

# Taxi Strategic Plan

2022

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# Message from the Acting Commissioner

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As Acting Commissioner of the Taxi and Limousine Commission, I am committed to supporting the Taxi industry and its future as a critical part of New York City's transportation network. We all know that the Taxi industry has experienced financial hardships, many of which were exacerbated by COVID-19. More recently, demand for Taxis has greatly increased as the City recovers from the pandemic. This comes at a time when the City has implemented a Medallion Relief Program (MRP), which provides significant debt forgiveness for financially distressed medallion owners. Against this backdrop, I am excited to present to you a "living" Strategic Plan outlining a path toward a revitalized and strengthened Taxi industry.

As New York City continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a tremendous opportunity for the Yellow Taxi sector to position itself as a leader in service, sustainability, and innovation. This Strategic Plan is a guiding document to help ensure the stability of the Taxi industry and its move into the modern age. Together, we will shape the industry to continue to provide world class service to passengers while generating a good income for our hardworking Drivers and Owners.

This Strategic Plan presents 40 initiatives that will guide TLC in the coming years, including electrifying the vehicle fleet, ensuring accessible service for all New Yorkers, modernizing vehicle equipment, and adjusting fares and fees. These initiatives reflect conversations with the Taxi Advisory Group—a working group of members from all parts of the Taxi sector, including Drivers, Medallion Owners, agents, technology providers, and insurers—that has been meeting regularly since January of 2021. The Strategic Plan also reflects discussions with many industry stakeholders through other forums, including meetings and hearings, as well as internal research and conversations at TLC. I sincerely thank the Taxi Advisory Group members and other industry stakeholders for their thoughtful contributions, insights, and recommendations that informed much of what is presented in this Strategic Plan.

It is important to add that TLC cannot implement these initiatives on its own. Rather, it will require a collaborative effort with elected officials, other City and State agencies, and perhaps most importantly, Taxi industry members themselves. I look forward to working with our governmental partners and the Taxi sector to shepherd this Strategic Plan and support the health, stability, and strengthened future of Taxis in New York City.

Thank you,



Ryan Wanttaja  
Acting Commissioner  
New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission

“As New York City continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a tremendous opportunity for the Yellow Taxi sector to position itself as a leader in service, sustainability, and innovation.”



# Executive Summary

This Taxi Strategic Plan presents short- and long-term initiatives that will guide TLC's work in the coming years, while building on recent and ongoing projects undertaken by the agency. These initiatives, described in brief below, together represent a holistic approach to the Taxi sector's health and longevity. The Taxi Strategic Plan represents a collaborative, living document, which will continue to be updated to reflect future industry discussions and needs.

## Section 1: Supporting the Taxi Industry's Financial Health

- Initiative 1:** Fully Implement the Medallion Relief Program.
- Initiative 2:** Continue to support the work of the Owner/Driver Resource Center.
- Initiative 3:** Continue to monitor and evaluate the financial stability of the Taxi industry.
- Initiative 4:** Evaluate Taxi fares and driver pay.

## Section 2: Modernizing Vehicle Equipment

- Initiative 5:** Require software-based Taximeters fleetwide.
- Initiative 6:** Digitize items displayed in Taxis where appropriate, including rate cards, driver licenses, and informational notices.
- Initiative 7:** Reevaluate in-vehicle advertising operations and content.
- Initiative 8:** Update in-vehicle camera system requirements.
- Initiative 9:** Streamline taximeter and technology system rules.

## Section 3: Improving E-hail Service

- Initiative 10:** Work with e-hail companies to explore ways to discourage cancellations by both passengers and drivers.
- Initiative 11:** Evaluate the viability of shared rides in Taxis.
- Initiative 12:** Work with e-hail companies to integrate Taxi service with popular trip planners like Google Maps.

## Section 4: Modernizing the Taxi Fleet

- Initiative 13:** Evaluate existing vehicle retirement requirements.
- Initiative 14:** Pursue the standardization of vehicle inspection schedules across sectors.
- Initiative 15:** Modernize vehicle specifications and in-vehicle requirements to better accommodate new makes and models and improve the driver and passenger experience.
- Initiative 16:** Adopt an electric vehicle plan to increase their use as Taxis.

