are so happy.  
16 We have no fear of losing our homes and losing our  
17 assets." That and the joy and relief we have seen in  
18 hundreds of drivers is what this program is about,  
19 but this critical relief can only work if drivers  
20 earn a dignified wage that keeps up with the times.  
21 We have proposed an increase in the taxi meter fare  
22 as well as high-volume driver pay. Our taxi drivers  
23 have not had a fare increase in 10 long years and,  
24 with inflation and the lingering effects from COVID,  
25 these drivers are hurting. At last week's public

2 hearing on these proposals, many drivers voiced the  
3 great need for a pay increase just to cover expenses.  
4 The proposal increases the base fare, the rush hour  
5 fee, and airport fees. This includes a 65-dollar flat  
6 rate for JFK trips and a 5-dollar surcharge for  
7 LaGuardia trips.

8 On for-hire driver pay, in 2018 the TLC  
9 found that 85 percent of high-volume for-hire drivers  
10 were making less than minimum wage. This category  
11 includes Lyft and Uber. In response, TLC adopted  
12 rules establishing driver pay minimums. The rules  
13 have worked. Drivers are making more money with an  
14 average per-driver income at an all-time high. A CPI  
15 increase is built in to make sure that driver pay  
16 keeps up with expenses, but the CPI for urban wage  
17 earners only captures a small part of the increase in  
18 costs. To better address the skyrocketing operating  
19 costs, we are increasing rates by the rise in the  
20 transportation costs index. Also included in the  
21 driver pay proposal is a change in the rules around  
22 utilization rates. Utilization refers to the  
23 percentage of a driver's on-duty time that is spent  
24 with a passenger versus without one. This is part of  
25 the calculation for driver minimums. The TLC wants

2 drivers to be able to work and not be "locked out"  
3 due to the utilization rate. Rather than micromanage  
4 rates, we will require Uber and Lyft to stay within a  
5 range of 52 to 64 percent. This will ensure that  
6 drivers' pay rates will continue to incorporate their  
7 downtime without incentivizing companies to lock out  
8 drivers. The majority testifying at last week's  
9 hearing supported both of these proposals. The TLC  
10 will vote on them in the coming weeks. Innovation and  
11 technology are vital tools to help the industry  
12 thrive. We are making data more accessible than ever  
13 by increasing the number of metrics and the frequency  
14 of data releases. We developed and released the State  
15 of the Industry dashboards to help the public  
16 navigate our most requested metrics. We also updated  
17 and released the TLC Data Hub tool, which allows  
18 people to easily access and visualize trip data by  
19 Taxi Zones. Once again, we are the first FHV  
20 regulatory agency in the nation to do this, and we  
21 intend to keep developing these tools because we  
22 value transparency and strive to ensure that our  
23 policies are empirically based. We will continue to  
24 look at how technology can help move the industry  
25 forward and meet customer needs and expectations.

2           The fourth area I'd like to emphasize is  
3 sustainability. The TLC is committed to mitigating  
4 emissions and encouraging cleaner air. As part of  
5 this commitment, we are issuing 1,000 new for-hire  
6 vehicle licenses for electric vehicles only. These  
7 new licenses will help electrify the fleet and spur  
8 the development of more charging infrastructure. We  
9 are currently determining the requirements and  
10 application process for the new licenses. We will  
11 release more information in early December. While the  
12 prospect of new licenses is exciting, I urge  
13 potential applicants to wait on purchasing a new  
14 vehicle until those requirements and processes are  
15 released. We are also working on a comprehensive  
16 electrification plan, a roadmap of how we will  
17 replace gas-powered vehicles with electric vehicles  
18 and stand up necessary charging infrastructure. EVs  
19 are a win-win for drivers and customers. Drivers  
20 appreciate the fuel savings and customers want  
21 sustainable transportation options. The for-hire  
22 vehicle industry has a role to play in being part of  
23 the climate solution. This includes commuter vans,  
24 which reduce emission and congestion. We are working  
25 with the state on technology and safety improvements



2 that can help advance this sector. We are in favor of  
3 state legislation to allow commuter vans to receive  
4 street hails. They are a lifeline to residents who  
5 often live in transportation deserts. We will do this  
6 while continuing to make vehicles more accessible for  
7 people with disabilities. I am proud to tell you that  
8 there are over 6,000 accessible taxis and for-hire  
9 vehicles on the road now, including almost 2,000 more  
10 wheelchair-accessible vehicles. More needs to be  
11 done, which is why we are looking at how we can  
12 increase the number of WAVs across all sectors and  
13 make our Accessible Dispatch Program even more  
14 effective. The TLC is committed to meeting our 50  
15 percent WAV goal for taxis, and we will work closely  
16 with our medallion owners on this. In addition, we  
17 will continue to work with the high-volume for-hire  
18 industry so that at least 80 percent of WAV trip  
19 requests are provided within 15 minutes or less.

20 I am so excited to lead the TLC and the  
21 industry into a new frontier where we emerge from a  
22 global pandemic stronger than ever before, more  
23 resilient, more accessible, and more environmentally  
24 sound. We will continue to support our drivers, our  
25

2 riders, and our city as we rebuild and get people  
3 back where they need to be for work, family, and fun.

4 Thank you again for the opportunity to be  
5 here today. I look forward to answering any of your  
6 questions.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so  
8 much for that. Next, we're going to hear from our  
9 Public Advocate, Jumaane Williams.

10 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so  
11 much. As mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams, the  
12 Public Advocate of the City of New York. I want to  
13 thank the Chair and Members of the Committee for  
14 having this hearing and thank you, Commissioner, for  
15 being here as well.

16 Today, the Committee will consider among  
17 other bills Resolution 0292, which I am happy to co-  
18 sponsor with the Chair, and I thank the Chair for  
19 having a hearing on this legislation. Resolution will  
20 call on the New York State Legislature to pass Senate  
21 Bill 5320 allowing commuter vans to accept hails from  
22 perspective passengers in the street, expanding upon  
23 current restrictions that require passengers to  
24 prearrange transport ahead of time. I was glad to  
25 hear in the traffic, Commissioner Do, that you are in

2 support of that legislation. The reality of these  
3 current limitations on commuter vans is that it  
4 continues to the proliferation of an unregulated and  
5 unsafe commuter van industry. In 2020, I called for  
6 greater TLC enforcement against unauthorized commuter  
7 vans after a cyclist was struck and seriously  
8 injured. Prior to that in my capacity as a City  
9 Council Member, I passed the Commuter Van Safety Act  
10 in 2018 to ensure licensed and ensured operators  
11 could safely operate across the city. While we have  
12 bridged gaps in commuter van enforcement, we still  
13 have a need to address additional factors as to why  
14 unauthorized vans continue to exist. Unregulated  
15 commuter vans exist because there is a demand and  
16 need for them. Many New Yorkers live in communities  
17 that are severely underserved by public transit  
18 options. In other words, they are in transit deserts.  
19 Those living in transit deserts greatly rely on cars  
20 still, and many own cars to commute throughout the  
21 city, especially for work. Others who do not drive  
22 nor own a car may rely on ride-share services which  
23 adds up quickly and requires a phone and internet  
24 connection. (INAUDIBLE) community vans become a  
25 reliable option for those in transit deserts as they

2 are often the less expensive options, commonly called  
3 dollar vans. These vans tend to follow a specific  
4 route so passengers are picked up in one location and  
5 know that they can be dropped off. There is no need  
6 to call ahead of time and prearrange transportation  
7 services. As someone who grew up in an area that used  
8 this vehicle and represented an area that used this  
9 frequently, I knew that transit options still remain  
10 sparse in those areas. I know firsthand the reliance  
11 these vans have on communities. I also know that this  
12 city has called on those vans at times of blackouts,  
13 at times of strikes, at times of COVID, and then  
14 forget about them when the emergency is over. It is  
15 this experience I take with me to support New Yorkers  
16 to be serviced by commuter vans in the way they know  
17 best and be assured that they are utilizing safer and  
18 authorized options. In addition to these changes, we  
19 must also support commuter van drivers and push for  
20 affordable commuter van insurance which has seen a  
21 tremendous increase due to lack of ridership stemming  
22 from the pandemic and aid passengers in discerning  
23 between TLC-licensed and unlicensed commuter vans,  
24 something that we worked with the TLC a while and

2 we've seen a drop-off in making sure that we can  
3 clearly identify who is who.

4           Lastly, I do want to share some concern I  
5 have with an additional issue that has risen that  
6 affects the commuter van issue as well. That is that  
7 TLC has recently announced the issuance of 1,000 new  
8 licenses for for-hire vehicles. While I'm listening  
9 to the reasons for that, I am concerned because our  
10 streets are already congested and adding 1,000 more  
11 cars would likely exacerbate the issue. The new  
12 licenses are supposedly in the name is  
13 sustainability, but I think instead the direction  
14 that TLC could go in is to replace existing gas-  
15 powered cars with electric cars from the fleet of  
16 over 80,000 for-hire vehicles on the streets. TLC's  
17 move could possibly hurt yellow taxi industry as well  
18 as commuter van industry by increasing competition  
19 despite data showing that for-hire vehicle trips are  
20 down from pre-pandemic numbers. This is a step that  
21 may be unnecessary. If we wish to be more  
22 environmentally conscious city, then replacing gas-  
23 powered vehicles with electric ones might be the  
24 right move, not further congesting our streets. I do  
25 know the Commission and TLC are very concerned about

2 this topic and this issue and are moving in the right  
3 direction in so many ways. I was very proud to be  
4 early and consistent in supporting our van drivers to  
5 deal with the loans so I look forward to hearing more  
6 about that to see if I'm missing something.

7 Overall, I hope we can push for safe and  
8 sustainable transportation options by passing  
9 Resolution 0292 and pushing back against some of the  
10 recent things that I spoke about.

11 I do want to shout out Hector Ricketts who  
12 is here from Queens and a big shoutout to Leroy  
13 Morrison who really pushed this issue and pushed this  
14 Resolution from Brooklyn and anybody who knows Leroy  
15 knows he definitely is pushing and pushing on this  
16 issue. I'm glad he's here, and I'm glad that we're  
17 dealing with this issue for the entire city. Thank  
18 you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
20 Public Advocate. I'm going to have to shout out my  
21 constituents also of being here. I love that  
22 Southeast Queens is in the room right now.

23 Commissioner, welcome. First hearing with  
24 you as Commissioner. Thank you for being here and  
25

2 congratulations again for your appointment. So let's  
3 dig in.

4 New for-hire vehicle licenses. Recently  
5 the TLC announced that it would issue 1,000 new for-  
6 hire vehicle licenses restricted to electric vehicles  
7 despite the same report suggesting the vehicle cap is  
8 working as intended. Why is the TLC doing this now,  
9 and why do you believe this move would spur the  
10 transition of the existing vehicle fleet?

11 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Thank you so  
12 much for that, Council Member. One of the most  
13 important things to note is that, and as you know and  
14 asked me about a few months ago during my  
15 confirmation hearing, was about the Black Car and  
16 Livery Taskforce (INAUDIBLE) that service outer  
17 borough residents, and we know that anecdotally from  
18 listening to many of our livery bases, black car  
19 bases, that they need more vehicles to transport  
20 people, nonemergency medical transportation, Access-  
21 A-Ride and other programs that really help residents  
22 and so, with the lack of vehicles, it is impeding  
23 their work for outer borough residents, but let me  
24 step back a little bit. In 2018, there were 120,000  
25 vehicles. Today, there are 95,000 vehicles that are

2 active on our roads, and so there was a significant  
3 drop over the last four years. We know that these  
4 1,000 EV licenses who mostly will go to owner/drivers  
5 will not be impacting the overall for-hire vehicle  
6 industry.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. How  
8 will TLC determine who gets one of the 1,000 new  
9 licenses, how many of these licenses will go to  
10 individuals, and how many are intended to go to  
11 companies that have already invested in creating EV  
12 vehicle fleets like Revel.

13 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: We are  
14 anticipating a 60/40 split, which means 600 will go  
15 to individual owner/drivers that now many which are  
16 immigrants can now own their own business instead of  
17 having to rent these vehicles and that they can put  
18 that extra money into their families, into their  
19 homes, and into their communities, and then 400 will  
20 help spur additional infrastructure.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. How  
22 will TLC ensure that drivers can actually transition  
23 from existing vehicles to the EVs?

24 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: That's a great  
25 question. With federal, state, and local incentives,



2 federal being the new infrastructure law that was  
3 passed by our President that there will be a tax  
4 credit of 7,500 dollars for those who are making  
5 125,000 dollars or less at the beginning of the year.  
6 NYSERDA also has a tax credit for many EV vehicles,  
7 and I urge drivers to look into that. Finally, we're  
8 working with DOT to ensure that there are discounts  
9 and better infrastructure across our city. Currently,  
10 we are launching a pilot program with the DOT to  
11 provide discounts for for-hire vehicle drivers and  
12 taxi drivers at two locations at fast-charging  
13 stations including Long Island City and Manhattan.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How did you  
15 pick the locations?

16 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: We worked with  
17 DOT to identify which of the municipal locations can  
18 fulfil the needs. Long Island City is where the  
19 Falchi Building is and where many drivers operate  
20 live and work so that they can get to Midtown very  
21 quickly.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: TLC drivers  
23 are competing over a smaller pool of trips than they  
24 were prior to the pandemic. What analysis does TLC  
25 have to suggest that this move will not further

2 damage other sectors like medallion taxis and that it  
3 will not reduce driver pay?

4 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: We know that we  
5 have set a minimum driver pay per trip, and that was  
6 a calculation that was done by the Parrott and Reich  
7 Report a few years ago, and we know that for every  
8 trip a driver will make, based on mileage and time,  
9 so a 7.5-mile trip that is 30 minutes will net a  
10 driver 22 dollars in 2018. With the new CPI increases  
11 just months ago, they will be making gross 25, and  
12 with the new driver pay they'll be making 28 dollars,  
13 and so there is a minimum pay standard out there that  
14 supports drivers as a whole. Overall, I believe that  
15 many of these will be helping individual drivers,  
16 will be helping outer borough residents, and will not  
17 have a major impact on the for-hire vehicle industry  
18 as a whole. I'm confident of that, my team is  
19 confident of that, and we will continue to work to  
20 mitigate any risks, but the future is now. We need to  
21 get to a more sustainable future, and, with more EVs,  
22 it will fast track our adoption of EVs over the  
23 entire fleet. Currently, Council Member, there are  
24 only 600 for-hire vehicles that are EVs. This will  
25 almost double that. On the yellow side, we're also

2 looking at various incentives to support adoption of  
3 EVs. When I saw the numbers, there were only 37 EVs  
4 in the yellow fleet. I know that I need to do more  
5 and so we're working on a broad electrification plan  
6 that will support various incentives, that will work  
7 with state and federal partners to fast-track the  
8 adoption of more infrastructure for FHV's and taxi  
9 drivers, and we know that this is a benefit. Drivers  
10 want cheaper prices when they fill up a tank, be it  
11 with electric or else, and we know that passengers  
12 are looking for more sustainable options. In reality,  
13 what we know is that passengers are paying more for  
14 EV trips so we want to support that adoption.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for  
16 that. We know that a plurality all trips take place  
17 the Manhattan CBD, and we know from research that  
18 for-hire vehicle trips pull riders from transit.  
19 Could the TLC explain to the Committee whether it  
20 believes issuing new licenses conflicts with the  
21 goals of the State's Congestion Pricing Program?

22 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: We don't  
23 believe that it does. We are supportive overall, and  
24 this goes back to what I said earlier, is greening  
25 our fleet. How do we do that? Making sure that there

2 is a critical mass of these EV vehicles. We're not  
3 releasing ICE vehicles, ICE, internal combustion  
4 engine or gas vehicles. We are focused on a greener  
5 future. Part of the greener future is replacing gas  
6 for-hire vehicles with EVs. We are committed to that.  
7 We have set our goals on that, and we will continue  
8 to push for that.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 Just shifting a little bit of focus right now to the  
11 Medallion Relief Program and the Medallion Relief  
12 Program Plus. What is the current amount of debt  
13 relief that the MRP and the MRP Plus has provided to  
14 owners.

15 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Council Member,  
16 let me first start to say that I want to thank all of  
17 the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, our  
18 federal electeds, NYTWA and many of our other groups  
19 were pushing so hard to get almost 1,500 owners  
20 through our doors so that we can get over 240 million  
21 of debt reduction. This has been a partnership with  
22 everyone involved, and I'm very proud to say that we  
23 were closing loans, as I said in my testimony, one in  
24 every three minutes at its peak. We're at 240 million  
25 in debt relief and counting. Next week, we're going

2 to work with PenFed to close those first loans, and  
3 this is exciting for a lot of our industry, and then  
4 we will also do a closing day in Long Island City for  
5 PenFed loans, which is the second largest holder of  
6 medallion loans in our city, and so we are very  
7 passionate to get every single owner/driver who wants  
8 to be a part of this program through a part of this  
9 program. With various partners with our advocates, we  
10 will get there. We will get close to it.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How many have  
12 applied so far for the debt relief?

13 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: 2,200 have gone  
14 through our owner/driver resource center.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Of that, how  
16 many have actually received...

17 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Almost 1,500.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How many  
19 owners estimated to be eligible yet have not taken  
20 the first steps in the process? Do you have an idea  
21 of that number?

22 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: We're thinking  
23 about 3,000 drivers who could take advantage of this  
24 program. 2,200 have gone through the owner/driver  
25 resource center. We're continuing our push. Some

2 owners have been more difficult than others to  
3 contact, but we're continuing to push. We have our  
4 External Affairs Team that is working to send out  
5 messages in 10 different languages, phone banks. We  
6 are engaged, and we want as many driver/owners as  
7 possible to be able to participate in this program,  
8 and for those out there who have not yet gone through  
9 our owner/driver resource center, I definitely  
10 encourage everyone to go through it. Email  
11 [driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov](mailto:driversupport@tlc.nyc.gov), and we will get you  
12 connected with a lawyer so that you can get supported  
13 and you can get an advantage through this program.  
14 There's a lot of work left to do, and we are hyper-  
15 focused on that.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How long does  
17 this usually take from start to finish?