## Section 5: Updating the Regulatory Environment

- Initiative 17:** Allow Taxi drivers to use smartphones to accept dispatches.
- Initiative 18:** Continue to limit the number of new licensed vehicles to mitigate congestion and unfair competition.
- Initiative 19:** Improve data collection and analysis to better inform policies that support licensed vehicle industries.
- Initiative 20:** Update, streamline, or repeal antiquated, overly complex, and burdensome rules.

## Section 6: Improving the Airport Experience

- Initiative 21:** Increase the flat fare from Kennedy Airport to Manhattan and create a flat fare from LaGuardia Airport to Manhattan.
- Initiative 22:** Continue working with the Port Authority to improve Taxi service at airports.

## Section 7: Restructuring Fares and Fees

- Initiative 23:** Evaluate the viability of alternative pricing models for Taxis.
- Initiative 24:** Review fees, taxes, and surcharges across all sectors with a view towards parity and sector health.
- Initiative 25:** Advocate for the exclusion of Taxis from any additional fees as the MTA implements congestion pricing.
- Initiative 26:** Move TIF collection and payment responsibilities from the medallion owner to the technology system providers.

Section 8: Improving the Driver Experience

- Initiative 27:** Continue to improve driver training on safety, customer service, and industry best practices.
- Initiative 28:** Improve the driver leasing process.
- Initiative 29:** Consider ways to improve financing mechanisms to help drivers afford new vehicle purchases.
- Initiative 30:** Improve the health and wellness of drivers.

Section 9: Solidifying the Role of Taxis in the City's Transportation Network

- Initiative 31:** Better integrate licensed vehicles in New York City and regional transportation planning efforts.
- Initiative 32:** Explore the feasibility of autonomous vehicle use for the Taxi industry.
- Initiative 33:** Expand pickup and drop-off areas and relief stands for Taxis.
- Initiative 34:** Promote the use of licensed vehicles in public contracting.

Section 10: Expanding Accessibility

- Initiative 35:** Increase the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles on the road.
- Initiative 36:** Work with New York State to increase compensation for Access-A-Ride trips.
- Initiative 37:** Improve compliance with the Accessible Dispatch program.
- Initiative 38:** Review in-vehicle requirements to ensure accessibility for passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing and blind or low vision.

Section 11: Improving Enforcement Practices

- Initiative 39:** Expand efforts to address illegal street hails.
- Initiative 40:** Evaluate and consider expanding the grace periods for equipment and other violations.

# The State of the Taxi Industry

## Taxi Trip Counts and Locations

Over the past several years, the Taxi industry has shown both increases and decreases in the number of completed trips. As shown in Figure 1, monthly Taxi trip counts steadily decreased from 2013 to 2019, partially due to the expansion of High-Volume For-Hire Services (HVFHSs)<sup>1</sup>. While Taxis completed over 14 million trips in January of 2013, by January of 2020 that number was under seven million, a decrease of more than 50%.

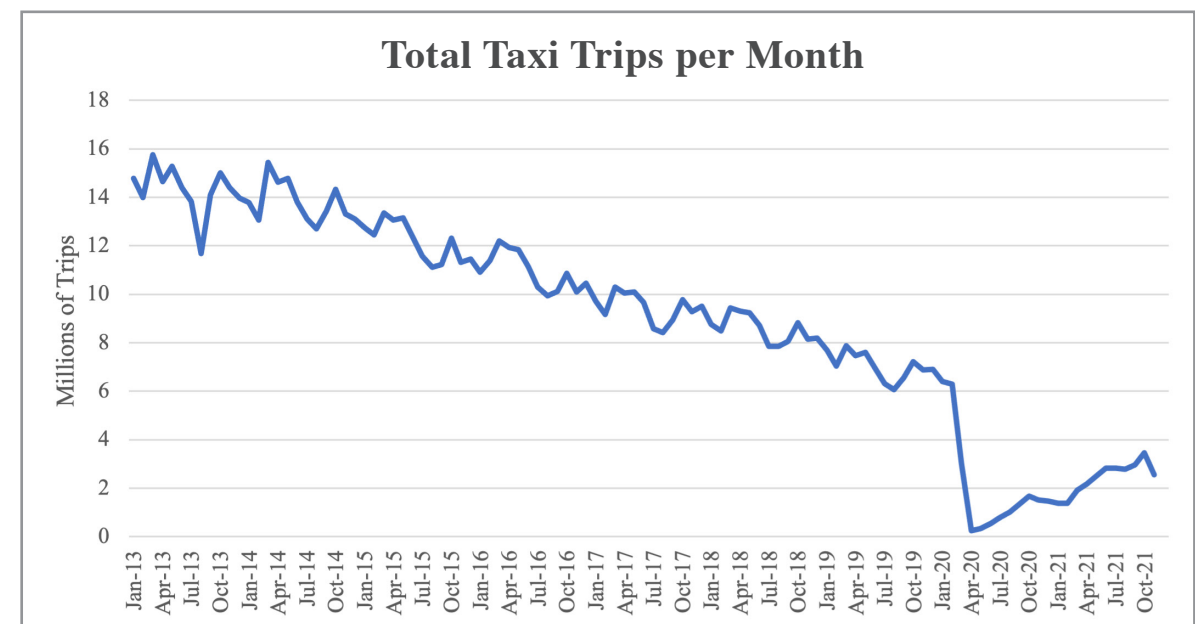


Figure 1: Total Trip Counts by Month, 2013-2021.<sup>2</sup>

With the emergence of COVID-19, the industry saw a sharp decline in rides starting in February of 2020, as evident in Figure 1. At the peak of the pandemic, in April of 2020, Taxi trips were at their lowest with a total monthly trip count of 238,073, a 92% decrease from the previous month. However, since that low point, trips have been increasing as the industry recovers, the City reopens, and passenger demand returns. In May of 2020, trips had increased by 46% from the previous month, and, most recently, there were over 2.5 million trips completed in November of 2021, a nearly 1,000% increase from April of 2020.

<sup>1</sup> A high-volume for-hire service is a license category defined, in short, as a company that dispatches 10,000 or more trips per day. Currently, Lyft and Uber are licensed as HVFHSs.

<sup>2</sup> TLC Trip Record Data, available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/tlc/about/tlc-trip-record-data.page>.

Despite the long-term decline in trip counts and the dramatic impact of COVID-19, trip locations for Taxis have remained fairly constant, centralized in Manhattan and at JFK and LaGuardia airports. Analyzing data from 2018 through 2021, the most common pickup location has been in the Upper East Side North Taxi Zone.<sup>3</sup> In 2018 and 2019, Midtown Center was a close second, but was replaced by the Upper East Side South Zone in 2020 and 2021 as Midtown workers and tourists stayed closer to home.<sup>4</sup> Another significant change was that the fifth most popular pickup location for 2018 and 2019, the Times Square/Theatre District Zone, fell to 20th in 2021, likely due to the closure of Broadway theaters during the pandemic, the decline in tourism, and the reduction in office workers.<sup>5</sup>

### Driver Statistics

In line with the change in trip volumes, the number of “active” Taxi Drivers—defined as the number of unique TLC-licensed Drivers who have completed any Taxi trips in a given quarter—began slowly declining each year beginning in Q2 of 2014, as shown in Figure 2. This correlates with the rapid expansion of HVFHSs in New York City. The steep drop in Q2 of 2020, as many Drivers temporarily stopped working during the peak of the pandemic, represents an 82% decrease in active Drivers between the first and second quarters of 2020. As the industry bounces back, the count of active Drivers has risen at a steady rate, averaging about a 19% increase per quarter beginning in Q3 of 2020.