18 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: I'm very proud  
19 of our program's team that have gotten some drivers  
20 who visited on the same day connected with an  
21 attorney and then closing on their loans in just one  
22 day. It was really a team effort to close the amount  
23 of loans that we did in just one week and then now in  
24 two weeks we're almost at 1,500 in total so we're  
25 continuing to push for that. If a driver's

2 interested, we'll get them connected ASAP with a  
3 lawyer and get their documents approved.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How is the TLC  
5 engaging medallion owners about the debt relief  
6 programs that they're offering? I will say even for  
7 me I welcome the opportunity to partner closer with  
8 TLC, opening up my office if there is opportunity to  
9 do some outreach locally, but I'm interested to know  
10 what you're doing already.

11 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Almost all  
12 drivers have to go through our Long Island City  
13 offices on a regular basis to renew their licenses.  
14 The Falchi Building in Long Island City is a location  
15 that many drivers know and know very well, so that's  
16 why we made an effort to put our events at that  
17 building. Let's talk about our outreach. Again, I  
18 thanked you earlier for all our elected officials  
19 doing phone banks, reaching out through social media,  
20 but we have also worked on our side with our team to  
21 call every eligible owner/driver of a medallion that  
22 can participate in this program. We have provided, by  
23 law, information in all 10 languages, and so we have  
24 been doing a lot. As you'll hear later from various  
25 testimony, we have reached out to many of the

2 qualified drivers. There are some drivers who might  
3 not just be interested because they're not interested  
4 in a government program, and we've seen that in the  
5 past or their loan amounts are too low to  
6 participate, but we make that decision on a case-by-  
7 case basis so I encourage every driver to go through  
8 the owner/driver resource center for that support.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Are  
10 there any remaining lenders that are not  
11 participating in the program?

12 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: There's about  
13 20 lenders, the biggest lender of which who backs  
14 most of the loans has participated. That is  
15 Marblegate. Then the second biggest lender is going  
16 through, and we're working with many of the other 18  
17 lenders to get them through this process. Some have  
18 been easier than others, but we are continuing our  
19 outreach to ensure that this is a great deal for  
20 them, this is a city-backed guarantee and to take  
21 advantage of this. We're also thinking of new  
22 creative ways, working with our advocates, and  
23 ensuring that there's a pathway for every driver who  
24 is interested.



2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for  
3 that. I'm wondering like why some of those 18 that  
4 you're working to participate, why are they not  
5 really participating?

6 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: We're taking a  
7 very succinct and iterative process on this. We're  
8 making sure that first and foremost that the biggest  
9 lender, Marblegate, was processed through. They're  
10 now done and then we're going to the second biggest  
11 and then we will make sure that the other 18 will  
12 participate in the near future. We will reach out to  
13 them and show them the various documents that they  
14 need to know about, but there are two. There is one  
15 for banks and then one for credit unions because of  
16 the regulatory structure of each of the entities.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm  
18 going to pause my questions briefly just to allow  
19 Council Member Narcisse to ask a few questions before  
20 she leaves.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good morning,  
22 Commissioner. Thank you for being here. I know you're  
23 a cool guy, a cool dude, you're going to do your very  
24 best, but we've been through a lot with taxi, yellow  
25 cab in our community, and, just to let you know, my

2 father was a yellow cab driver and worked for many  
3 years and I have seen the struggle. That really hits  
4 home when I see people are jumping, dying for a  
5 business that was very lucrative, and, overnight,  
6 their family, their who resources, their whole  
7 investment went through the window so I know you came  
8 at a hard time but at the same token we are expecting  
9 something be done and we don't go back. What I have  
10 learned throughout my life, you have learned from  
11 mistakes and don't go back to the same. If we don't  
12 change, if we don't "talk about history" it tends to  
13 repeat itself and we don't want that for anyone in  
14 our city to invest all the money and then overnight  
15 lose it so I thank you, I see the changes that you've  
16 made, the loan is being adjusted, but it's not going  
17 to be enough for those who lost their family, like  
18 you say, one of the drivers in the room. I see Mr.  
19 Leroy, probably is going to be a pain for you too  
20 just like he's a pain for all of us.

21 My two quick questions. What would be the  
22 mileage of the EVs per charge and how long could a  
23 driver work before they stop for charge?

24 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: There's a range  
25 of options for drivers out there. There are some that

2 are high as 330 miles on one charge, so there are a  
3 range of options. I encourage drivers to look at what  
4 is the best option, but, right now, I don't encourage  
5 anyone to buy a vehicle before we release the final  
6 rule package and how to get one of those licenses,  
7 but we are hyper-focused on building more  
8 infrastructure, Council Member, and making sure that  
9 there are enough fast chargers for everyone in our  
10 city. That is my number one focus, working with both  
11 federal, state, and local to ensure that. We know  
12 that if there are some more EVs out there, not a lot  
13 more but some more EVs, it will spur innovation, it  
14 will spur more charging infrastructure and get us to  
15 what we want which is a greener, more sustainable,  
16 and better quality of life for all residents of New  
17 York City.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I appreciate it.  
19 My time is over, but one thing I may add. I live in a  
20 transportation desert so whatever you can do, because  
21 we spoke about it. We have to revisit how we do  
22 transportation in our community, and we have to  
23 reinvent who we are and reimagine that city because  
24 the population is increasing every day. Thank you for  
25 your time.

2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Thank you,  
3 Council Member.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you, Madam  
5 Chair. Thank you for your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No problem.

7 Next, I just want to touch on safety. The Committee  
8 has heard reports of serious safety incidents  
9 involving TLC vehicles in the recent past on both  
10 sides. One where there was an alleged kidnapping from  
11 one of the for-hire vehicles and then, unfortunately,  
12 several weeks back there was an unfortunate death of  
13 a driver in my district so what is the TLC doing to  
14 protect passengers and drivers, how is the TLC  
15 working with the for-hire vehicle services to ensure  
16 safety.

17 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Definitely.  
18 Safety is a top priority of the TLC team. How we  
19 ensure passenger safety is ensuring that every driver  
20 goes through a full background check, goes through  
21 fingerprinting, making sure that their record is  
22 clear, making sure that they go through various  
23 courses, and making sure that they are licensed and  
24 have the proper insurance to operate a TLC licensed  
25 vehicle. With all of those including inside-app

2 notifications and panic buttons, we want to ensure  
3 that passengers are safe, but, more so, we need to  
4 make sure that passengers look at the T-plate that  
5 matches the high-volume for-hire vehicles and the  
6 rest, that their T-plate matches the plate in the  
7 app. They should not be going into any random vehicle  
8 but should be going into a vehicle that is licensed  
9 and insured and is inspected for safety and emissions  
10 by the TLC. For drivers, we continue to ensure that  
11 driver safety is our priority. We have a Driver  
12 Protection Unit within our Long Island City offices  
13 to support drivers to work through the legal system  
14 and make sure that NYPD is responsive and making sure  
15 that they know what their rights are after an  
16 incident, but we're also very excited by the very  
17 many different funds out there to support high-volume  
18 drivers including the livery and black car funds that  
19 support drivers directly.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Over the past  
21 year, how many for-hire vehicle drivers have been the  
22 victims of assault?

23 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: I don't have  
24 that number in front of me, but I'll definitely get  
25 that for you.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I  
3 would like to know in terms of the complaints that  
4 have been filed against drivers by passengers as  
5 well.

6 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: That number I  
7 have. That has been growing. We have a dedicated  
8 Consumer Complaints Department that looks at every  
9 complaint from a passenger or a roadway user, right,  
10 so blocking of bike lanes, running a red light,  
11 blocking a pedestrian crossing, making illegal u-  
12 turns, and, from last fiscal year to now, that number  
13 has increased from 1,100 consumer complaints to about  
14 2,000 consumer complaints, and, when we go to court  
15 on these cases, 95 percent of the time our summons  
16 are upheld.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Interesting  
18 that you brought up about some of the complaints that  
19 you're getting because we do have a bill that we're  
20 at some point going to hear in this Committee that  
21 focuses on blockage of the bike lanes, for example,  
22 and so I'm interested in knowing how does the TLC  
23 handle those types of complaints.

24 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: In our power,  
25 there are two big things, which is enforcement and

2 education. I try to lean on education, making sure  
3 the drivers have the appropriate knowledge not to be  
4 blocking bike lanes, not to run red lights, not to  
5 speed on our roadways, and to make sure that they are  
6 supportive of all roadway users. In the last year,  
7 safety has been our focus on the enforcement side as  
8 well, and there have been 22,000 summons within the  
9 sphere that our enforcement officers provide on  
10 safety-related Vision Zero incidents, and so we will  
11 continue to focus on making sure that our licensees  
12 use the roadway safe, and, for the most part, many of  
13 our licensees follow traffic rules, keep our roadways  
14 safe, but for those who do not we will change their  
15 behavior.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Is there a  
17 process that is in place to address those types of  
18 complaints already, so if a member of the public sees  
19 a for-hire vehicle blocking a bike lane and they  
20 would then what, they would call 311 or they would  
21 call TLC?

22 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: As long as they  
23 have the T-plate number, the medallion number, or any  
24 other identification number, they can go through the  
25 311 process. One of our prosecution attorneys will

2 then call the complainant, get more information, make  
3 sure that they're ready to testify at OATH, and then  
4 we will work with them, the driver first to settle  
5 the complaint, and, if not, we will go to OATH and  
6 prosecute that case.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So you already  
8 work with OATH on this?

9 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: That's good to  
11 know because I believe this bill looks at also  
12 engaging with OATH so you brought it up and wanted to  
13 touch on it.

14 Again, in line with safety, does the TLC  
15 believe legislation is needed to assist the  
16 Commission in driving new safety measures in its  
17 licensed vehicles?

18 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: I think we have  
19 very broad authority over keeping our licensees safe  
20 and making sure that they act in a safe manner. I'm  
21 willing to work with you, Council Member, on any ways  
22 that we can make sure that we can use our existing  
23 authority to make our roadways and our passengers and  
24 our drivers even more safe, but we do have broad  
25 authority from inspecting every single vehicle to



2 making sure that road users are operating in a safe  
3 way.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

5 Next, I want to touch on commuter vans. As you know,  
6 an important issue for communities like mine. Does  
7 TLC support giving commuter vans the right to accept  
8 street hails as proposed in State Legislation?

9 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Along Flatbush  
10 Avenue and in parts of Queens, we know that commuter  
11 vans are a critical part of our transportation  
12 infrastructure, and we do support street hails in  
13 existing corridors where they can operate. This is  
14 something that we have written to the State about,  
15 and we will continue to be supportive of this.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If provided  
17 this ability, what effect does TLC believe this will  
18 have on the industry?

19 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: I think that it  
20 will support making sure that the existing corridors  
21 that commuter vans can operate on will be legalized.  
22 This is something that our commuter vans do on a  
23 regular basis, and we need to just make sure that it  
24 is put in and set in stone within legislation.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: How is the TLC  
3 working with the commuter van industry to improve  
4 service?

5 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: I have met not  
6 only with you, Chairperson, but also with advocates  
7 from the commuter van industry. We're working with  
8 our state partners to implement better technology,  
9 and TLC is prepared to use its safety and emissions  
10 inspections to support the State's goals and then our  
11 goals for a safer commuter van industry. We're also  
12 looking at ways, like I mentioned at my confirmation  
13 hearing, is how can we adopt better technology within  
14 the commuter van industry. We know that they're a  
15 critical part of our infrastructure, and we support  
16 their expansion in a way that is safe for all folks  
17 who use commuter vans.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Are there  
19 opportunities for further utilizing commuter van  
20 services to provide transportation in transit  
21 deserts?

22 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: I think this is  
23 something that we need to work with the commuter van  
24 operators and advocates on to see where they can  
25 expand their operations, but we also need to know

2 that existing corridors where they operate, we need  
3 to enhance service levels there, right. How have the  
4 for-hire vehicle industry and the taxi evolved, so  
5 should the commuter van industry leverage technology  
6 to connect with passengers within the outer borough  
7 service areas that they operate.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What is the  
9 City currently doing to support the use of commuter  
10 van services when it contracts for transportation  
11 needs, and I'm going to just let you know upfront  
12 there was a recent I believe RFP released, and my  
13 understanding is that an out-of-state entity was  
14 selected as opposed to identifying a service right  
15 here in New York City so I'm interested in knowing  
16 what the City is doing right now and how can we  
17 better improve that going forward.

18 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: I met with the  
19 advocates on this, and I've heard the issue. The RFP  
20 was not issued by the Taxi and Limousine Commission,  
21 and I don't have full insight on the details of that,  
22 but, like I said to our advocates, I'm willing to  
23 work with them and support them in making sure that  
24 they have the appropriate tools including insurance  
25 to provide all of these services for the public.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm  
3 just going to ask a few more questions before I kick  
4 it over to my Colleagues touching on Uber and taxis.  
5 Uber recently announced an agreement to dispatch some  
6 yellow taxis through its app. What is the state of  
7 this program and how does TLC believe it will affect  
8 medallion taxis?

9 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: This is a  
10 private partnership between Arro, Curb, and Uber  
11 using an existing pilot, the E-Hail pilot, and so  
12 we're in a wait and see mode. We're evaluating the  
13 program's success and waiting for additional data  
14 from the pilot's participants. Right now, we know  
15 that it's a small universe of individuals who can  
16 take these rides, and we are carefully evaluating the  
17 program to see what successes there are, to see how  
18 we could improve service within our regulatory  
19 service, but, look, this is an innovative program  
20 that provides more passenger trips for the yellow  
21 taxi industry and, overall, we're supportive of that  
22 notion.

23 If I may go back to your previous  
24 question, Council Member, there's been 15 driver  
25 assaults this last year.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: 15?

3 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: 15, and not all  
4 drivers report assaults to TLC. We encourage them to  
5 reach out to the Driver Protection Unit so that they  
6 can get additional resources to support them and  
7 their well-being and, of course, their safety.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Is  
9 TLC contemplating any steps to change regulations in  
10 response to the agreement with Uber and the yellow  
11 taxi?

12 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: We're always  
13 looking at options using our regulatory authority to  
14 make the marketplace a better place for all  
15 individuals, including making sure that the driver  
16 pay and meter rates are appropriate. Again, I have to  
17 wait and see what data there is from this program,  
18 and the universe of trips out there is very small and  
19 I don't have that full insight into that program as  
20 of yet, but hopefully the next time before I am in  
21 front of the Committee, I can provide you with more  
22 extensive data, but, again, this is a pilot phase and  
23 some of the private industries have just agreed this  
24 last month and the rollout has been slow since the  
25 announcement around earlier in May/April.

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Has the  
3 TLC held conversations with Uber regarding the  
4 agreement just broadly speaking?

5 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Yeah, we're in  
6 talks with all of our regulated industries on a  
7 regular basis. I'm in talks with a lot of folks to  
8 better understand the industries that we look at and  
9 examine, so there have been conversations across the  
10 board on a variety of different issues.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.  
12 Next, I'm going to pass it to my Colleagues. We'll  
13 hear from Council Member Lee.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hello. Good morning.  
15 Good to see you again, Commissioner, and great to see  
16 all the advocates in the room here today.

17 I just had a couple questions. The first  
18 one is about the EVs, and I talk also from a personal  
19 experience because I just got an EV car myself, and I  
20 have to say it is a bit frustrating because there  
21 aren't enough public charging stations. If you look  
22 at the app and the map, it's actually really like a  
23 desert in terms of the charging stations, and I also  
24 live in a transportation desert as I've mentioned to  
25 you before so there are no railways in my district.

2 There's no subways or railroad stations, and I have a  
3 lot of the for-hire vehicle drivers that actually  
4 live in my district as well, and so I just wanted to  
5 know, I know you mentioned that there's going to be a  
6 plan to push the city for more charging stations, but  
7 how specifically, because it seems like there hasn't  
8 been an incentive for the city to get this going  
9 quick enough and I guess my worry is that there  
10 aren't going to be enough charging stations so I'm  
11 assuming that at the taxi hubs there will be  
12 something but then also for the folks that own the  
13 vehicles and are going to bring it back home, let's  
14 just say, you have to buy the fast charger, you have  
15 to work out the plan with Con Ed, there's incentive  
16 plans and all that, but if there aren't charging  
17 stations nearby, will there be incentives for the  
18 drivers maybe to install it in their homes or  
19 something, out of the box, creative solutions like  
20 that.

21 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: We're looking  
22 at all options on the table, Council Member. What I'm  
23 very excited by is our electrification plan that  
24 we'll be releasing in the near future that really  
25 looks at how can we broaden infrastructure for

2 charging within our city, what existing  
3 infrastructure is out there, how can we partner with  
4 our utility companies like Con Ed to build a better,  
5 stronger grid to support the charging infrastructure,  
6 and we know that we're slowly but surely building  
7 better infrastructure. We know that we're giving our  
8 drivers exclusive access to two municipal charging  
9 stations within Manhattan and Long Island City where  
10 they typically go to operate, but we're also looking  
11 at additional incentives both on the federal level  
12 that the new infrastructure law has been supporting  
13 and then also on the state level. I think  
14 cumulatively with the additional vehicles we're also  
15 looking at for-hire vehicle hubs to support charging  
16 infrastructure, and I know that drivers are able to  
17 go to various hubs, privately owned hubs, to also  
18 charge their vehicles today, but that's not enough.  
19 We need to continue to push, and that's why our Mayor  
20 has supported pushing more electrical infrastructure,  
21 charging infrastructure in our city, and we'll  
22 continue to work on that and update the entire  
23 public.

24

25



2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Awesome. Chair, if  
3 it's okay, can I ask one more question on congestion  
4 pricing?

5 As I mentioned, because I'm in a transit  
6 desert over in Eastern Queens, I have a lot of  
7 concerns about congestion pricing as I'm sure most  
8 do, but my main concern is really the cost of burden  
9 that will potentially fall on both the drivers as  
10 well as the passenger and then especially as Chair of  
11 the Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction  
12 Committee, I'm think the disabilities community, I  
13 know this is a very big concern for them as well  
14 because a lot of the families that live out in my  
15 district, they don't have another option but to use  
16 for-hire vehicles for their children and family  
17 members with disabilities and so, especially for  
18 people that work and live in the district and also  
19 drive these for-hire vehicles, I know technically  
20 Access-A-Ride is the only option, and it's a little  
21 bit frustrating because I think there are a lot of  
22 inefficiencies so if we were to, I know that for the  
23 congestion pricing, Access-A-Ride is more state-run  
24 but how can the city get more involved in pushing for  
25 the pricing not to fall on a lot of our drivers,

2 especially the ones that have their vans outfitted  
3 for disability constituents?

4 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Let me quickly  
5 address the Access-A-Ride program and how we can make  
6 that better. I'm working with the Vice President of  
7 Accessibility Services on a regular basis at the MTA  
8 to ensure better service for all of our people with  
9 disabilities within the Access-A-Ride pilot and then  
10 the additional Access-A-Ride program.

11 In terms of congestion pricing, what we  
12 know is that we need to have a fair and equitable  
13 process that incorporates all of the public testimony  
14 that has been ongoing for the past few weeks, and I  
15 know that our drivers and our for-hire vehicle  
16 community as a whole have been very active within  
17 that. We know that even with the MTA's environmental  
18 assessment that there is going to be an impact on our  
19 for-hire vehicle industry and that they need to  
20 consider that, but let me step back, Council Member,  
21 is that our for-hire vehicles and taxis have paid  
22 almost 2 billion dollars to the MTA in congestion  
23 charges since four years ago with the 50 cent  
24 surcharge on the MTA, a \$2.50 on our yellows, and  
25 then our for-hire vehicles \$2.75. In the Fiscal Year

2 '23 alone, the industry has contributed to 414  
3 million dollars to the MTA's budget so that's where  
4 we are and so as the Traffic Review Mobility Board  
5 looks at this, I urge them to look at the  
6 contributions that the for-hire vehicle industry as a  
7 whole has already contributed to the MTA.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Awesome. Whatever  
9 help you need and support on our end, please let us  
10 know because I know that a lot of the residents in my  
11 district are very concerned about the potential cost  
12 and how it'll impact their daily lives. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for  
14 that, Council Member. Next, we'll hear from Council  
15 Member Kagan.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you, Chair.  
17 Thank you, Commissioner. I would like to ask you  
18 about green cabs. I represent Coney Island,  
19 Bensonhurst, a large chunk of Southern Brooklyn and  
20 green cabs are very, very population in Southern  
21 Brooklyn so I have a few questions. I will give them  
22 right away, all of them. First of all, do you know  
23 how many green cab drivers work in New York City  
24 altogether?

2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: The number has  
3 been declining over the various years, but there are  
4 about, I think, currently 1,500 to 2,000 green cabs  
5 in our city. I'll get you the specific numbers that I  
6 have, but in overall trips there's been 59,000 trips  
7 in the last year, which is a 77 percent increase in  
8 green cabs.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: How will all of  
10 these changes you were talking about affect green  
11 cabs? I'm talking about fare increase, (INAUDIBLE),  
12 electric/hybrid vehicles? How do you work, if you  
13 work, with green cab drivers?

14 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Our green cab  
15 industry provides a critical service to outer borough  
16 residents. I know that when I went to the Seagate  
17 community in Coney Island recently, we know that  
18 green cabs are important to the residents within the  
19 communities, but I also know that we need to ensure  
20 that green cabs operate fairly, and I remember talk  
21 to you about this, operate legally. We have  
22 enforcement officers out there to look at that and to  
23 work with not only the Seagate PD but also the NYPD  
24 to make sure that we curb illegal behavior and  
25

2 illegal activity, both in Coney Island and the  
3 Brooklyn community as a whole.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: You mentioned there  
5 will be a fare increase. Will it affect the green  
6 cabs?

7 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Yes. We will  
8 also increase the green cab meter rates as well as  
9 part of this fare increase.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: If they use meters  
11 at all.

12 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: If they use  
13 meters, and that's something I know we talked about  
14 and we want to make sure that they're turning on  
15 their meters when they're servicing residents.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you very  
17 much.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for  
19 that. I have a few additional questions. Just wanting  
20 to go into a little bit of congestion pricing. While  
21 the TLC does not have direct control over the MTA's  
22 congestion pricing plans, as the industry's  
23 regulator, it's position carries weight. How does the  
24 TLC believe taxis and for-hire vehicles should be  
25 treated under the new tolling program, has the TLC

2 communicated with the MTA about the potential new  
3 charges?

4 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Yes, so we have  
5 been in talks with various stakeholders including our  
6 industry advocates and, of course, the MTA. What I  
7 have expressed publicly is that our industries need  
8 to be equitable and fairly treated, and that's my  
9 position that has been out there for a long time.  
10 However, I don't want to get ahead of the MTA and I  
11 don't want to get ahead of the Traffic Review  
12 Mobility Board, but, as I said to Council Member Lee  
13 earlier, is that the for-hire vehicle industry and  
14 the taxi industry have made great contributions  
15 already to the MTA, close to 2 billion dollars in the  
16 last few years, and then in the Fiscal Year '23  
17 budget 414 million dollars and so, as the MTA said in  
18 their environmental impact study, that we need to  
19 very much consider the impacts on for-hire vehicles  
20 and taxi industry as a whole in evaluating congestion  
21 pricing. However, I'm not going to get ahead of what  
22 the Traffic Review Mobility Board is thinking about  
23 right now.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Just to  
25 delve a little bit deeper, short of taking any stance

2 on the tolls and what have you, what does TLC see as  
3 the potential consequences for the industry of the  
4 various potential tolling options.

5 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: There is going  
6 to be a big impact, and some studies have said that  
7 there will be a decline of trips by more than 5  
8 percent and so this is a big concern, and we need to  
9 ensure, again, that our industries are treated fairly  
10 and equitably.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In terms of  
12 Vision Zero, how is TLC working with other city  
13 agencies to improve Vision Zero outcomes?

14 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Vision Zero is  
15 an incredibly important priority of mine and the TLC.  
16 Our roadways, when they are safe, reduce roadway  
17 deaths, and so we are active with our Vision Zero  
18 enforcement, and we have issued 22,000 summonses on  
19 Vision Zero issues in the last year. This is  
20 something that we have been working with DOT, we have  
21 been working on the Vision Zero Taskforce, meeting  
22 every two weeks to ensure that we share our data,  
23 collect data, and think of ways to make  
24 infrastructure improvements, to educate our drivers,  
25 and then also to use our enforcement tools to change

2 behavior. We will continue to make sure that Vision  
3 Zero safety violations are our priority and making  
4 sure that our drivers' behavior change to make our  
5 roadway safer but, again, like I said to you before,  
6 Council Member, is that an overwhelming of our  
7 drivers are operating on our roads safely. It's just  
8 that small percentage, right, that we need to be  
9 focused on.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In your  
11 opinion, are there things the Council could do to  
12 help TLC make Vision Zero improvements?

13 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: I think we have  
14 the tools in our toolbox. We educate, we provide  
15 Vision Zero training within the courses that our  
16 drivers take, we regularly do additional training and  
17 then also outreach activities to ensure that they are  
18 operating within the framework of our regulations and  
19 our city's laws and our state laws.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In terms of  
21 taxi fares and for-hire vehicle minimum pay  
22 increases, can the TLC inform the Committee regarding  
23 the process that went into determining how taxi fares  
24 and the for-hire vehicle minimum pay standards would  
25 be adjusted?



2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Yeah, for the  
3 meter rate of fare increase, taxi drivers have not  
4 had a fare increase in over 10 years, and, as you  
5 know, Council Member, expenses have risen over the  
6 last 10 years. Gas prices at its peak was one of the  
7 highest that we have ever seen. What we know is that  
8 the initial charge will increase from \$2.50 to \$3  
9 which will support our drivers on the base rate, but  
10 also the per unit rate, the mileage rate, will  
11 increase by 20 cents, but I think there will also be  
12 rush hour surcharges, nighttime surcharges, and then  
13 a new flat rate from Manhattan to JFK of 65 dollars,  
14 and there will also be new surcharges to LaGuardia  
15 Airport and, of course, increased surcharges to  
16 Newark Airport. I know that we've talked about this  
17 in the past, and we try to incorporate not only our  
18 community's input but also the surveys that our  
19 drivers submitted to us to make this a robust  
20 decision that is based on actual cost of drivers.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Can you  
22 address the for-hire standard as well?

23 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Excuse me.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: The for-hire  
25 vehicle standard, can you address that as well?

2 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: Do you mean the  
3 surcharge on the TIF? Oh, yes, sorry. Driver pay.  
4 Thank you. As I said initially when the Parrott and  
5 Reich Report was first published, we set a minimum  
6 pay standard to meet an independent contractor wage  
7 of 15 dollars. Obviously, since that point in 2018,  
8 inflation, especially transportation costs, have  
9 risen dramatically, especially in the last year, and  
10 so we are looking at a CPI increase as of our Rules  
11 meeting, our public hearing on October 6th which  
12 would look at increasing the driver minimum for a  
13 7.5-mile ride, a 30-minute trip, from \$22.34, we  
14 increased that recently to 25 dollars with CPI and  
15 then the new one would gross drivers about 28  
16 dollars.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. My  
18 last question is does the TLC have any concern that  
19 the increased cost of a ride could lower trip  
20 volumes, reducing driver pay across the industry and  
21 what analysis was conducted to consider the  
22 possibility?

23 DEPUTY DIRECTOR CAMPBELL: We do not  
24 expect passenger demand to decrease over the long  
25 run. We know that from our previous experience that

2 when we do a meter rate fare increase that there is  
3 no doubt some passenger demand that goes away.  
4 However, that quickly recovers in the long run. We  
5 know that this is an important meter rate fare  
6 increase because our drivers are struggling just like  
7 many families in New York. Bread, cheese, eggs, a  
8 carton of milk is increasing for New Yorkers but also  
9 our drivers and so we need to keep pace just so that  
10 they can afford their mortgage payments, just so that  
11 they can afford to put food on the table. This meter  
12 rate fare is important for our drivers and our taxi  
13 drivers who service New Yorkers on a daily basis and  
14 they should be paid fairly and commiserate with the  
15 rise in inflation.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for  
17 that. Do we have any other questions?

18 Thank you, Commissioner, for your  
19 participation in today's hearing.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so  
21 much, Council Member, and thank you so much,  
22 Committee Members. I appreciate your time.

23 We'll next have testimony from Assembly  
24 Member Khaleel Anderson.

2 ASSEMBLY MEMBER ANDERSON: All right. Good  
3 morning. Thank you so much, Chairwoman Brooks-Powers,  
4 for having this very important hearing where you will  
5 discuss today some of the transportation issues that  
6 are impacting not just Queens but the entire city.

7 I'm so grateful to be in support of the  
8 Commuter Vans Association's work on ensuring that  
9 street hails can become a legal possibility for folks  
10 here in the City of New York. Currently, in the State  
11 Legislature, I carry an Assembly Bill that would  
12 ensure that street hails are legalized here in the  
13 City of New York. The commuter vans started to  
14 operate when the MTA fell down on the job in  
15 providing transportation to communities like mine,  
16 which I represent in the Assembly, the 31st District,  
17 that are often transportation deserts. Allowing the  
18 commuter vans to do street hails and conduct street  
19 hails across the city in certain corridors really  
20 work to assist in ensuring that communities that have  
21 historically been transportation deserts can have  
22 access to adequate transportation so I'm proud to  
23 carry that piece of legislation in the Assembly  
24 alongside Senator Comrie in the State Senate, and I  
25 am proud that you have introduced, Chairwoman,

2 Resolution 292 which would push on the State level to  
3 do the right thing and ensure that street hails are a  
4 reality here in the City of New York. Now that we've  
5 heard from the Commissioner this morning, I'm really  
6 invigorated to hear that the Commissioner is in favor  
7 of the concept of having legalized street hails so it  
8 gives us that much more pressure and support to  
9 ensure that it passes on the State level so we're  
10 going to be looking forward to partnering together to  
11 do that in the next legislative session, and I also  
12 want to take a moment to thank Public Advocate  
13 Jumaane Williams for his fight as well on this  
14 subject matter. When we think about providing  
15 transportation to all New Yorkers, street hails and  
16 legalizing street hails would truly ensure that  
17 there's a safe way for our New Yorkers to get from  
18 point A to point B, particularly in areas that are  
19 underserved by the MTA. Again, Chairwoman, thank you  
20 so much for bringing together this important hearing,  
21 and I'm looking forward to passing that bill next  
22 legislative session.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so  
24 much, Assembly Member.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you,  
3 Assembly Member. We will now turn to public  
4 testimony. The first two panelists will each have  
5 four minutes to speak, and then subsequent panelists  
6 will have two minutes to speak.

7 For panelists testifying in person,  
8 please come to the dais as your name is called and  
9 wait for your turn to speak.

10 For panelists who are testifying  
11 remotely, once your name is called a member of our  
12 staff will unmute you and the Sergeant-at-Arms will  
13 give you the go ahead to begin. Please wait for the  
14 Sergeant to announce that you may begin before  
15 delivering your testimony.

16 I'd like to now welcome Aziz Bah from the  
17 Independent Drivers Guild to testify and also  
18 Bhairavi Desai from the New York Taxi Workers  
19 Alliance. You can begin.

20 AZIZ BAH: All right. Good morning, Madam  
21 Chair and Members of the Transportation Committee and  
22 the Infrastructure Committee.

23 My name is Aziz Bah. I am a for-hire  
24 vehicle driver and the Organizing Director of the  
25 Independent Drivers Guild. Thank you for the

2 opportunity to testify before you today regarding  
3 the state of the TLC regulated industries. I am  
4 joined by a number of colleagues who are willing  
5 to give up their time to allow me testify so I can  
6 provide you with our full comprehensive take on the  
7 state of our industry.

8           As you know, IDG is a nonprofit  
9 organization of the International Association of  
10 Machinists and Aerospace Workers, and our  
11 organization represents over 100,000 for-hire  
12 vehicle drivers in New York State and 250,000 in  
13 Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and  
14 Illinois. The IAMAW is the only union to  
15 successfully organize black car workers in New  
16 York and has been doing so for over 20 years. Our  
17 members primarily drive for Uber and Lyft. We do  
18 not only organize, educate, and advocate, but we  
19 also make sure drivers have access to an array of  
20 services and benefits in conjunction with our  
21 partners including mandated TLC classes, legal and  
22 financial counseling, telemedicine, mental health,  
23 dental and vision care.

24           I am here today on behalf of New York's  
25 FHV ride-share drivers to tell you the state of

2 our industry remains very fragile and needs your  
3 and TLC's help. First and foremost, we want to say  
4 that the new Commissioner of the TLC, David Do, has  
5 been like a breath of fresh air. TLC is listening  
6 and communicating like we have never seen before.  
7 That being said, we know we will not agree on  
8 everything but can still have a respectful and  
9 productive working relationship, and IDG looks  
10 forward to doing so.

11 We applaud Commissioner Do and the staff  
12 at TLC for proposing an additional 7.82 percent  
13 raise on our rates which will bring the overall  
14 rate of 13.5, bringing it back to the 2019 levels  
15 adjusted for inflation, and tying future increases  
16 to the Consumer Price Index. With that being said,  
17 while TLC seems to be on the verge of approving  
18 this proposal, we believe that the economy is  
19 still experiencing rising levels of inflation and  
20 the proposed raise will be out of date sooner  
21 rather than later. Furthermore, IDG has always  
22 maintained that the 2019 minimum pay rate was  
23 actually low. While making some progress, it was  
24 way too low and not enough for drivers to meet all  
25 their business expenses while supporting their



2 families. We also thank TLC for listening and for  
3 proposing to establish a utilization rate that  
4 seeks to prevent the disastrous lock-outs from Uber  
5 and Lyft our drivers experienced in the past.

6 Before we continue to lay out the state  
7 of affairs of the FHV sector, we want to share  
8 some good news and progress. As some of you may  
9 remember, many FHV drivers were being unfairly  
10 deactivated by the app companies without any  
11 notice of cause or due process. We had asked the  
12 previous City Council and TLC to step in, to no  
13 avail, so we took matters into our own hands. We  
14 are happy to report that IDG has established an  
15 arbitration process with Uber and Lyft ensuring  
16 all NYC rideshare drivers have the right and power  
17 to fight unfair deactivations. Drivers are  
18 provided representation and a fair hearing in  
19 front of a panel of drivers. As a result, IDG has  
20 been able to save and re-activate thousands of  
21 drivers.

22 Now for the current state of our  
23 industry. All drivers were...

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry.  
3 I'm just going to ask you if you could wrap up,  
4 please. Thank you.

5 AZIZ BAH: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You can make  
7 your closing statement.

8 AZIZ BAH: We just want to note that with  
9 regard to Inro 258-A, FHV drivers who are on the  
10 road upwards of 16 hours a day regularly struggle  
11 not only to find clean and workable bathrooms, of  
12 course, but legal parking also is a problem so we  
13 would like to definitely work with you to find out  
14 how we can extend the current, nonexistent almost  
15 relief stands, to not only expand them but to  
16 allow drivers to have those spaces available for  
17 them in case they are looking for a bathroom.  
18 Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
20 sir. Next, we're going to Bharavi Desai. I just  
21 want to clarify. You'll have two minutes to speak,  
22 and we ask everyone to please adhere to the clock.  
23 We have a lot of individuals signed up to testify  
24 today. Thank you.

2 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Good morning, Madam  
3 Chair and Members of the Council. My name is  
4 Bhairavi Desai. I'm the Executive Director of the  
5 New York Taxi Workers Alliance. We are the proud  
6 organization that represent drivers across this  
7 industry. We are solely funded by the drivers and  
8 the only organization that is as such.

9 First and foremost, Madam Chair, you  
10 raised so many different issues, and when you look  
11 at that list of topics from debt forgiveness to  
12 the need of a raise to the threat of congestion  
13 pricing which could lead to massive job losses as  
14 the MTA itself has already found in its report to  
15 really a questionable plan about putting more cars  
16 on the road while we're facing congestion pricing,  
17 all of these issues, and you also talked about  
18 safety, they all speak to the reality that this is  
19 a job that for far too long has been under a  
20 serious attack where it's been construed as low-  
21 wage work. We're so sick and tired of taking steps  
22 forward only to constantly be pushed backward, and  
23 you can see that in just the list of issues that  
24 you raised. I think it's also really symbolic that  
25 the City always knows how many complaints have

2 been made against drivers, but they never know how  
3 many drivers have faced assaults or have been  
4 victims to crime. I think that symbolization  
5 actually really indicates the fundamental flaw of  
6 how we regulate this industry. The drivers are the  
7 ones that serve a million people every single day.  
8 It's their labor that's brought in the 2 billion  
9 to the MTA. They take the risks, they bear the  
10 costs, they should be the priority in the  
11 regulations of this industry. In regards to just  
12 cause, which is the issue of deactivations, you  
13 cannot allow that to be a voluntary program. We  
14 need regulation from the City Council to protect  
15 drivers in the same way that fast food workers are  
16 protected against the massive job losses under  
17 deactivations where companies like Uber and Lyft  
18 fire drivers without notice and without reason,  
19 any kind of a warning. A voluntary program entered  
20 into by the companies is a...