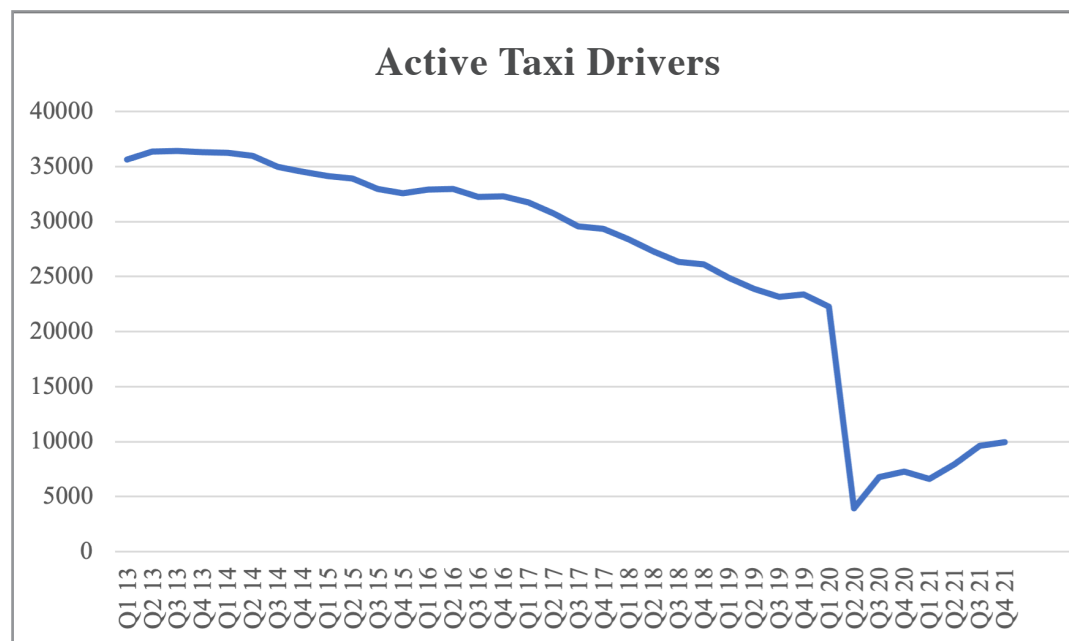


Figure 2: Active Taxi Drivers by Quarter, 2013-2021.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that Taxi Drivers are an incredibly diverse group, representing an array of ethnicities, countries of origin, and ages, and living in all five boroughs and throughout the metropolitan area. Taxi Drivers not only serve the City, but are members of our community, and policy decisions relating

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Taxi Zones are neighborhood or sub-neighborhood approximations and are based on the New York City Department of City Planning’s Neighborhood Tabulation Areas. For example, the Upper East Side North Taxi Zone includes the portion of the Upper East Side between East 77th Street and East 96th Street, and 5th Avenue and 3rd Avenue. For a map of Taxi Zones, see <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Transportation/NYC-Taxi-Zones/d3c5-ddgc>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

to the Taxi sector must take this into account. The top four most common countries of origin for Taxi Drivers are Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and Haiti.<sup>7</sup> Of the 12,643 drivers who performed Taxi trips in 2021, the plurality (36%) lived in Queens, about a quarter (24%) resided in Brooklyn, 17% in the Bronx, 7% in Manhattan, 3% in Staten Island, and about 14% resided outside of the five boroughs. The average age of all active Taxi Drivers is 53.

Age Range	Number of Active Taxi Drivers
20-40	1,007
41-60	3,540
61-80	2,039
81+	19

Figure 3: Count of Drivers by Age Group.<sup>8</sup>

### Medallion and Driver Earnings

Taxi revenue has generally declined since 2014, as shown in Figure 4. From 2014 when the monthly farebox revenue per Medallion was about \$11,300, until COVID’s emergence in early 2020, farebox revenues were in a steady decline. With the sudden decrease in demand for transportation during the pandemic, farebox earnings were cut roughly in half from the previous year, with farebox earnings averaging only \$4,611 per month. However, in 2021, this number dramatically increased by 66% to reach \$7,670 per month, which is closer to what medallions earned in 2019 pre-pandemic, signaling that the demand for Taxis is growing.