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Please wrap  
22 up.

23 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Trojan horse, it will  
24 not protect the workers, and we ask the City  
25 Council to see through that and actually legislate

2 on this issue. If I may have just one extra  
3 second...

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry.  
5 We have a lot of people testifying, and I want to  
6 respect everyone's time here, but if you can  
7 submit the rest of your testimony in writing, we  
8 welcome that. I do look forward to having further  
9 conversations in terms of the legislation you wish  
10 to see in terms of regulations, but, again, we  
11 have a lot of people who signed up to testify, and  
12 we want to be able to make sure that we're able to  
13 hear everyone.

14 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Thank you. I just  
15 wanted to say though to your question to the  
16 Chairman with regards to Uber and yellow cabs, the  
17 reason there is not real interest in that program  
18 is because the drivers are being grossly  
19 underpaid, whether it's by Uber on E-Hail trips or  
20 even by the MTA on Access-A-Ride trips which  
21 affects not only yellow cab drivers but also green  
22 cab and livery drivers. While the MTA has taken in  
23 2 billion dollars from the sweat and the labor of  
24 the drivers on trips that are done in yellows,  
25 greens, and liveries, the drivers are paid 20

2 percent less on those trips than what they would  
3 earn actually on the meter. We need the City  
4 Council to step in.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Excuse me.  
6 Can we please keep order in the room? Thank you.

7 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Thank you, Madam Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I  
9 ask that no one in this room yell during any  
10 testimony. Please and thank you.

11 Next, we will ask for the next few  
12 testifiers to come up to the dais. That includes  
13 Mr. Hector Ricketts, Richard Lipsky, Israel  
14 Acevedo, and Lateef, I'm sorry if I mispronounce  
15 your name, Ajala.

16 Whenever you're ready, Mr. Ricketts.

17 HECTOR RICKETTS: Good afternoon, Madam  
18 Chairperson and Members of the Transportation  
19 Committee. My name is Hector Ricketts. I'm the  
20 President of the Commuter Van Association of New  
21 York, and I have been involved in the commuter van  
22 industry for some three decades.

23 I'm joined here today with a number of  
24 members of the community. As you heard Advocate  
25 Jumaane Williams acknowledge my comrade in the

2 battle, Mr. Leroy Morrison. He's considered the  
3 catalyst in the equation of commuter vans so I  
4 want to publicly acknowledge him.

5 Thank you for the opportunity to  
6 comment on Resolution 292. I must also take this  
7 opportunity to thank Public Advocate Jumaane  
8 Williams and Council Members Restler and Won for  
9 their work on this matter to ask the New York  
10 State Legislature to pass and the State Governor  
11 to sign Bill 5320, which would amend the  
12 Administrative Code of New York to allow commuter  
13 vans to accept street hail from prospective  
14 passengers in the street and would repeal certain  
15 provisions of law relating thereto.

16 Our support for street hail for  
17 commuter vans has remained consistent over the  
18 decades. On behalf of the Commuter Van  
19 Association, I would like to reiterate our  
20 position in support of street hail privileges  
21 which has remained elusive. Numerous attempts have  
22 been made over the years to achieve this goal. A  
23 lawsuit by Hector Ricketts versus New York City,  
24 attempts by City Council Members Clarke, Comrie,  
25 and Williams. The prevailing law, Local Law 115,

2 and for years there has been jurisdictional tug of  
3 war between Albany and New York City since the  
4 enabling legislation in Section 80 of the State  
5 Transportation Law. Commuter vans currently  
6 operate in violation of the street hail and bus  
7 route prohibition, sometimes without aggressive  
8 ticketing. This is just...

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Sorry, Mr.  
10 Ricketts, if you could wrap it up soon.

11 HECTOR RICKETTS: This is just a  
12 discretionary gesture on behalf of the  
13 administration. We must remember that for years  
14 subsidized buses throughout the city abandoned our  
15 riders by ending service at midnight and the vans  
16 were what rescued these riders. Now, today with  
17 new technology, one can tap a phone and hail a  
18 ride while we cannot raise a thumb in the street  
19 to hail a ride. We're asking that you support this  
20 Resolution to grant the State the ability to pass  
21 the law to give our industry street hail  
22 privileges as we come out of the COVID crisis and  
23 navigate our way through an insurance crisis.  
24 Thank you for your time.



2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
3 Mr. Ricketts. Mr. Lipsky.

4 RICHARD LIPSKY: I have a lot of stuff  
5 to discuss, but, give the time constraints, I'll  
6 refer to my testimony, and I appreciate this  
7 opportunity.

8 I represent Big Apple Taxi Management,  
9 the largest taxi management firm in the city, and  
10 I was listening to the Commissioner, who has done  
11 a terrific job, he's been very accessible himself,  
12 but he tended to create the impression of good  
13 news, and to some extent there is good news, but I  
14 think it's important to focus on what isn't good  
15 news. What isn't good news is that taxi rides are  
16 a little bit over 100,000 a day, which is down  
17 from pre-pandemic times. If we don't address the  
18 trips, the bail-out plan will be insufficient.  
19 What will increase the value of medallions is  
20 increasing the number of taxi trips, and I have  
21 some suggestions in the testimony that I will  
22 hopefully be able to refer to when we meet on a  
23 one-to-one basis, but I think the largest issue  
24 here for taxis will be the threat of congestion  
25 pricing. The congestion pricing should not be

2 directed at yellow taxis that didn't create the  
3 congestion, and there should be an exemption for  
4 yellow taxis, and, when the Commissioner says fair  
5 and equitable plan, a fair and equitable plan has  
6 to take cognizance of the fact that the congestion  
7 was created when the City allowed tens of  
8 thousands of for-hire vehicles to flood the zone.  
9 We need to address that to create a disparate  
10 impact analysis so that the for-hire vehicles are  
11 not treated in the same way that the people who  
12 paid for those medallions for the right to be in  
13 that zone, were given that exclusivity, and the  
14 exemption for taxis should be a position of this  
15 City Council and a position of the Mayor as well,  
16 and we hope that is what actually happens.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

18 LATEEF AJALA: My name is Lateef Ajala.  
19 I'm the Executive Secretary for the Commuter Van  
20 Association of New York and the President of City  
21 Express Corporation, a commuter van company that  
22 services Far Rockaway exclusively. I see this  
23 opportunity to thank the Chairperson and the City  
24 Council Members of the Transportation Committee,  
25 the City Advocate, and Assemblyman Anderson for

2 supporting this bill, Resolution 292. It will be  
3 highly appreciated if we expedite this process so  
4 that we can be back in business as soon as  
5 possible. The way it is right now, we don't have  
6 any legitimate commuter van service in the  
7 Rockaways. Our routes and territory have been  
8 taken over by illegal vans because of high cost of  
9 insurance unnecessary regulations. We thank you,  
10 like I said earlier on, for supporting this  
11 Resolution and that's the reason why I'm here.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so  
14 much, and I'm glad Rockaway is here at City Hall.  
15 Sir.

16 ISRAEL ACEVEDO: Good morning. My name  
17 is Israel Acevedo. I am an owner/operator driving  
18 in the for-hire sector for seven and a half years.  
19 This industry has many issues, and they can't all  
20 be resolved at once, but I want to touch on two  
21 specific issues at the moment. The way TLC  
22 addresses their red light enforcement. When a TLC  
23 driver runs through a red light, they receive a  
24 monetary fine from the DOT of 50 dollars. A month  
25 later, TLC sends out a settlement offer of zero

2 dollars and three points. I think that it's unfair  
3 that we are the only professional drivers in the  
4 City of New York that are penalized twice. When  
5 I've addressed this issue with the TLC, the TLC  
6 says it's not double jeopardy but technically it  
7 is because you're being penalized twice for the  
8 same infraction. Currently, state legislators and  
9 federal legislators are looking for ways to make  
10 Uber and Lyft drivers employees instead of  
11 independent contractors, and the pitch is that  
12 they're concerned because we don't get benefits,  
13 we don't get this, we don't get that, and that's  
14 all great, but what people need to understand,  
15 state and federal, is that this is not a minimum  
16 wage job. You cannot possibly sustain yourself on  
17 15 dollars an hour so if they're going to consider  
18 turning independent contractors into employees and  
19 giving them all these wonderful benefits, they  
20 also need to consider a livable wage. I mean  
21 technically it's like 35, 40 dollars, which I  
22 don't think Uber and Lyft are going to pay their  
23 drivers. People will lose their jobs behind this  
24 because if you force somebody to make somebody an  
25 employee, then it's pretty much like I don't have

2 to have you if I don't want you. When the cost of  
3 the companies go up, they're going to start  
4 canning the driver, and it's a big concern. Thank  
5 you for letting me testify.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I  
7 have a followup question for you though. Can you  
8 explain more about the red light enforcement. When  
9 you say that you're penalized twice, but you said  
10 that there's a settlement offer of zero dollars so  
11 can you just explain that a little?

12 ISRAEL ACEVEDO: That is correct. What  
13 happens is you go through a red light camera.  
14 Let's just say today is October 13th. About a  
15 month from now, you'll get a notice of violation  
16 from the Department of Traffic, DOT. That  
17 infraction is 50 dollars. Then a month later,  
18 you'll get an envelope from the Taxi and Limousine  
19 Commission, and the Taxi and Limousine Commission  
20 will cite a certain rule and they'll say accept  
21 this settlement of zero dollars and three points  
22 or you can go to a hearing at OATH, and, if you  
23 lose the hearing, then you'll get the three points  
24 and you'll pay 400 dollars. David Do said it  
25 earlier, most of our TLC drivers are safe drivers.

2 I just think it's unfair that we're targeted that  
3 way. I don't have an issue with the red light  
4 camera being enforced. I just think three points  
5 for a camera violation is just a little absurd.  
6 The way they address it, and you pretty much take  
7 the settlement because your chances at OATH are  
8 like hopeless so you take the settlement, you take  
9 these three points. Now, if you get another three  
10 points within a 15-month period, your TLC license  
11 gets suspended for about 30 days. If you accrue, I  
12 believe it's 10 points within a 15-month period,  
13 your license gets revoked. It's discriminatory on  
14 all levels. You've got MTA drivers, bus drivers,  
15 you've got school bus drivers, you've Access-A-  
16 Ride drivers, you've got all these drivers, nobody  
17 gets penalized like the TLC driver does, nobody,  
18 and it's just unfair, and I've addressed it with  
19 them. There's a bill that was sponsored by  
20 Fernando Cabrera, Intro 748-A. That bill was  
21 supposed to protect the drivers from double  
22 jeopardy, but, when you address it with the TLC,  
23 they say it's not double jeopardy so how is it not  
24 double jeopardy. Their justification is the DOT  
25 issues the fine to the car and the TLC issues the

2 fine to the driver, but it's still double  
3 jeopardy. You're being hit twice for the same  
4 violation, but they say it's not, and I don't know  
5 how. I've got a stack of emails because I got this  
6 ticket, and, you want to know what it did to me,  
7 it put me in a lot of stress. You want to know  
8 why? Because I need at least 5 grand a month to  
9 sustain my household. I am an owner/operator. All  
10 the expenses are on me. I purchased the vehicle. I  
11 pay collision insurance. I pay liability  
12 insurance. I pay for gas. The burden is always on  
13 the driver. We take this burden, and we fight,  
14 fight, fight, but we don't get no responses, and a  
15 lot of times we just feel like our voices are  
16 going unheard. It's horrible. Whether it's yellow,  
17 whether it's green, whether it's FHV's, we are all  
18 invested in this business. We pay to drive, and we  
19 should be protected, and they don't protect us.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you  
21 for that feedback.

22 With that, the Committee will stand at  
23 ease.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: We're  
25 going to now call the next panel for public

2 testimony. I would like to now welcome Cira  
3 Angeles, Hector Herman, Richard Chow, and Diakite  
4 Bamba to testify.

5 CIRA ANGELES: Good afternoon. My name  
6 is Cira Angeles. I'm the Spokesperson for the  
7 Livery Base Owners. We serve approximately 250  
8 bases in our communities out of 317 that we still  
9 have doing business in the City of New York. The  
10 communities we serve trust us to provide safe,  
11 reliable transportation, but the livery sector is  
12 in a state of emergency due to the past decade of  
13 one-size-fits-all regulations implemented by the  
14 City, most especially the 2018 cap on for-hire  
15 vehicle licenses. While passenger demand has  
16 remained steady, the community car service sector  
17 has lost both bases, approximately 177 businesses  
18 have closed, and almost from 30,000, we barely  
19 have 6,711. The crisis has affected us directly.  
20 Out of 24,000 licenses that we don't have in the  
21 industry, 22,000 of them are attributed to being  
22 lost in community car services. Impact in the  
23 transportation deserts impacting the communities  
24 on a day-to-day basis. The taskforce identified  
25 that our livery sector is the most impacted



2 segment of the industry, an admission that  
3 diminishes our communities of color in  
4 transportation and impacts also by the livery cab  
5 blanket regulation. A lot has been said about the  
6 service not changing in the wait times. The truth  
7 is that 39 percent of our calls from people in our  
8 communities, we have to deny. We have to refuse  
9 service because we don't have enough vehicles. The  
10 TLC has proposed another 1,000 licenses for  
11 electric vehicles. The truth is that we welcome  
12 the opportunity to be part of a better  
13 environment. Our drivers cannot afford these  
14 electric vehicles. There is no infrastructure, and  
15 to say their ratio, 600 to 400, against individual  
16 operators diminishes our individual drivers the  
17 opportunity to have their own vehicle again and  
18 stop renting. We urge the City Council to look  
19 into the different segments of the industry as we  
20 plead for your help, and we want to be partners in  
21 the city because our bases that are located  
22 throughout the five boroughs can be a place where  
23 drivers can charge their vehicles. Yes, indeed,  
24 they're going to save a lot of money in gas, but  
25 the truth is that maintenance and other things

2 that come with owning electric vehicles can also  
3 put a lot of economic burden on our drivers. We  
4 plead for the City Council and the TLC to continue  
5 working the leadership to bring the necessary  
6 solutions to the table for us to continue  
7 servicing our communities and to provide the  
8 service that we have been providing for the last  
9 40 years.

10 Thank you for your consideration, our  
11 statement has been submitted, and we are happy to  
12 work together as New Yorkers to ensure that the  
13 city can continue to provide opportunities for  
14 hard-working immigrants and their families in our  
15 industry.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I  
17 do have a followup question. When you say loss in  
18 community cars, what do you mean?

19 CIRA ANGELES: Our community vehicles,  
20 livery, the industry has different sectors or  
21 segments. We have the black cars, we have the  
22 community car services, we have the yellows, we  
23 have the greens, and we also have the luxury  
24 limousines, the vans, and the (INAUDIBLE)  
25 transits. Our segment of the industry at one

2 point, in 2014, 2013, we enjoyed having 30,000  
3 vehicles to service our boroughs. Today, reported  
4 by the TLC, including the 1,500, 1,600 borough  
5 taxis, we only have 6,700 vehicles to service the  
6 population of the outer boroughs and it reflects  
7 on the numbers the Commissioner previously stated  
8 saying that prior to 2018 the industry enjoyed  
9 120,000 vehicles. Today, as of July 2022, there  
10 are only 95,000 vehicles on the road.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

12 Sir.

13 BAMBA DIAKITE: Good morning, everybody.

14 My name is Bamba Diakite. I drive a taxi. My point  
15 is talking about (INAUDIBLE) close the app, the  
16 taxi driver. The taxi driver working, support  
17 their family. How do you close the app, Uber and  
18 Lyft close the app (INAUDIBLE) Everybody works,  
19 helps their family. That's why I will tell the TLC  
20 take the (INAUDIBLE) Thank you, everybody.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

22 Sir.

23 HECTOR GERMAN: (SPEAKING FOREIGN  
24 LANGUAGE)

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I was just  
3 going to ask if you could wrap it up, please.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: (SPEAKING  
5 FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

6 HECTOR GERMAN: (SPEAKING FOREIGN  
7 LANGUAGE)

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: (SPEAKING  
9 FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.  
11 Sir.

12 RICHARD CHOW: Good morning,  
13 Transportation Committee Chairperson and all City  
14 Council Members and everyone. My name is Richard  
15 Chow. I'm an owner/driver. I'm driving taxi for 17  
16 years. I'm proud to be a New York Taxis Workers  
17 Alliance member. Yellow cabs and green cabs  
18 (INAUDIBLE) no raise for 10 years. That's 10  
19 years, inflation up 2 percent. Last year,  
20 inflation up close to 10 percent. That's too much.  
21 Thank you, Commissioner David Do, for proposing a  
22 raise for the meter fare for yellow cab drivers.  
23 The owner/drivers barely survive. We have to buy a  
24 new car, pay the high tab medallion loan, we need  
25 a raise as soon as possible. JFK fare (INAUDIBLE)

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 85  
2 is 52 dollars to 70 dollars, LaGuardia meter fare  
3 plus 5-dollar surcharge to the City, even rush  
4 hour 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. 1 dollar to \$2.50,  
5 (INAUDIBLE) charge 50 cents to \$1.50. City Council  
6 and Transportation Committee (INAUDIBLE) annually  
7 raise the meter fare based on inflation. Yellow  
8 and green cabs are part of New York's public  
9 transportation so we are (INAUDIBLE) every trip 3  
10 dollars for the MTA. City made 850 million dollars  
11 it says between 2001 and 2012. Taxi and FHV  
12 industry have given to the city more than close to  
13 2 billion dollars. I collect every day 30 dollars  
14 for the MTA. I have the proof of the receipt here.  
15 All MTA Access-A-Ride fare and all (INAUDIBLE)  
16 given to the yellow cab should be the metered fare  
17 and should be transparent. We yellow cab and green  
18 cab FHV need a retirement plan. We also pay our  
19 own share to collect the MTA (INAUDIBLE) yellow  
20 and green cab exemption 23 dollars congestion  
21 below the (INAUDIBLE) so last year we protest in  
22 the City Hall 45 days, 15-day hunger strike. We  
23 (INAUDIBLE) hunger strike, me and a lot of our  
24 union members including Assembly Member Zohran  
25 Mamdani and Assembly Woman Yuh-Line Niou, we

2 participate in the hunger strike. We won the debt  
3 forgiven and the city-backed guarantee. From the  
4 bottom of my heart, I want to thank Senator Chuck  
5 Schumer, our Mayor, our TLC Commissioner, and all  
6 elected officials, and our union leader, Bhairavi  
7 Desai, and all the New Yorkers. Thank you so much.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I  
9 just want to reiterate if we can please, please,  
10 please adhere to the two-minute rule. Thank you  
11 because I don't want to have to cut anyone off.  
12 Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
14 The next panel, we'll call up Anil Pradhan, Basia  
15 Osowsky, Jacky Lin, and Azizul Haque to testify.

16 ANIL PRADHAN: Good afternoon, Council  
17 Members. My name is Anil Pradhan, and I am a  
18 member of IDG. I've been driving for the FHV as a  
19 driver for five years. Actually, I'm here today  
20 (INAUDIBLE) TLC. When the TLC company will issue  
21 the new plates for the drivers like me, like all  
22 drivers, I've been paying a lot for rental  
23 companies, and I want to have my own TLC plate so  
24 I've been waiting for that. The other concern is  
25 the TLC cops. Really, given trouble, hard time for

2 the drivers like us, like we have been paying big  
3 amounts for no reasons. I had an incident a couple  
4 of days ago, a TLC cop pulled me over for no  
5 reasons, my holder was broken, and I was just  
6 using my phone on my lap (INAUDIBLE) GPS issues  
7 and I'm driving for myself without passengers so  
8 they pull me over for holding my device on my lap,  
9 and I said (INAUDIBLE) and it stopped (INAUDIBLE)  
10 law but they give me a big amount of ticket and  
11 they said I can appeal for that, but I don't want  
12 to pay a single penny for that because I know my  
13 rights. I didn't do any mistake so (INAUDIBLE)  
14 really fight for it. I don't want other drivers to  
15 get the same summons or (INAUDIBLE) for doing  
16 nothing like this. Small, tiny mistakes. My  
17 concern is that. Thank you so much and have a  
18 great day.

19 BASIA OSOWSKY: Thank you, everybody,  
20 for allowing me to speak today. The reason why  
21 we're here today is because we have a lot of  
22 difficulties being a driver. There's a lot of  
23 enforcement that is coming down upon us. We're  
24 getting attacked from everywhere. We go to the  
25 airport. They try to tell us can you take me

2 there, 40 dollars, the next thing you know we've  
3 got a ticket for 2,000 dollars. I'm not saying I  
4 do that, but I hear stories. That hurts drivers.  
5 Hence, this is why I want to say we need someone  
6 as the TLC Commissioner, we need someone there,  
7 not me as a TLC Commissioner, but someone else as  
8 a Driver/Commissioner. The reason is if a driver  
9 understands the community, understands the  
10 industry, they are one of the most educated ones  
11 to make changes of these matters, and that's what  
12 I want to say.

13 Another thing was before, Commissioner  
14 Do, he was talking about why does driver make u-  
15 turns and about Vision Zero. As a driver, a rider  
16 will come up to us and say hey, can you make a u-  
17 turn. Now, in that u-turn, if anything happens we  
18 get penalized. If we say no to that u-turn, we  
19 still get penalized. How do we get penalized from  
20 that? Because riders will take that and they'll  
21 use it as a way to make another excuse and say  
22 hey, this driver was trying to sexually assault  
23 me, this driver was trying to do other kind of,  
24 it's all false accusations made against the  
25 drivers where the (INAUDIBLE) will listen. Now, if



2 that does happen, yes, they do get a ticket but  
3 then they face deactivation so this is why u-  
4 turns, it's not safe, I get it, but we need to get  
5 more protection on those matters.

6 Another thing is that we need specific  
7 places to drop off and pick up passengers without  
8 being penalized like, what was it, like bus lanes  
9 and bike lanes. No, I'm not saying over there, but  
10 a place just to pick up and drop off without being  
11 penalized. Especially in Manhattan, that's very  
12 difficult. Thank you for your time.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.  
14 We have one actually in Council Member Ariola's  
15 district that I notice that works pretty well,  
16 like an area where folks can drop off and take  
17 their time and stuff like that so real estate is  
18 hard in New York City, but that's something we can  
19 work on together and see what options are out  
20 there. Sir.

21 MOHAMMAD AZIZUL HAQUE: Good afternoon,  
22 Committee, and thank you, Chairman. My name is  
23 Mohammad Azizul Haque, and I'm a proud member of  
24 New York City Taxi Worker Alliance, and I'm an  
25 owner/driver of FHV. I'm a full-time driver, and I

2 have been driving for five years. We have seen  
3 this industry has changed a lot. I joined this  
4 industry with hope, but now drivers of this  
5 industry are facing a critical situation due to  
6 inflation. Drivers are facing higher cost due to  
7 this inflation. Prices are skyrocketing, making  
8 drivers vulnerable. Another challenge we are  
9 facing from the app companies with the hiring  
10 freeze while drivers are getting only minimum pay  
11 which is not fair livable wage while other  
12 industry's wage went up. Even in emergency  
13 situation, if there is storm or a state of  
14 emergency, they charge higher fees. We feel it's  
15 unfair. This needs to change. Another thing we  
16 need is just cost protection proposed by NYTWA.  
17 I'm working today, but tomorrow I'm not sure I'll  
18 be able to work or not because a simple warning  
19 can fire me and my livelihood can be taken away so  
20 it's time to pass a bill which is called Just  
21 Cause Protection (INAUDIBLE) by New York City Taxi  
22 Worker Alliance, and it's really important. We  
23 want to see a justifiable cause to deactivate  
24 drivers. We know drivers are the (INAUDIBLE) of  
25 the city's transportation system. It's time to

2 protect their drivers and their livelihoods and  
3 think of their future. I would like to thank you  
4 all for this hearing, and it's important for  
5 everyone. Thank you so much.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.

8 We'll move to our next panel. I would like to now  
9 welcome Raul Rivera, Leroy Morrison, Aloha Barry,  
10 and Rakesh Pradhan to testify.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Whenever  
12 you're ready.

13 RAUL RIVERA: Thank you. Good afternoon.  
14 My name is Raul Rivera. I'm a New York native. I'm  
15 a TLC driver, TLC driver advocate. I'm also the  
16 Founder of NYC Drivers Unite, the only group in  
17 New York City seeking to reform the Taxi and  
18 Limousine Commission. That's the real issue here  
19 in New York, not the yellow, not the green, not  
20 Uber and Lyft. We are all TLC drivers. We have a  
21 petition to reform the TLC. Council Member Carlina  
22 Rivera signed it, Jumaane Williams signed it, Eric  
23 Adams signed it, and many other elected officials.  
24 We ask you to join in signing that petition. It's  
25 symbolic. We're fighting for the reform of this

2 agency. It's 50 years old and has failed the  
3 drivers. We have bills that have been drafted. We  
4 shared those bills with you and your Committee. We  
5 hope to have hearings sooner rather than later for  
6 those bills for the benefit of all drivers,  
7 regardless of what sector they drive in. We hope  
8 that doesn't go on deaf ears. The bills are very  
9 important. We're here to support you and your  
10 Committee. You won't find a stronger advocate than  
11 myself. You may see me and look at a taxi driver,  
12 but really I'm a native New Yorker, I'm here  
13 fighting for my rights. This agency has failed us.  
14 I tried to get a meeting with the Commissioner.  
15 Just so you know, he gave me a phone call for five  
16 minutes. He thinks that's a meeting. I said that's  
17 not a meeting. He's meeting with every other  
18 group, but he refused to meet with me. I left him  
19 two voicemail notes, I spoke to him for five  
20 minutes, and I just spoke to him now before he  
21 left, and all he can say is we'll see, we'll see,  
22 and if you ignore one New Yorker you ignore them  
23 all. He should do the right thing and sit down and  
24 meet with us. It's ironic that the group that he  
25 doesn't want to meet with is the only group in the

2 city seeking a reform of the Taxi and Limousine  
3 Commission so we urge the Commissioner and we even  
4 ask for your support so we can get this meeting. I  
5 thank you for meeting us in June. Thank you so  
6 much.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thanks so  
8 much. Sir.

9 LEROY MORRISON: Good morning, Chair. I  
10 want to say thank you, Madam Chair, to have this  
11 hearing on behalf of commuter vans, the Reso 292  
12 along with Intro 87. Commuter vans have been  
13 around for decades. My name is Leroy Morrison. I'm  
14 the President for New York City Commuter Van  
15 Association. Pretty much, I'm the shaker and the  
16 mover for all commuter vans across New York City,  
17 in the Asian community, black and brown community.  
18 This today is a day where I'm looking forward to  
19 this for 32 years, to see the black and brown  
20 community stop being harassed by the police when  
21 they want to take commuter vans, whether it's a  
22 passenger, whether it's a rider, and with all  
23 respect due today's history so that my grandkids,  
24 your grandkids can see that commuter van is  
25 recognized. Whenever the city needs commuter vans,

2 they take us from underground, and as soon as we  
3 finish they put us back under the ground, but I'm  
4 glad that the new TLC Commissioner and the  
5 Transportation Madam Chair recognize commuter vans  
6 in the black and brown community and the Asian  
7 community that we deserve the same thing as much  
8 as the Uber and Lyfts and the other neighborhoods  
9 that's gentrification. Commuter vans have been  
10 around a long time. I've been shot, I've been  
11 robbed, I've been stopped. I still go along with  
12 it. Commuter van is the way to go for all New  
13 Yorkers, not gentrification. Some of the seniors,  
14 they don't understand about technology, they used  
15 to come out and get their vans. The single woman  
16 parents with their kids going to school, they  
17 don't have money for school bus, they used to get  
18 on the commuter vans. Driver, I have three kids,  
19 and I only have two dollars. We are here,  
20 recognize who we are, and I'm glad for your  
21 support. It's always a pleasure, Madam, to meet up  
22 with you, and I will always fight for commuter  
23 vans. There's one thing with this Reso here we  
24 forgot to put A9731 in the Assembly, that's  
25 Khaleel Anderson, and we have 18 Assembly Members

2 rally on that bill already, and it's a bipartisan  
3 bill in the Senate, and I'm asking you please,  
4 Madam Chair, to add the Governor's Office and also  
5 the Speaker to push this bill forward and in the  
6 Senate to ask Stewart-Cousins to push this bill  
7 because we need it, reform, commuter vans. Thank  
8 you so much and have a great day. Hoping to work  
9 with the Transportation Chair and also the people  
10 in the City of New York, and I will always hear.  
11 Thank you all.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.  
13 Just to be clear, you're talking about Assembly  
14 Bill 9731, right?

15 LEROY MORRISON: 9731 is the same thing  
16 as S5320. Pretty much in Albany, I'm the one that  
17 makes the phone calls, I'm the one that called,  
18 and it's a bipartisan bill. I make the calls. I'm  
19 the shaker and I'm the mover for commuter vans. We  
20 passed five bills in the City Council. I did nine  
21 in the state. Right now, I have one with the  
22 state, the Governor waiting to sign it, and we  
23 raised also 11.2 million dollars to put back  
24 commuter vans on the street, and thanks to the  
25 insurance company, I brought him here today, he's

2 here to bring affordable insurance for all  
3 commuter vans. Right now, we are paying 35,000,  
4 and that's too high. We're moving from 10,000 to  
5 35,000 so today we have the insurance company  
6 owner who is here (INAUDIBLE) and I want to say  
7 thanks to Khaleel Anderson to be here and thanks  
8 to you and all the City Council Members to  
9 recognize what commuter vans are. I've been doing  
10 this for 32 years. I'm the owner for Alexis Van  
11 Lines in Brooklyn and also the owner for  
12 (INAUDIBLE) Transportation and the Secretary for  
13 Commuter Van Across New York City, she is here and  
14 I respect her and thanks to be here.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you  
16 for that. I know in Southeast Queens we  
17 definitely...

18 LEROY MORRISON: And you have Janet  
19 right there. She's the Secretary for Rockaway,  
20 Southeast Queens, the Asian community that cannot  
21 speak English properly, I represent them also so  
22 they are people like everyone else.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.  
24 Sir.



2 ALPHA BARRY: Good afternoon, everybody.  
3 This is my first time being out in this hearing. I  
4 thank the City Council Members for organizing  
5 this.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Can you just  
7 bring the mic a little closer? I'm having a hard  
8 time hearing you. Thank you.

9 ALPHA BARRY: My name is Alpha Barry.  
10 I've been driving for almost 19 years, and I'm a  
11 NYTWA member, and I thank the City Council Members  
12 for organizing this hearing for us and to hear  
13 what we have to say. The reason why we are here is  
14 because of the deactivation. Uber deactivated my  
15 account because I was offered to charge a  
16 passenger cell phone so she forgot the phone in  
17 the car and 10 minutes later she called, she said  
18 she forgot her phone, and I brought the phone  
19 back. The next day, my account was deactivated. I  
20 went to Uber office, and anywhere I go they told  
21 me they didn't see any reason, but there's no way  
22 they can activate my account. I say how are you  
23 going to tell me you don't see any reason why my  
24 account was deactivated and you can't reactivate  
25 my account. These companies are making rules. TLC

2 gives us a license, they gave us plates. In order  
3 for you to be a cab driver in New York, you have  
4 to have a TLC license so Uber is making their own  
5 rules and regulations without even consulting the  
6 TLC. Without even consulting the TLC, they do  
7 their own rules. When they first came, they never  
8 thought they were going to survive. Now they throw  
9 us under the bus. The effect that I got from that  
10 was my family just came and has a debt, I have  
11 credit card, I have no money in my account, I  
12 can't even pay my rent, and it was just too much  
13 for me. Right now, I'm driving for Lyft. Lyft also  
14 is doing the same thing. They want you to pick up  
15 every passenger. When you miss one or two, they  
16 send you a deactivation notice without thinking  
17 that when you go out there you put gas in your  
18 car, you are more hungry than them, so it's  
19 impossible to pick up everyone so that's like  
20 intimidation.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Is there  
22 like an appeal process or mechanism that's  
23 available or none at all?

24 ALPHA BARRY: None at all. It seems like  
25 there's nobody there who will stand up for us to

2 fight for us so we are here. We need to stop this  
3 deactivation.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Can I just ask a  
5 question around that? For better for me to  
6 understand process, so let's say you're ready to  
7 drive, and you pick up a passenger, pick up a  
8 second passenger, and then you skip the third,  
9 skip the fourth, and then they send you a notice  
10 saying...

11 ALPHA BARRY: Listen, say they give you  
12 a passenger. The last time they give me a  
13 passenger this passenger was in the park, inside  
14 the park, so I was on Fifth Avenue, 11 o'clock at  
15 night. I texted the passenger. I said I cannot go  
16 into the park. You need to come to the street so  
17 the passenger didn't respond so I called him and  
18 he hung up on me so he called me, I pick up the  
19 phone, and he hung up again so I think he was just  
20 trying to play games on me so the next one put a  
21 wrong address, it was on 31st Street and 7th  
22 Avenue so when I came there, she called me and  
23 said I'm 31st Street and 7th Avenue. When I came  
24 there, she said oh, I'm in front of the post  
25 office. I know there's no post office on 37th and

2 7th Avenue. The post office is on 8th Avenue. Then  
3 I looked at the app and I saw where she was  
4 standing. I said you know what, ma'am, wait for  
5 me, I'm coming for you because I know this is not  
6 the place where you are. She kept saying I'm on  
7 7th Avenue and 31st Street and she said also she  
8 said she's in front of the post office, but I know  
9 she's not on 7th Avenue so I went there. When I  
10 went there, she also told me oh, I'm on 9th Avenue  
11 so she kept moving around so I canceled the ride.  
12 The next I got was a notice that this is a  
13 warning, we're going to deactivate your account or  
14 we will deactivate your account permanently so I  
15 have it on my phone right here. I can show it to  
16 you if you want to.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Is that  
18 happening in the moment or is that happening later  
19 in the week when they look back at your rides?

20 ALPHA BARRY: No, that happened. I think  
21 that was the reason why it happens because every  
22 week they don't go what happened the other week.  
23 They go through the week that you are working.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: That makes  
25 sense. Okay. Thank you for clarifying that.

2 ALPHA BARRY: Please help us stop the  
3 deactivation and also drivers, instead of putting  
4 more drivers on the road, drivers that have been  
5 deactivated unfairly I think we should activate  
6 those drivers instead of putting more cars on the  
7 road. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If you make  
9 noise again, you will be removed from the Chamber.  
10 Sir.

11 RAKESH PRADHAN: Hello. Good afternoon.  
12 Thanks for giving me the chance for speaking for  
13 this Committee. I'm a member from the IDG and a  
14 TLC driver, and I am driving since five years for  
15 the FHV. Today, I'm representing those drivers who  
16 are suffering from this cap from the TLC for the  
17 license plate. Those drivers, we are working on a  
18 day more than 16, 18 hours on the road for our  
19 families, for our better improvement of the life.  
20 My concern is today the TLC is giving 1,000 plates  
21 for those drivers. I want to get that the plates  
22 are only for the drivers, not for the big fleet  
23 companies because after the pandemic these fleet  
24 companies have raised the price for the plates and  
25 for the vehicles, they have raised so much the

2 price for renting the plates and the vehicle, and  
3 you have to give the plates to those drivers who  
4 have been driving more than 10, 15 years, and they  
5 are renting the plates and the vehicles from these  
6 companies. I want to give this information to the  
7 Committee that if the TLC plate, it will be a  
8 great relief for the drivers and give the plates  
9 to the drivers, not for the leasing companies.  
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

12 LEROY MORRISON: Excuse me, Madam Chair.  
13 One second, please. I forgot to say thank you so  
14 much to Jumaane Williams also and Mr. Hector  
15 Ricketts on the record. Thank you so much.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Really  
17 quickly.

18 RAUL RIVERA: Yes, I just want to say  
19 that 90 percent of the drivers are immigrants that  
20 have a language barrier and deactivation is  
21 something that could easily, easily happen. I have  
22 over 23,000 trips, and the language barrier is a  
23 big problem. The app companies abuse, and that's  
24 why elected officials and the City Council should  
25

2 always put humans first, technology second today,  
3 tomorrow, forever.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
5 everyone

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
7 We'll call up the next panel. I would like to now  
8 welcome Sonam Ghising (phonetic), Zashib Alanti  
9 (phonetic), Madjed Segrar (phonetic), and Rashid  
10 Awan to testify. Thanks. You may begin.