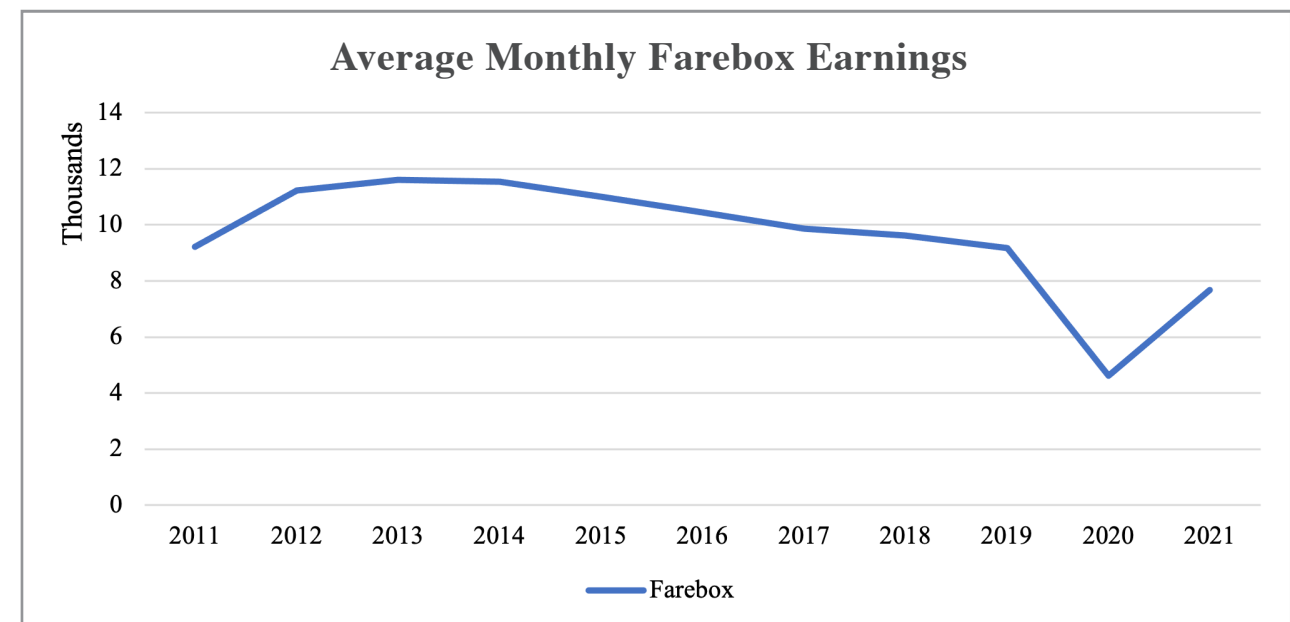


Figure 4: Average Monthly Farebox Earnings for the month of October through 2011-2021.<sup>9</sup> Note that outliers—those Medallions that TLC data suggests performed fewer than 15 trips or more than 1,150 trips in a given month—are not included here.

<sup>7</sup> TLC Factbook 2020, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/tlc/downloads/pdf/2020-tlc-factbook.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Internal TLC Driver Records.

<sup>9</sup> Internal TLC Farebox Records.

## Taxi Medallion Activity and Storage Trends

There are currently 13,587 Taxi Medallions. The trend in the count of active Taxi Medallions—i.e., the number of unique TLC-licensed Taxis that completed any trips in a given quarter—mirrors that of active Drivers, discussed above. As shown in Figure 5, the number of active Medallions stayed relatively steady until 2016 when it started to decline. In early 2020, with the onset of COVID-19, the number of active Medallions declined dramatically. Prior to COVID-19, in Q1 of 2020, there were 11,594 active Medallions. With the peak of the pandemic in Q2 of 2020, there were only 3,670 active Taxis on the road, a sharp decline of about 68% from the previous quarter. After the low point of the second quarter of 2020, the number of active Taxis slowly began to increase, culminating in the most recent figure of 6,750 active Taxi Medallions in Q4 of 2021, an 84% increase over Q2 of 2020.