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Hi. Good afternoon, City  
12 Council. We are living in New York City. TLC, we  
13 drive the taxi and Uber, Lyft, they drive the  
14 taxi, but this company, any price came up, but we  
15 don't do nothing if a (INAUDIBLE) taxi driver  
16 (INAUDIBLE) 500 fine in TLC. Same country, same  
17 city. Why the two rules? I don't know. TLC  
18 looking, this is the taxi driver, this is the Lyft  
19 and the Uber. I don't know why they do that.  
20 Another thing, if somebody complained for my name  
21 or my taxi, I am still going to court, but  
22 complainant don't come to court and then TLC say  
23 oh, they're not coming so why? I'm driver. I lose  
24 money. The complainant, why not coming? Why does  
25

2 TLC do this two ways? I don't know, but can you  
3 find out, please? Thank you, everybody.

4 RASHID AWAN: Good afternoon, everyone.  
5 My name is Rashid Awan. I'm TLC driver since 2011.  
6 I'm driving a rental car. Since then, I'm paying  
7 money, more than I should every week because  
8 before I could not afford to buy a personal car to  
9 work, but now I can afford to buy a small car to  
10 work but, because TLC has a cap on FHV permits,  
11 I'm not able to get an FHV permit. They're only  
12 giving out 1,000 electric vehicle FHV permits, but  
13 I cannot afford because electric vehicles and  
14 wheelchair-accessible vehicles cost a lot to bring  
15 them on the road to work, which most of the  
16 drivers like me cannot afford. I request on behalf  
17 of this Commission to TLC at least give me and  
18 drivers like me who are driving rental cars since  
19 before August 14, 2018, when the TLC put the cap  
20 for FHV permits at least one permit, at least one  
21 place that we can (INAUDIBLE) This will be a big  
22 help for us which will help us to have a better  
23 life for us and our families. Because I think  
24 everyone who is working in this industry in rental  
25 cars more than five years, we all deserve to have



2 at least one personal FHV permit. Please worry  
3 about the ones in need and stop giving  
4 corporations any new plates. They charge too much  
5 rent and also give us bad cars that break down and  
6 then we lose money and we can't work. On top of  
7 that, now MTA wants to add more tolls every time  
8 we will enter Manhattan and that's also something  
9 we can't afford. We work in Manhattan. We don't  
10 come to visit. As IDG said, we drivers should not  
11 be paying these tolls. It's not our fault that TLC  
12 and Uber overloaded the market. TLC should pause  
13 the license and Uber and Lyft should stop hiring  
14 new drivers. No matter how much of a raise we get,  
15 it's not going to be worth it if the work keeps  
16 dividing between drivers. A union is needed, and  
17 IDG is the world's largest driver-led organization  
18 and they are doing a great job in helping and  
19 fighting for this.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm sorry,  
21 sir. I need you to wrap up. Thank you. I just want  
22 to note, as we continue on, we have a lot of  
23 people that want to testify today so we need to  
24 stick to the timing.

2 RASHID AWAN: Please, can you give one  
3 last minute?

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: One last  
5 line. Not a minute. A few seconds.

6 RASHID AWAN: I just want to say because  
7 we request, IDG, already they put a bill in front  
8 of TLC that at least they should give out 7,000  
9 plates to the drivers because electric vehicles  
10 and the wheelchair vehicles are very expensive to  
11 bring on the roads. We cannot afford that. If you  
12 go to check Tesla, that's like 70,000 dollars  
13 vehicle, and, if you want to do a wheelchair  
14 vehicle, that's 15,000 dollars just for the lift  
15 to be installed. A little money we can have a  
16 small car and we can save some money for us and  
17 our families.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: We  
19 understand.

20 RASHID AWAN: Thank you. I request on  
21 your behalf to TLC.

22 SONAM GHISING LAMA: Thank you, Council  
23 Members, Committee Chair, for having me here. My  
24 name is Sonam Ghising Lama. I'm an FHV driver and  
25 a proud of Independent Driver Guild who represent

2 100,000 in the city and nationwide. I also  
3 represent my community, the Nepalese community, in  
4 this city. I have over 3,000 drivers in my group  
5 where I help them with everything that they need.  
6 I'm a driver too so I'm not talking about for me,  
7 but I'm talking about all the drivers. The problem  
8 started with COVID. We were the ones who stood at  
9 the front place to help all the people in need,  
10 delivering food, taking people to the (INAUDIBLE)  
11 to the hospitals, to the police station, wherever  
12 we were wanted, we did it, but what happened after  
13 that was not any (INAUDIBLE) not any government  
14 took care of us. They just tried to make bills,  
15 paying unnecessary fees. These things are leaving  
16 drivers in poverty and depression still. Like my  
17 colleagues said, capping the rental fees. It was  
18 250 dollars, the maximum was 350 that I learned,  
19 but right now it's like over 700. It's not me  
20 speaking. The guy who is paying 700 is behind me,  
21 he's right there, and I'm pretty much sure if TLC  
22 would be here and hearing that, that would be more  
23 effective too, but now they're gone. That's the  
24 disparity and the TLC people, and I really want to  
25 thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are

2 here to listen to us and the drivers. What I'll be  
3 requesting to your Committee is capping the rental  
4 fees right now. We can't afford 700 dollars to pay  
5 for the rental fees. They are the mafia right now  
6 for the drivers, and we are not rich. We cannot  
7 afford 100,000 Tesla cars to have the TLC cars. It  
8 has to be something that you should consider. We  
9 are immigrants. Our parents are not billionaires,  
10 millionaires. We are immigrants and colored  
11 people, like you guys, so we want you guys to  
12 think about us as a human, not like rich people,  
13 we could afford TLC cars for electric vehicle.  
14 Apart from that, the unfair deactivations  
15 (INAUDIBLE) has some supports for the unfair  
16 deactivations. They can come to IDG office. Also,  
17 definitely new plates for the drivers. 1,000 EV,  
18 think about it, these old drivers, they have  
19 family, they're waiting, and today they're  
20 expecting their husband to have the plates in  
21 their hand, but I know it's not going to happen.  
22 You know why? Because TLC capped them. Some of the  
23 people inside the building, they made a bill to  
24 cap the TLC plates. Thousands of plates were

2 (INAUDIBLE) during the pandemic. Where are those  
3 plates? Please give them opportunity. Please.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
5 sir.

6 SONAM GHISING LAMA: That's my thing.  
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

9 RASHID AWAN: I'm sorry. One second. If  
10 you look at companies like (INAUDIBLE), they have  
11 thousands of vehicles. They're just renting out to  
12 us to make money. TLC gives them out thousands of  
13 plates, but they don't want to give us one plate.  
14 I'm driving since 2011. We don't make much. I  
15 could never afford it. That's why I'm still  
16 renting. Now I can buy like a 15,000-dollar car  
17 and put my own plates if TLC give me. I can save  
18 some money. I'm the only breadwinner in my house.  
19 I can give a better life to my kids. Please  
20 request them to open not the EV vehicles, at least  
21 one personal plate to any driver at least who is  
22 renting since before the cap.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: My  
24 understanding from the Commissioner was that in  
25

2 the 1,000 that there's a certain portion that are  
3 going to be for the drivers.

4 SONAM GHISING LAMA: It's only 600. If  
5 you look at the tower, look at the (INAUDIBLE) how  
6 many cars they're renting out, thousands of cars,  
7 thousands of cars. Those people need their own  
8 plates because this is not the industry like  
9 somebody joined yesterday and he will be able to  
10 buy his own car today. You understand? I'm telling  
11 you I've been here for 11 years, this industry.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
13 Sir.

14 RASHID AWAN: Madam Speaker, if I may,  
15 just wanted to add the same thing, so the TLC  
16 proposed 1,000 cars for EV. Like I said, all  
17 drivers, we don't come from rich families. We are  
18 immigrants. We are here to build a family and  
19 future, and how can we put ourselves in debt?  
20 Right now, the (INAUDIBLE) people, they are in  
21 debt. We don't want to see ourselves, knowing the  
22 path that would lead us to debt so I request, IDG  
23 is fighting for 7,000 plates for the drivers who  
24 have been fighting for long. They should get a  
25 chance. I have a plate. I don't want it, but for

2 my fellow drivers right here sitting, I'm fighting  
3 for them, I'm fighting for him too.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Thank  
5 you.

6 RASHID AWAN: Thank you so much for  
7 having us.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: We'll now  
9 call the next panel. I'd like to call Adalgisa  
10 Payero-Diarra, Onkar Singh, A. Kadir, and Jeevan  
11 Poudel to testify.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'd also  
13 like to take a moment to acknowledge my Colleagues  
14 that have been in attendance for today's  
15 Transportation and Infrastructure hearing. Council  
16 Member River, Louis, Farias, Kagan, Lee, Narcisse,  
17 Restler, Stevens, Williams, Carr, and Ariola.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: You may  
19 begin.

20 ADALGISA PAYERO-DIARRA: Good afternoon,  
21 Madam Chair, Council Members, and members of the  
22 taxi industry. Thank you for the opportunity to  
23 speak today. My name is Adalgisa Payero-Diarra. I  
24 represent the organization UTANY, which is a non-  
25 profit organization that fights for the drivers'

2 rights, mainly in the Upper Manhattan and the  
3 Bronx area. We want to urge the new Commissioner  
4 to review the practices that the agency has been  
5 doing for too long. We encourage that they make  
6 changes, especially to the OATH department, that  
7 we desperately need. We are pleased to hear about  
8 the proposals and the changes that they want to  
9 make, which is the relief fund for the yellow  
10 cabs, the release of plates, the increase in fares  
11 that we have needed for a long time, the safety  
12 programs that they are trying to implement for the  
13 drivers. We have seen a huge amount of assaults  
14 and deaths in the taxi community within the past  
15 months and we urge and are desperate for a safety  
16 program that ensures that all drivers come home to  
17 their family. We also want to ask the Council  
18 Members to also keep in mind the congestion fee  
19 that is being proposed by the MTA. The taxi  
20 industry has given the MTA and the City almost a  
21 billion dollars since 2019 when the 2.75 fee was  
22 imposed. We urge and we are happy to contribute to  
23 a (INAUDIBLE) but we are also already have  
24 provided money to the city which we are thinking  
25 that we should not be double taxed and it's unfair



2 to the city. We were considered essential drivers  
3 during the pandemic. We provided the services for  
4 essential workers and delivery food for those  
5 staying at home. Now that the pandemic finished,  
6 we are now being considered, I will say, a problem  
7 for the city, and that is not fair. We always  
8 respond to the city when we are needed. We expect  
9 the same from the city, and we encourage the  
10 Council to please review all these policies and  
11 help the taxi industry. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.  
13 Sir.

14 ONKAR SINGH: Thank you, Council  
15 Members. My name is Onkar Singh, and I drive  
16 yellow taxi for more than 20 years, and now I'm a  
17 medallion owner. I am a member of the New York  
18 Taxi Workers Alliance. A lot of lenders have  
19 participated in the restructure of the debts,  
20 loans, but the TLC should pursue and rather  
21 pressurize the other lenders also to come under  
22 this umbrella so that the other drivers who are in  
23 debt, they can also avail this opportunity because  
24 the drivers are at the bottom step of the economy  
25 so they need this help and the TLC should

2 pressurize the other lenders too. Regarding the  
3 hail pickups, it's a great exploitation. A large  
4 portion of the fare is taken by the company so we  
5 want that it should be a meter fare. Regarding the  
6 raise, it's very important (INAUDIBLE) and it's  
7 taken up at this time after 10 years. We  
8 appreciate this, and it should be passed as soon  
9 as possible and implemented immediately because  
10 inflation is so high (INAUDIBLE) that everybody is  
11 disturbed from the high prices. Again, I  
12 appreciate the efforts by the City, City Council,  
13 and the (INAUDIBLE) Alliance to pursue this case.

14 Further, I have another point that my  
15 other friend talked about, the double penalty of  
16 the tickets. The TLC gives unnecessary (INAUDIBLE)  
17 and frustration to the drivers. They look upon the  
18 DMV or DOT (INAUDIBLE) see any violation and then  
19 they come and pick up and torture the drivers. It  
20 should be stopped. That is it. Thank you very  
21 much.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
23 sir.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
25 We will now call our next panel, Anucan Azim

2 Malik, Alieu Jabuon (phonetic), Jawaid Toppa, and  
3 Sonny Moorjani now come forward to testify.

4 JAWAID TOPPA: Good afternoon, Council  
5 Members. My name is Jawaid Toppa. I'm a New York  
6 City cab driver for 27 years from Floral Park, New  
7 York City. I'm a member of New York City Taxi  
8 Workers Alliance.

9 Driving a New York City cab is one of  
10 the most dangerous professions in the world,  
11 behind being a police officer. For the last 10  
12 years, we did not have a fare increase for New  
13 York City taxi drivers. Over the last 10 years,  
14 every five years we also have to replace a car.  
15 They're only given a five-year term limit to  
16 drive. The cost of cars has gone through the roof.  
17 An average car in this day and age costs you at  
18 least 50,000 to 75,000 dollars nowadays. The same  
19 cars that would cost 50,000, ten years ago were  
20 25,000 dollars. Our rents have gone through the  
21 roof. We have to put food on the table for our  
22 kids, and we also have to take care of our elders,  
23 mothers, fathers, sometimes brothers, sisters who  
24 are not working. It's also the sole responsibility  
25 of the household to do the best of his ability to

2 make ends meet. As a New York City cab driver, I'm  
3 also a medallion owner, and the cost of a running  
4 a medallion has gone through the roof. I have a  
5 mortgage to pay on the medallion alone. On top of  
6 that, I have insurance to pay which is about 300  
7 dollars a month. On top of that, I have a mortgage  
8 on the car that runs about 800 to 1,000 a month.  
9 On top of that, I also have to pay the expenses to  
10 maintain that car. The average expense for running  
11 a New York City taxi costs you 500 to 800 dollars  
12 a month because the roads are so damned bad, and  
13 New York City has the highest bad conditions when  
14 it comes down to potholes and manholes. We break  
15 control arms, front ends, transmissions, you name  
16 it. It's costing us an arm and a leg just to try  
17 to make ends meet. I request the Council take into  
18 consideration that the fare from Manhattan to  
19 Kennedy Airport should be at least 80 dollars. The  
20 current rate we're getting is 52 dollars. It takes  
21 us two hours, sir, from right now, from downtown  
22 Lower Manhattan to Kennedy Airport, it will take  
23 you easily two hours to get there. Is your life  
24 worth 52 dollars when you have a heart attack or  
25 stroke?

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
3 sir.

4 JAWAID TOPPA: The leading cause of  
5 death of taxi drivers, just give me one minute,  
6 ma'am, is heart attacks for truck drivers, bus  
7 drivers, and taxi drivers.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
9 sir.

10 JAWAID TOPPA: Thank you.

11 : Good afternoon, Committee Members and  
12 Madam Chairman. I signed up right here to talk  
13 after hearing your interest on Vision Zero. I take  
14 that very strongly, but I want you to know that  
15 Vision Zero is only going to work if everyone  
16 follows the law, everyone here, everyone there. If  
17 it says don't walk, don't walk. If everyone  
18 follows, then Eric Adams does not have a problem  
19 with Vision Zero, and I'm a fair follower of that.

20 Over here today I've heard a lot of  
21 people put down FHV drivers, for-hire vehicle. I'm  
22 not going to badmouth anyone. Back in the days, if  
23 people didn't discriminate, agencies did not  
24 discriminate there would be no reason for Uber or  
25 Lyft to be here so it's here now. Let everyone be

2 treated fairly, fairly. Everyone needs to live.  
3 Not charge these people, don't charge these  
4 people, these people should be excluded, whatever.  
5 Everyone should be treated fairly. I don't even  
6 think congestion pricing should be around. You're  
7 trusting an agency that does not know how to  
8 manage money. You've seen that in the past. The  
9 hypothetical (INAUDIBLE) that you've heard of in  
10 the past, but we all, like I said, should be  
11 treated fairly, completely. That is all. Thank  
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.  
14 Sir.

15 ANWAN MALIK: Good afternoon. My name's  
16 Anwar Malik, and I'm a proud supporter of IDG.  
17 Just want to say to the few brothers that were  
18 saying they're deactivated, they can actually go  
19 to iamdeactivated.com and file an appeal. IDG,  
20 what they do is they just make the appeal for you  
21 to Uber and Lyft and then Uber and Lyft comes back  
22 with an answer, and, if it's a no, they actually  
23 fight harder to get your account back. Besides  
24 that, in the app, there's another appeals process  
25 that is from Uber. With Lyft, you can actually

2 send proof as dash-cam videos and everything. I  
3 don't agree that they're true, that they're 100  
4 percent fake. They just listen to riders, and they  
5 just screw the drivers. It's that simple. I've  
6 seen many, many cases, which is why I actually  
7 became an activists and I'm just fighting so that  
8 actually the power comes into the driver's hand,  
9 and through the IDG platform it's easier for me to  
10 reach out to people, help people, and that's what  
11 I'm doing.

12           Second thing I want to say is TLC  
13 customer service, ever since IDG came into being,  
14 their customer service went up high. It's still  
15 not the best, but it's still high, but now through  
16 that customer service they're actually financially  
17 screwing drivers more where they're giving out  
18 more tickets. That double jeopardy Israel talked  
19 about, that's also true. It's just messed up they  
20 do it.

21           Third thing is I agree with everyone  
22 else that there should be a Driver/Commissioner at  
23 the TLC Board. Over here, you've got Raul, you've  
24 got Israel, you've got all these drivers, you've  
25

2 got IDG, I don't want to say them because they've  
3 been failing us.

4 About the plates, 600 plates go to  
5 drivers. They're only EV plates. Now my guy, after  
6 10 years, he only saved up 15,000 dollars. Now,  
7 how can he afford an EV plate? It's against  
8 religion to be financing cars, and we have to  
9 respect that so let's just give them plates for  
10 the cars they can afford. They've been driving  
11 since 2011. They've been moving the city. They've  
12 been moving people. He's got thousands and  
13 thousands of rides. Just give these people cars  
14 and plates that need them as much as they can  
15 afford them because, as a Muslim, they have  
16 certain restrictions to follow and they respect  
17 that. If they respect their religion, if they  
18 trust in God, we should at least help them.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: I forgot to say one  
21 thing. If I got one minute. The other thing,  
22 Council...

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Sir, no, we  
24 have other people that have to be heard, and we're  
25 really trying to make sure we're hearing everyone.



2 UNIDENTIFIED: I'll make it very quick.

3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You can  
4 submit it in writing, sir. We really want to get  
5 through. We have more people who are online that  
6 have not even gotten a chance to speak yet.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. Appreciate  
8 your time and effort.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
10 Sir.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
12 We'll now call the next panel to testify. Kehinde  
13 Kolawole, Nusrat Jahan, Nizam Ahmed, and Skafidas  
14 Nikolaos.

15 KEHINDE KOLAWOLE: My name is Kehinde  
16 Kolawole. I'm going to address this issue of  
17 deactivation from my experience from the angle of  
18 a student. In 2018, I was a student on my master's  
19 degree course, and Lyft deactivated my account.  
20 Till today, they have not opened it. An issue  
21 happened between me and Lyft. I picked a passenger  
22 up from the city, Manhattan here to Long Island,  
23 and I wanted to cash my money, Lyft would not  
24 allow me to cash the money. I went to their  
25 office. I'm told they were investigating the debit

2 or credit card that the passenger used to pay Lyft

3 because I didn't take money from the passenger,

4 and I ask the guy, when will I get my money

5 (INAUDIBLE) You're investigating the card that was

6 used to pay. That shouldn't affect me because I

7 don't know the passenger. The passenger was given

8 to me by Lyft, but, thereafter, my account was

9 closed. I went to Lyft office, and the guy told me

10 my account has been closed forever, and he told me

11 that one of the passengers said I was parking on

12 the other side of the road. Since 2018, my account

13 has been opened by Lyft. I went to IDG. They

14 helped me appeal, but still it was not opened. I

15 want to state here that the effect of deactivation

16 of an account is very disastrous on drivers.

17 Drivers in New York City working with these app

18 business companies, we have been treated as second

19 fiddles. I believe they said America is the land

20 of the free and wish New York is part of it, but I

21 must tell you (INAUDIBLE) we drivers don't have

22 freedom of economy, to choose what we want to do

23 or to choose what we want to work for because they

24 are always deactivating us. Same thing with Uber.

25 You have to look at the impact of the economy

2 (INAUDIBLE) Uber is also threatening to deactivate  
3 my account for doing nothing. Most of these  
4 companies, I must say you have to do something.  
5 They are based on lies. They have become vultures  
6 that (INAUDIBLE) our eyes when we are still alive.  
7 You can imagine how painful it is. Many of us now  
8 today, in 2018, I couldn't pass my course because  
9 of what happened to me. It affected me  
10 emotionally, physically, and financially. I have  
11 (INAUDIBLE) and they believe whatever they do is  
12 the final. They are the accuser and at the same  
13 time they are the judge in the same case. Please,  
14 because many of us are immigrants, we have very  
15 thick accents...

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,  
17 sir. I have a followup question for you. When you  
18 talk about when this complaint is made about the  
19 credit card, I'm trying to understand what you  
20 were saying. Are you saying that if someone pays  
21 for a ride and then disputes the credit card, is  
22 that what you're talking about?

23 KEHINDE KOLAWOLE: I never knew what  
24 transpired between Lyft and the passenger. I  
25 wanted to pay my rent that day. I couldn't cash

2 it, and I went to the office in Long Island, and  
3 it was when I started shouting at them that I'm  
4 taking my money, that the money that came out, and  
5 apologized to me and said he would make sure that  
6 I got my money that day. If had not made any  
7 noise, before I leave this place you have to call  
8 the police, it is the police that will take me  
9 out. That is how I was able to get my money, but I  
10 didn't know what transpired between the credit  
11 card or debit card that the passenger used.

12 Drivers don't know about that. Whatever  
13 investigation they were making should not have had  
14 any affect on me as a driver.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Understood.

16 Because you've done the transporting already, and  
17 it's a matter of them disputing the payment which  
18 is something that you feel is... Got it. I was  
19 trying to understand it. Thank you.

20 NUSRAT JAHAN: Good afternoon and thank  
21 you. My name is Nusrat Jahan, I'm a member of  
22 NYTWA. I would like to talk about deactivation. As  
23 you all know, we are individual contractor. We pay  
24 taxes, 1099, we don't pay W-2, so the company  
25 cannot deactivate us without any prior notice,

2 without any prior written. We have a family and  
3 we're struggling with the gas price and inflation,  
4 and overall, on top of that, the deactivation is  
5 killing the drivers so they don't just treat us  
6 like we don't exist. We are the people who are  
7 giving service to the community without a raise,  
8 without a benefit for a long time. Before you  
9 judge the driver, please make sure. I would say  
10 both for the driver and the rider should call 9-1-  
11 1 if any incident happened, call 9-1-1, let the  
12 officer come and note the incident and Uber should  
13 verify the thing and then go for deactivation. If  
14 we're found not guilty, they should give us our  
15 job back, and also they should pay the penalty so  
16 we are the ones who are generating their revenue  
17 for the company as well as the city so we cannot  
18 be ignored, we cannot be unseen. We just want to  
19 request you to make rules for Uber and Lyft they  
20 cannot deactivate without knowing only one side of  
21 the incident. They have to hear from the driver as  
22 well. Thank you very much for your time.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

24 NIKOLAS SKAFIDAS: Good afternoon. My  
25 name is Nikolaos Skafidas, and I'm a yellow taxi

2 driver. I've been driving approximately for 25  
3 years. The reason why I'm testifying in front of  
4 you today is because I want to let you guys know  
5 what the TLC has done to us. The TLC has kept us  
6 for many years without a decent raise. As you  
7 know, the cost of inflation and the cost of all  
8 your household expense has gone up through the  
9 years. Now, we're ready to go into recession, so  
10 they say, but the bottom line is here that what  
11 the TLC did to us, and they made us suffer through  
12 all these years, it's a crime. They put us through  
13 this burden, they make us collect all these state  
14 fees, 2.50 for the state, another 50 cents, and  
15 then they want to put this 23-dollar congestion  
16 surcharge. If they do that to this business,  
17 there's going to be the last nail in the coffin.  
18 Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
20 We'll call our next panel. I'd like to invite  
21 Christopher Garcia, Wilfredo Dislo, and Arifa  
22 Ticmizi (phonetic) to testify.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: You can start.

24 CHRISTOPHER GARCIA: Hello, Committee.  
25 Thanks for having me. I'm currently renting from

2 American Lease. I had ordered a Tesla vehicle  
3 before the cap was in place with the intent to get  
4 a TLC plate. During this time, I got burned out  
5 due to severe pain from pinched nerves and muscle  
6 aches. I've been given pointless medications that  
7 didn't solve the problem. I eventually found the  
8 solution which turned out to be yoga after a year  
9 of trying out different methods. I was more caught  
10 up in my physical condition than with news of the  
11 TLC. I explained to TLC my issue. They were kind  
12 enough to give a week extension. I have emails to  
13 verify my claims. Unfortunately, I could not  
14 fulfil the requirements due to factors outside of  
15 my control such as not getting the V-I-N number  
16 within that time period, and I couldn't get a base  
17 letter from anywhere. I asked them for another  
18 extension, but they denied it. The email they  
19 sent, it says that they would honor the request if  
20 the vehicle is purchased or ordered before the cap  
21 date, which I had an order number that I proved to  
22 them. I reached out to them. They just gave me the  
23 runaround, and now I'm stuck with Tesla payments,  
24 insurance, along with the rental weekly payments.  
25 That's it. I'm done.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so  
3 much for your testimony. You can go.

4 WILFREDO DISLO: Thank you, Council.  
5 Thank you for our opportunity to talk with you, to  
6 say our problems, try to fix everything. The IDG  
7 is a completely working community. We are just  
8 work. We need the opportunity to work on the  
9 street to give us our services and good money for  
10 our families. This is all we need. We got rights,  
11 and that's the important thing we are here. We  
12 need work every day, and Uber and Lyft every day  
13 block our drivers. They have to give us the  
14 opportunity to fight, to say oh, what is the  
15 problem, what happened with my account, what  
16 happened with my job, because we invest money in  
17 cars, we pay taxes, we pay insurance, we pay  
18 everything, and we give the people on the street  
19 our services. I'm a driver for five years with  
20 five stars in every company, but Lyft blocked my  
21 account without any explanation and everything. I  
22 tried to talk to with too many people. I went to  
23 the Lyft office, and they told me no, you can't do  
24 anything, that's it, and then we need somebody to  
25 talk about these problems, fix that problem. Lyft



2 has to open an office or any people to talk to us  
3 about the problem and give us the opportunity to  
4 fight and give proof for everything because we are  
5 just work for our families and for the city of NYC  
6 and give everything we can give it.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so  
8 much for your testimony.

9 ARIFA TICMIZI: Good afternoon,  
10 Committee. My name is Arifa Ticmizi. I am an  
11 organizer of Independent Drivers Guild and, most  
12 importantly, I'm a TLC driver for FHV and I'm a  
13 mother. I want to let you know that according to  
14 TLC data 40 percent of the rideshare drivers, that  
15 is almost 30,000 drivers, that are binded with the  
16 rental companies. There's absolutely no cap on the  
17 rental companies and how much they can charge. The  
18 rental could be from 400 to 700 dollars per week.  
19 I rented a TLC vehicle from a big TLC rental  
20 giant, that is Tower. One of the companies that is  
21 Tower that is charging almost 450 dollars. That  
22 accumulates to 23,000 dollars a year for just  
23 renting a vehicle from such giant companies, but  
24 we don't have any protection as drivers. As FHV  
25 drivers, we don't have such protection. These

2 rental companies, they can charge from 400 dollars  
3 to 700 dollars a week, and who protects us? TLC's  
4 protecting us? The only solution they came out was  
5 to issue 1,000 EV plates. The Commissioner did  
6 say, when you asked him a question what is the  
7 mileage, and he said almost 330 miles that you can  
8 go up to one charge. When you look it up, the  
9 price of that car is almost 65,000 dollars so  
10 they're actually putting us in a corner and they  
11 don't give us choices to what we can do to provide  
12 for our family. I'm not only here talking on  
13 behalf of FHV drivers. I'm talking about the  
14 people who live in New York City and they move New  
15 York City. What kind of protection do we have? We  
16 don't have absolutely nothing. As a parent, as  
17 having children, as having disabled children, I  
18 don't think I have any protection. As being a  
19 mother, how do I protect my children? There's  
20 absolutely no protection for FHV drivers. I want  
21 to thank you for letting me speak here, and I  
22 would like to see some action. Yes, I understand  
23 there are different giant companies. Uber is a  
24 giant. Everybody's fighting, but what about those

2 rental companies that are abusing drivers? Thank  
3 you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Thank you so  
5 much. I just wanted to state, I know the Chair is  
6 back, for those who just orally or verbally have  
7 testified today, if there are main points you want  
8 to get across in writing, I encourage you all to  
9 submit actual written testimony as well. We review  
10 all of these things. I'm a paper person so I'm  
11 asking for that as well. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I just  
13 wanted to say thank you for your testimony.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
15 We'll now begin calling members who are appearing  
16 virtually on Zoom. We'll begin with Diana  
17 Clemente.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has begun.

19 DIANA CLEMENTE: Good afternoon. My name  
20 is Diana Clemente, and I am the President and  
21 Owner of Big Apple Car and VIP Gold. I am also the  
22 President of the Black Car Assistance Corporation,  
23 the black car industry's trade association. I  
24 thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf  
25 of the traditional black car industry today.

2 As I have stated many times in past  
3 hearings, the deck is and has been stacked against  
4 us. Today, however, the situation has never been  
5 so dire. Congestion pricing is looming, and,  
6 depending on the final toll structure, it could  
7 very well be the final threat that our industry  
8 can take.

9 Today, I would like my testimony to  
10 drive home the consequences of painting policy  
11 with a broad brush. Three years ago, the City  
12 decided that the proliferation of high-volume FHV's  
13 needed to be addressed and responded by freezing  
14 the issuance of FHV vehicle licenses. At that  
15 time, we point out that the traditional black car  
16 industry was not responsible for the congestion  
17 that high-volume FHV's were creating. Our industry  
18 is different in many ways, but specifically our  
19 business model doesn't result in cars trolling  
20 around the central business district all day  
21 waiting for jobs. It was unfair at that time to  
22 create a policy that treated us the same as the  
23 companies that were responsible for congestion,  
24 and we explained over and over again how this  
25 decision would create a disproportional burden to

2 our industry. Our concerns fell on deaf ears, and  
3 our fears were realized. In the year since the  
4 height of the pandemic, the traditional black car  
5 industry has not recovered anywhere close to the  
6 level that high-volume FHV's have. In that time..

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired.

8 DIANA CLEMENTE: Can I just do one more  
9 paragraph.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: If you could  
11 please wrap because we do have a good amount of  
12 people for online testimony as well.

13 DIANA CLEMENTE: Okay. I won't mince  
14 words. The TLC and the City Council have failed  
15 the traditional black car industry, the small  
16 businesses it is comprised of, and the drivers  
17 that service it. That's what happens when policy  
18 is painted with a broad brush. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: We'd next  
21 like to call on Galina Kaminker to testify.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has begun.

23 GALINA KAMINKER: Good afternoon. Thank  
24 you, Madam Chair. I don't know if you remember  
25 times when we (INAUDIBLE) I'm now here

2 representing yellow taxi owners. I know a lot of  
3 things have been talked about drivers, drivers,  
4 but actually we are the owners who (INAUDIBLE)  
5 struggle with everything with Uber and Lyft coming  
6 in, like Rich Lipsky said, that are trying to  
7 reach out to Commissioner, trying to reach out  
8 with a petition because we're individual owners  
9 who nobody talks on our behalf, but we're  
10 struggling. We hear about another thousand  
11 (INAUDIBLE) plates to be distributed for free  
12 where yellow taxi industry, we all paid a lot of  
13 money for being able to drive, and here things are  
14 being given away for nothing. We have a big burden  
15 on our shoulders. We're paying (INAUDIBLE) people  
16 who do not drive, like I'm not a driver so nobody  
17 wants to lease my medallion because nobody is  
18 willing to pay that amount of money for buying a  
19 new vehicle. It went up to 50,000 to 80,000 just  
20 for a vehicle, and the industry, the way it seems  
21 doesn't have any future. We've been hit with  
22 congestion pricing apparently. Meanwhile, we've  
23 paid so much to the State, to the City. Every  
24 medallion was averaged between 500 to a million  
25 (INAUDIBLE) million dollars with all new debt. The

2 program that it's running, it will not qualify for  
3 me because even though the debt will reduce to  
4 1,200 dollars, if nobody's leasing my medallion  
5 because nobody wants to invest in my medallion,  
6 how will I pay the 1,200 dollars so it's another  
7 way of putting me in a bankruptcy because I'm  
8 losing all the investment that I did to the City  
9 plus with the burden of 1,200 dollars so I'm going  
10 to have to give away my medallion for nothing.  
11 Meanwhile, I'm going to have to pay taxes on the  
12 forgiven loan so I'm trying to reach out to the  
13 TLC Commissioner. He is a very nice guy, but...

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired.

15 GALINA KAMINKER: Hasn't gotten me  
16 anything. You have to look into why do we need  
17 1,000 more cars in a place where there's so many,  
18 like 7,000 cars in storage, TLC medallions in the  
19 storage being idle. Nobody talks about that.

20 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

21 GALINA KAMINKER: Why can't you utilize  
22 them? It's a lot of things about the yellow  
23 industry, nobody wants to talk about it, everybody  
24 talks about (INAUDIBLE) but we're actually 90  
25 percent (INAUDIBLE)

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so  
3 much. Thank you. Again, I'll just ask, everybody  
4 could adhere to the two-minute rule. We want to  
5 hear from everyone, and, as I mentioned before, I  
6 do not want to have to cut folks off. I would like  
7 to hear the points that you'd like to make, but we  
8 want to be respectful of folks' time. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
10 We'll now hear from Michael Simon.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has begun.

12 MICHAEL SIMON: Hello. Good morning. My  
13 name is Michael Simon. I'm a medallion owner. What  
14 I'd like to talk about is the Taxi and Limousine  
15 Commission's current pricing rules that applies to  
16 taxis and Ubers. That system is grossly unfair to  
17 taxis, and this is why. TLC regulations mandate  
18 taxis have a fixed rate. That fixed rate is a  
19 public service and has no benefit for the taxi  
20 when the public can at any time compare pricing  
21 with a phone app. The bottom line is the public  
22 chooses the lowest price, not the fixed price, and  
23 therefore the fixed price is no benefit to the  
24 cab. Taxis are at the mercy of Uber's computers.  
25 At their own schedule, Ubers will lower their rate



2 below taxi rates to attract customers when it's  
3 slow. There are times when the cabs are completely  
4 empty because Uber lowered its price below cabs,  
5 and cabs are helpless to respond because their  
6 pricing is fixed. When it's busy, Uber raises its  
7 price, making more money than cabs. This unequal  
8 pricing requirement is destroying the taxi  
9 industry and its drivers. Uber's price must at all  
10 times be substantially higher than taxis, giving  
11 taxis the assistance it deserves for following New  
12 York City rules requiring it to have fixed  
13 pricing, which restricts its competitiveness.  
14 Something that I'd like to add on to what I just  
15 said. How can you have two trades within the same  
16 industry competing against each other, with one  
17 being required to have fixed pricing..

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired.

19 MICHAEL SIMON: And the other one not  
20 being required to? It's very unfair. Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
22 We'll now hear from Basia (phonetic).

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has begun.

24 BASIA: Hello.

25 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: We hear you.

2 BASIA: Hello. I cannot hear you. Hello.

3 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: We can hear  
4 you. Can you hear me?

5 BASIA: No. Can you get back to me,  
6 please?

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: We can hear you so  
8 you can just start speaking. We can hear you so  
9 you can start speaking.

10 BASIA O.: My name is Basia O. I am a  
11 member of Taxi Union Alliance, a very active  
12 member. I am one of the driers who went on 15-day  
13 hunger strike. Thank you very much to NYWTA for  
14 their action. Our President, Bhairavi, made  
15 something which is impossible to become possible.  
16 Thank you, also, to Senator Schulman and the new  
17 Commissioner who put some (INAUDIBLE) of our  
18 lives, which was destroyed by previous  
19 administration. We were simply (INAUDIBLE) and  
20 nothing happened because of wrongdoing. Saying  
21 that, we are very happy that the reconstruction  
22 happened, but we have to emphasize more senior  
23 drivers. I'm in this business for 40 years almost,  
24 37 years in the yellow industry, black, and I was  
25 told that I practically don't qualify for anything

2 so we have to somehow help the senior drivers a  
3 little more. To add Uber app to our industry is  
4 insult to the injury and to add more plates, we  
5 don't need more plates. We have on the shelves so  
6 many medallions. This is the same.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Time has  
8 expired.