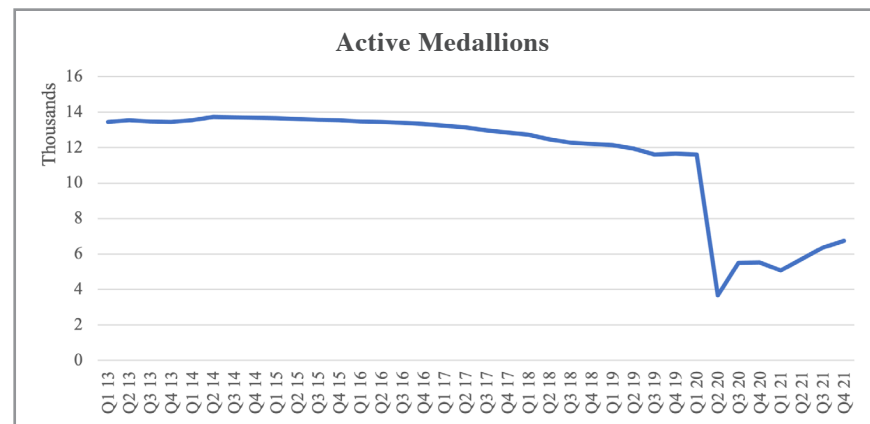


Figure 5: Medallions by Quarter 2013-2021.<sup>10</sup>

In response to the decreased demand for transportation caused by COVID-19, many Medallion owners chose to place their Medallions in temporary storage, as shown in Figure 6, to avoid costs such as insurance. The number of Medallions in storage peaked at 7,364 in April 2021. Since then, owners have slowly begun to take their Medallions out of storage and return their Taxis to service as demand increases for transportation around the City. As of November of 2021, there were 6,215 Medallions left in storage.

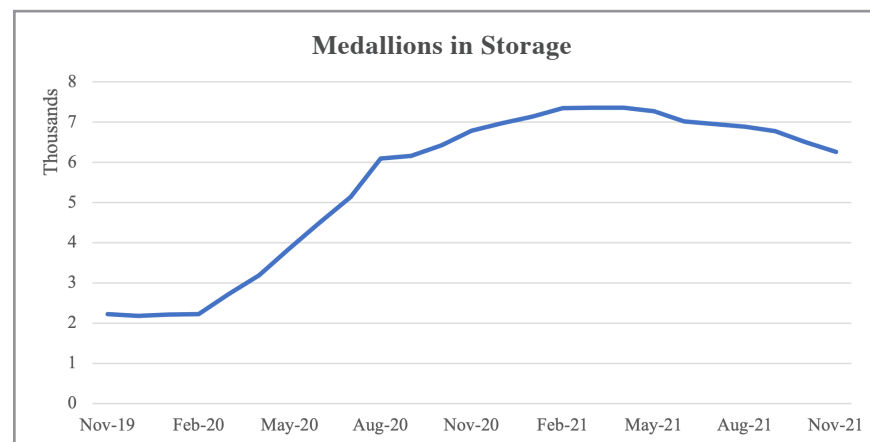


Figure 6: Count of Medallions in Storage.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> TLC Trip Record Data, available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/tlc/about/tlc-trip-record-data.page>.

<sup>11</sup> Internal TLC Licensing Records.

# Recent and Ongoing TLC Projects

The Taxi and Limousine Commission has undertaken numerous initiatives to support the Taxi industry, including projects intended to address the financial needs of Drivers and Medallion Owners, improve the Driver and passenger experience, and help the industry respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are a select few of the most impactful recent and ongoing TLC projects supporting the Taxi sector.

### Owner/Driver Resource Center and the Medallion Relief Program

TLC continues to prioritize financial assistance for Medallion Owners and Drivers. In May of 2020, TLC launched the Owner/Driver Resource Center (ODRC) to assist Drivers and Owners facing financial difficulties. Resources available include financial counseling, legal services, health and mental health services, assistance in applying for public benefits, and driver protection services. Additionally, ODRC provides legal assistance to Medallion Owners wanting to take part in TLC’s Medallion Relief Program (MRP).

Created in March 2021 as a \$65 million program, the MRP offers debt relief to Medallion Owners in the form of grants of \$20,000 to use as a down payment to restructure medallion debt, as well as additional monthly debt payment assistance. On November 3, 2021, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a loan guaranty supplement to the

original MRP. Medallion loans that are written down to a principal balance of \$170,000 or less, with an interest rate of 5% or less, and that are fully amortized over 20 years, may be eligible to apply for a guaranty on the principal balance. The goal of the MRP is to provide financial assistance to all Medallion Owners who need it.

### Driver Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic

TLC focused on support for Drivers during the COVID-19 pandemic. TLC Delivery launched in the spring of 2020 during the peak of the pandemic, when TLC partnered with other City agencies to provide work for drivers to deliver meals to food insecure New Yorkers. This initiative not only helped to feed families by delivering over 65 million meals, but it also helped ensure income for Drivers at a time when many people were not traveling around the City, the tourism industry was decimated, and State and City stay-at-home orders were in place.

In total, Drivers who participated in the TLC Delivery program earned over \$39 million. Furthermore, between February and May of 2021, TLC employees directly contacted licensed Drivers and worked to schedule about 6,500 vaccination appointments, which represented approximately one third of the total number of vaccinations scheduled through Health + Hospital’s online authorized scheduler portal. Through this effort,



TLC was able to help drivers stay healthy and protected against COVID-19. Since that time, TLC has held several vaccine pop-up events for TLC staff, Drivers, and their families, and the agency continues to provide messaging on the importance of getting vaccinated and wearing masks.

Taxi Improvement Fund Program

Launched in 2016, the Taxi Improvement Fund (TIF) promotes the adoption and operation of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) within the Taxi fleet. The fund is sustained through a surcharge of \$0.30 paid by passengers on every Taxi trip. The TIF program redirects money from the fund to medallion owners who purchase and operate WAVs, and provides an incentive of one dollar per trip to drivers who operate WAV Taxis. Through November of 2021, the TIF program has disbursed more than \$129 million, including throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vehicle Electrification

TLC is committed to electrifying the Taxi fleet. On May 4, 2021, TLC adopted the Battery Electric Vehicle Taxi Pilot Program, which will significantly expand the universe of electric vehicles (EVs) that can be used as Taxis in New York City. Advancing electric Taxis is in line with State and City mandates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mirrors trends in the automotive industry, supports clean jobs and economic development, and improves the TLC-licensed Driver and passenger experience.

There are also federal and State tax credits available for EVs and Licensees have the opportunity to save

money on fuel and maintenance costs. Importantly, TLC continues to work with stakeholders to ensure that there are wheelchair accessible EVs available to support a thriving, sustainable Taxi industry far into the future.

Flexible Fare Pilot

In March 2018, TLC adopted the Flexible Fare Pilot in order to test the viability of e-hail providers to offer upfront fare quotes to Taxi passengers, like their competitors in the for-hire vehicle (FHV) sector. E-hail providers began offering upfront quotes to passengers in 2020 and TLC is still evaluating the success of the pilot and determining next steps.

Office of Inclusion

The Office of Inclusion (OOI) was created by TLC pursuant to Local Law 219 of 2018 to ensure the riding public receives equal and courteous service from Taxis and FHVs. OOI's mission is to reduce and ultimately eliminate service refusals and to ensure that no one is discriminated against by TLC Licensees.

OOI attends events hosted by City agencies and community-based organizations to ensure the public is aware of the importance of filing a service refusal complaint. In addition to what is required by local law, OOI helps Drivers who experience discrimination on and off the road by connecting them to resources from the City Commission on Human Rights, which investigates and acts against such abuses.

Driver Assault and Victim Support

The Office of Inclusion launched the Licensee Safety Initiative in July 2020 to assist TLC Licensees who are victims of a crime while on the job. When notified of a crime against a Licensee, TLC staff contacts the Licensee to get more details regarding the incident. OOI then connects the Licensee to the New York State Office of Victim Services, which provides help with medical bills, lost wages, and other appropriate resources.

OOI also serves as a point of contact for Drivers and the criminal justice system. TLC's Enforcement Division works with the New York City Police Department to obtain case updates and an OOI staffer alerts the Licensee of their case's progress, including whether the case goes to trial.

TLC's Street Team

TLC's Street Team was created in 2018 with the goal of expanding Licensee and passenger outreach on agency initiatives. The Street Team visits Driver hubs and passenger hot spots throughout the five boroughs, providing resources on topics such as NYC WELL, how to file a service refusal complaint, TLC's accessibility programs, how to identify a TLC-licensed vehicle, TLC's financial disclosure survey, services from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, and much more.