9 BASIA O.: People could ride yellow  
10 (INAUDIBLE) industry. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
12 We'll now hear from Kuber Sancho-Persad.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You can start when  
14 you're ready.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Sir, are  
16 you able to hear us on the Zoom still?

17 KUBER SANCHO-PERSAD: Hello. I can't  
18 hear you...

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: We can hear you. You  
20 can begin when you're ready.

21 KUBER SANCHO-PERSAD: Hello. Thank you  
22 for hearing me today. I am a member of the New  
23 York Taxi Workers Alliance. I'm here today with my  
24 comrades, and we want to talk about driver safety,  
25 also the well-deserved increase of pay raise

2 because the pay raise has been taken away in  
3 effect by the congestion pricing, 2.50 extra on  
4 the meter, and also making the Access-A-Ride more  
5 accessible to more drivers and more fair pay  
6 because their payment structure is not aligned  
7 with what the meter would pay. Also, I've been  
8 driving for seven years. I've been in the  
9 industry. It's been a long road, driving in New  
10 York City, driving and serving the public. I've  
11 worked with different companies. I'm a lease  
12 driver, but my dad owned a taxi medallion for many  
13 years, for about 35 years, and drove. I know both  
14 sides of the industry. I think that there should  
15 be a lease cap for lease drivers who drive 24/7  
16 and are only one driver. Right now, the industry  
17 is at a good place with 800 dollars a week on a  
18 yellow taxi medallion lease. Before, in 2014,  
19 2015, 2016, I used to pay upwards of 1,400 dollars  
20 a week to between...

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
22 has expired.

23 KUBER SANCHO-PERSAD: I'm sorry.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
25 We'll now hear from Tashia Lerebours.

2 TASHIA LEREBOURS: Good afternoon. Can  
3 you hear me?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Yes.

5 TASHIA LEREBOURS: All right. Thank you.  
6 My name is Tashia Lerebours. I work for the Center  
7 for the Independence of the Disabled, New York.  
8 I'm a Transportation Organizer. Access-A-Ride is a  
9 service that's been around for over 20 years.  
10 People with disabilities should be able to access  
11 transportation in the same way as their non-  
12 disabled peers. The purpose of this program is to  
13 provide transportation to people who are disabled.  
14 Yet, they give passengers five minutes to get to  
15 the vehicle; otherwise, you're marked as a no-  
16 show. It's not realistic. Not all passengers can  
17 be outside within five minutes. A common thing  
18 that is never taken into consideration are the  
19 outdoor temperatures. Not all passengers can  
20 handle humid temperatures and not all can handle  
21 cold. A common situation I've heard from consumers  
22 are consumers waiting outdoors for an hour or  
23 more. Another common issue, try to get through it  
24 fast, the on-demand pilot program was, and still  
25 is, a life-changing experience for the 1,200

2 consumers who use it because it's a same-day  
3 service that takes you to your destination the  
4 same day you request it. The struggle to expand  
5 the service without rationing the number of rides  
6 per month has been a major challenge. There are  
7 consumers who were fine with using the blue and  
8 white vehicles instead of on-demand, and there are  
9 consumers who prefer using the pilot program. We  
10 have been advocating and are still advocating for  
11 it to be expanded. The disabled community deserves  
12 to have a service that gets them to their  
13 destination on time just like other transportation  
14 services. Just because they're disabled does not  
15 mean they deserve anything less. Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: We'll now  
17 hear from Ibrahim Zoure.

18 IBRAHIM ZOURE: Hello. Good day,  
19 everybody. My name is Ibrahim Zoure. I'm a New  
20 York Taxi Alliance member, the only organization  
21 that stands for all drivers. I'm here today to  
22 support all the demand that was input by New York  
23 Taxi Alliance. First of all, we need a living  
24 wage. We need a living wage because we are parents  
25 of children, and we have responsibility to take

2 care of vehicle to work with. I'm going to go  
3 straight to the point. We need 85 percent of what  
4 the passenger paid, or, if we can get 100 percent  
5 of TLC-regulated pay, that would be good for us.  
6 I'm going to the deactivation situation. I was  
7 deactivated in 2019 one morning after I finished  
8 my shift. I was going home, but I forgot to close  
9 my app so I get a trip to pick up on (INAUDIBLE)  
10 on Pennsylvania Avenue. When I reached there, I  
11 drove to the loop to pick up the passenger, and I  
12 stand there for a couple of minutes. When the  
13 passenger come out, there was a car that was  
14 parked right in front of me when I get to the loop  
15 so I blow the horn a couple of times for the  
16 person to move, he won't move, so I tell my  
17 passenger I'm going to go and see, maybe the  
18 person is sleeping, so I got to the vehicle, the  
19 guy was sitting on the phone. I said sir, sorry to  
20 bother, can you, please, make a little space for  
21 me to pass, so he ignored so I keep on repeating  
22 myself so finally he said to me, f Uber driver, f  
23 African, get the f out of my face, so I keep my  
24 calm and I say sorry, I just pick up a lady here,  
25 I don't know if she has an emergency, I want to

2 take her to destination, can you make me a space.

3 Oh, I'm going to punch your face so we got into

4 verbal altercation.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Time has

6 expired.

7 IBRAHIM ZOURE: Thank you very much for

8 being here today for us. You are the doctor. The

9 taxi industry is in ICU. Please save us. That's

10 all I can say. Thank you very much.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.

12 We'll now hear from Basel Mansour.

13 BASEL MANSOUR: Good afternoon,

14 everyone. My name is Basel Mansour. I'm an

15 owner/operator. I've been driving for six years.

16 I'm also a proud member of the Drivers Co-op. I

17 have different issues I would like to highlight,

18 but, given the time limitations, I will focus on a

19 few of them and send you a written statement.

20 The first thing I would like to

21 highlight is the deactivation. I was deactivated

22 myself when I started to do this work. I was

23 promised to have stable income, a stable

24 livelihood, and after investing in a vehicle and

25 paying a huge amount of money to start this



2 vehicle, within a few weeks my Lyft account was  
3 deactivated without letting me know what's going  
4 on so I went to their office to just ask why you  
5 deactivated me. I didn't get an answer. What I got  
6 was, they send like two security people that  
7 escorted me out as if I was a criminal. By the  
8 way, I also teach at college so how can you treat  
9 me like a criminal and not let me know why I was  
10 deactivated. This is not acceptable. Council  
11 Members, please, help us. Please, don't leave us  
12 easy prey for this (INAUDIBLE) behavior. Actually,  
13 the Uber and Lyft practices, they encourage hate  
14 crimes so riders sometimes keep us hostage if we  
15 don't do an illegal turn, basically they can  
16 blackmail us, they can report us to Uber and Lyft  
17 because we didn't just do an illegal u-turn. By  
18 the way, Uber is the largest employer in New York  
19 state, and also Uber and Lyft constitute 85  
20 percent of the transportation market share in New  
21 York so when they deactivate you, basically that  
22 amounts to the license revocation so there's  
23 nothing you can do with it.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
25 has expired.

2 BASEL MANSOUR: I can't just go out as a  
3 driver and learn computer skills and find another  
4 job after investing this amount of money in my  
5 vehicle. I will send you the rest of my statement  
6 in writing.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: We'll next  
9 call on Biju Mathew.

10 BIJU MATHEW: Hello, everybody, Madam  
11 Chair and the rest of the Committee and all of the  
12 City Council Members present. My name is Biju  
13 Mathew. I am with the New York Taxi Workers  
14 Alliance, and I am the President of the  
15 International Alliance of App-Based Transport  
16 Workers, which is a federation of 19 driver  
17 associations from across the world, all the way  
18 from Southeast Asia into Latin America.

19 We are currently running a petition,  
20 the Global Deactivation Petition, and drivers from  
21 across the world are signing it because it's the  
22 one common thing the drivers across the world  
23 understand about the Ubers, the Lyfts, the Olas,  
24 and the Bolts of the world, that they deactivate  
25 drivers without any reason based on passenger bias

2 or reasons of controlling the labor market, for  
3 all sorts of reasons, and there is no recourse at  
4 all. We heard from various members. We heard from  
5 Alpha Barry, we heard from Nusrat Jahan, and I can  
6 add any number of members of the International  
7 Alliance of App-Based Transport Workers across the  
8 world who have all been deactivated for absolutely  
9 no reason, but, even more important, without any  
10 recourse. Just cause and a due process is central  
11 to reform in this industry. We have to move  
12 towards it immediately. Drivers need a 15-day  
13 notice, 20-day notice before they are deactivated.  
14 The company needs to furnish documentation to say  
15 why they are potentially being considered for  
16 deactivation. A process needs to be defined for  
17 how a driver can defend themselves. The burden of  
18 proof should be on the company. Right now, none of  
19 those exists. There are algorithmic transparency  
20 that's (INAUDIBLE) Every single driver that Uber  
21 has voluntary data they've given, involuntary data  
22 they've given, and they're profiled..

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
24 has expired.

2 BIJU MATHEW: All in all, just to  
3 conclude, yes, it's time for a whole reform of the  
4 deactivation issue and due process to be brought  
5 in. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
7 We'll now call on Erhan Tuncel to testify.

8 ERHAN TUNCEL: Hello, Council Members,  
9 Madam Chair. My name is Erhan Tuncel. I am a New  
10 York City owner/driver for over 20 years and a  
11 member of New York Taxi Workers Alliance. Our  
12 meter is about to get a fare hike after a long 10  
13 years. This fare hike should be considered only  
14 for the drivers. The reason I'm saying that is  
15 because any job or fare that's provided to yellow  
16 taxi driver by entity or an act must pay the  
17 driver the metered rate plus any tip the customer  
18 might consider for the driver, and we need  
19 complete transparency for that from the app  
20 companies and from the MTA. Talk about MTA. Yellow  
21 taxis are the only entity in the industry that has  
22 a mandate or a court order for accessibility. 50  
23 percent of all taxis must be wheelchair  
24 accessible. Therefore, the Access-A-Ride fares  
25 must be prioritized for yellow taxis. It must have

2 the priority for Access-A-Ride fares, whether it's  
3 wheelchair-accessible fare or non-wheelchair-  
4 accessible fares from the Access-A-Ride because we  
5 have to live by the mandate of the court order.  
6 Now, this fare hike came 10 years after the last  
7 one. I don't understand why the City, TLC has to  
8 wait 10 years or eight years or seven years for a  
9 fare hike.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
11 has expired.

12 ERHAN TUNCEL: I think considering a  
13 fare hike every year or every two years is the way  
14 to go because a 10-year fare hike comes in a  
15 substantial amount, and it also comes as a huge  
16 shock to the riding public as well. That's all I  
17 need to say. Thank you very much for having me.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
20 We'll now hear from Mamadou Diallo.

21 MAMADOU DIALLO: Good afternoon,  
22 everyone. Hello.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yes, we can  
24 hear you. Can you hear us?

2 MAMADOU DIALLO: Yeah. Good afternoon,  
3 everyone. My name is Mamadou Diallo, and I'm a  
4 Taxi Worker Alliance member, and I would like to  
5 thank the City Council for giving me the  
6 opportunity to testify today.

7 First of all, I would like to talk  
8 about deactivation, how that can impact and affect  
9 drivers. I was a victim one time, a long time ago,  
10 like in 2020. I was deactivated in Staten Island  
11 without no reason. I was drinking just my iced  
12 tea. It was like summertime last year, and this  
13 car get out from the car and then she just  
14 reported me, I was drinking something like I don't  
15 know and then they just deactivated me, and that  
16 affected me a lot. I know that will be affecting a  
17 lot of drivers, not me only, but deactivating  
18 drivers without letting them know the reason why,  
19 like my fellow drivers just explained to you guys,  
20 it is very painful. TLC also don't have any  
21 consideration for drivers or for those kind of  
22 stuff, and Uber, at the same time, if you walked  
23 to the office, try to explain or to ask what  
24 happened, they don't even care, so I would like to  
25 ask the City Council and all of you guys today to

2 really take a look about their case and then think  
3 about this. Most of these cab drivers are  
4 immigrant, and most of us have families, have  
5 kids, have parents, and have a lot of people to  
6 feed. If you are dependent on one app and they  
7 deactivate you, that means they make you become  
8 homeless I think which is not fair, and we...

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
10 has expired.

11 MAMADOU DIALLO: I would like to thank  
12 you very much for having me here and thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.

15 We'll now call on Zubin Soleimany to testify.

16 ZUBIN SOLEIMANY: Good afternoon. Can  
17 you hear me?

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Yes, we can  
19 hear you.

20 ZUBIN SOLEIMANY: Good afternoon. This  
21 is Zubin Soleimany. I'm a Senior Staff Attorney  
22 with the New York Taxi Workers Alliance. I'm going  
23 to focus my comments on the two issues where  
24 Council action will be most helpful.

2 Chair, you asked about E-hails for  
3 taxis. Currently, that is the only sector right  
4 now where payments for the drivers are not  
5 regulated. You get a street-hail trip and taxi  
6 meter fare regulates what the driver takes. FHV  
7 drivers for Uber and Lyft, it's regulated. This  
8 used to be regulated. TLC used to require the full  
9 credit card amount to be paid for the driver. Now  
10 there is no regulation. I want to note that  
11 Chairman Do, the pilot program that he mentioned,  
12 has been expired for over two years, and I don't  
13 know what the legal authority is for TLC to  
14 continue allowing E-hail trips to be paid to the  
15 drivers at whatever rate without any minimum  
16 floor. Council needs to step in, TLC has not been  
17 taking action, and pass legislation that at the  
18 very least drivers receive the metered rate on  
19 those trips.

20 Regarding deactivation, I'll just say  
21 the FHV driver pay rules are on the large part  
22 good with some caveats, but the other part of  
23 economic security is job security. There has to be  
24 a truly independent process in which drivers can  
25 contest unfair firings. This means a process where



2 all complaints get in the door, not one where the  
3 company decides who gets to be heard. If you look  
4 at Uber's website right now, they describe their  
5 deactivation process. It says it's not eligible  
6 for certain types of allegations such as those  
7 involving reckless driving or those involving a  
8 possible altercation with a customer. When a taxi  
9 driver gets taken to OATH on a TLC prosecution,  
10 they aren't barred from the door just because the  
11 allegation is about a physical altercation or  
12 about unsafe driving. When an Uber driver loses  
13 their job and goes to unemployment, the Department  
14 of Labor doesn't refuse to hear their case because  
15 of the basis of the allegation. This is not due  
16 process. It's arbitrary gatekeeping. This was set  
17 up...

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time  
19 has expired.

20 ZUBIN SOLEIMANY: I'll just say that  
21 when the IDG was created in 2016 (INAUDIBLE)  
22 reported in the New York Times with significant  
23 funding. When Uber created this process, I'll just  
24 note that you don't have to take my word for it  
25 that the process in place with this gatekeeping,

2 and Mr. Bah, who testified earlier, had asked for  
3 City intervention at a TLC hearing on October 6,  
4 2018, on the basis that the process wasn't  
5 working. We need a full process, real due process.  
6 We did it for fast food workers. I'm confident  
7 this Chamber can do it again. Looking forward to  
8 working with you on it. Thank you for the extra  
9 time. I apologize for going over.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.  
11 We'll now call Larbi Aytanou to testify.

12 LARBI AYTABOU: All right. We good?

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yeah.

14 LARBI AYTABOU: Thank you very much for  
15 having me today. I just wanted to go straight to  
16 all the issues that drivers... number one, let me  
17 introduce myself. My name is Larbi Aytanou. I'm  
18 one of the organizers at IDG. I'm also a driver,  
19 been a driver since 2007, drove yellow taxi, black  
20 car, and I still drive from time to time while I'm  
21 organizing drivers and helping them with whatever  
22 issues that they are facing in the industry. All  
23 that is something that I want to sum up today from  
24 this Council hearing which is drivers that have  
25 been deactivated, we fought for having a

2 deactivation appeal, which would go through IDG,  
3 and we helped thousands and thousands of drivers,  
4 some of which they're proudly here and listening  
5 to us today or standing outside with our  
6 organizers. We've helped countless amount of  
7 drivers getting their job back and that through  
8 deactivation process or due process as you wish to  
9 call it. Now, is that process helping everybody?  
10 No, not 100 percent, but, again, it is something  
11 that we negotiated and thanks to IDG for giving  
12 countless drivers their jobs back fairly so we are  
13 the voice of drivers. I'm one of the organizers. I  
14 help a lot of drivers. My team is helping drivers  
15 constantly. Today, right now as we speak, I'm  
16 helping drivers through that process, but I don't  
17 want to focus on deactivation only. I want to  
18 focus on drivers' pay as well. Yes, drivers are  
19 struggling out of the pandemic, the only people  
20 that were driving, I would say, the black car  
21 drivers, and not to say that yellow were not, but  
22 there were not a lot of drivers that were helping  
23 all the essential workers through the pandemic,  
24 and I think they deserve a higher pay...

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Time has  
3 expired.

4 LARBI AYTABOU: Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL BREIDBART: Thank you.

6 If we've inadvertently missed anyone that is  
7 registered to testify today and has yet to have  
8 been called, please use the Zoom raise hand  
9 function if you're testifying remotely and you'll  
10 be called in the order that your hand has been  
11 raised, and, if you're testifying in person,  
12 please come to the dais.

13 Seeing none, I will now turn it over to  
14 Chair Brooks-Powers for closing remarks.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'd like to  
16 express my deepest gratitude for all of the  
17 stakeholders across the TLC industry for taking  
18 time out today to participate, to lend your voice  
19 to this conversation. As it was said earlier  
20 eloquently by one of the testimonies, all of the  
21 issues that exist today are not going to be  
22 addressed in one hearing so understand that I  
23 remain committed as Chair of this Committee to  
24 continuing to work with the drivers, the  
25 passengers, and the agencies and all stakeholders

2 around this issue to make sure that we're able to  
3 address some of what we've heard today, some of  
4 which was pretty concerning to me, and I will say  
5 I am appreciative also of Commissioner Do and his  
6 partnership and some of the steps that have been  
7 taken thus far by the TLC, and it's going to take  
8 us all being at the table together. Again, thank  
9 you, and I look forward to working with you and  
10 everyone have a wonderful day. This meeting is now  
11 adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date October 27, 2022