Driver Education

All TLC-licensed Drivers must meet certain driver education requirements in order to obtain and maintain their TLC license. TLC's Driver Education Unit is responsible for the

development of the curriculum for all courses and manages the standards and application processes for its approved education providers.

The general education course covers all rules Drivers must follow, customer service best practices, the City's Vision Zero initiative, and City geography. Furthermore, in 2021, TLC launched its updated Passenger Assistance and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Training, developed with input from the disability community and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. More details about the course are described later in this document. TLC also launched its renewal course, which is a new requirement for Drivers when they renew their license every three years. The curriculum will be continuously updated as drivers complete the course, providing them with fresh information on TLC policies and procedures.

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# TLC Initiatives

TLC recognizes the importance of the Taxi sector in New York City’s transportation network and the need to ensure a thriving Taxi industry. Many of the initiatives below, divided into eleven sections, were developed in consultation with the Taxi Advisory Group convened by TLC throughout 2021. This group was composed of industry stakeholders including Drivers, Medallion Owners, agents, garage owners, technology providers, and insurance brokers. The recommendations the Advisory Group put forth were further refined and supplemented by TLC based on internal discussions and additional outreach with stakeholders, resulting in the initiatives below.

## Section 1: Supporting the Taxi Industry’s Financial Health

*The financial health of the Taxi industry is of paramount importance. While the Taxi sector continues to rebound with New York City’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, many Medallion Owners have experienced financial distress. The industry has faced tragedy, technological change, disruption, and uncertainty over the past several years, including when HVFH vehicles flooded the market. Moreover, a number of Medallion Owners took on unsustainable debt in an underregulated lending market. In response, local laws and regulations were passed to strengthen the Taxi industry, and the City established the Medallion Relief Program to provide debt relief to Medallion Owners. The initiatives in the Supporting Financial Health section focus on continuing to improve the financial health of Medallion Owners and Drivers so that the industry remains viable and sustainable far into the future.*

### **Initiative 1: Fully Implement the Medallion Relief Program.**

On November 3, 2021, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a loan guaranty supplement to the original MRP. Medallion loans that are written down to a principal balance of \$170,000 or less, with an interest rate of 5% or less, and that are fully amortized over 20 years, may be eligible to apply for a guaranty on the principal balance. TLC adopted rules to implement the guaranty supplement on March 17, 2022, and will prioritize fully implementing the MRP in 2022, working with all eligible financially distressed Medallion Owners to restructure their loans.

### **Initiative 2: Continue to support the work of the Owner/Driver Resource Center.**

TLC’s Owner/Driver Resource Center (ODRC), which opened remotely in the spring of 2020, provides free financial counseling and legal services to TLC Licensees. Legal services encompass issues related to medallion-related debt, including review of loan term agreements, renegotiation of relevant financing agreements, challenging debt collections or judgements, and filing for bankruptcy if appropriate. Currently, lawyers from the New York Legal Assistance Group provide these free legal services at the ODRC, and staff from Neighborhood Trust Financial Partners provide free financial counseling. During 2021, the vast majority of licensees seeking these services were interested in participating in the City’s MRP. Once the MRP has been fully implemented,

TLC will continue to provide direct support to Medallion Owners through the ODRC.

### **Initiative 3: Continue to monitor and evaluate the financial stability of the Taxi industry.**

Local Law 111 of 2020 directs TLC to explore topics related to monitoring and evaluating the financial stability of the Taxi Industry, such as the gross income and expenses of operating a Taxi medallion, common terms and conditions of medallion loans, financial disclosures from Medallion Owners, medallion bankruptcy proceedings, and potential market manipulation, speculation, and collusion in medallion transfers. TLC issued a Medallion survey in 2021 that provided information on income and expenses, common terms and conditions of medallion loans, efforts to monitor and preside over medallion transfer closings, and progress implementing rules that apply to TLC-licensed brokers and agents. Going forward, TLC will continue to monitor and evaluate this type of information, including through obtaining a required annual financial disclosure statement from Medallion Owners. Furthermore, TLC will pilot the review and evaluation of credit bureau data at the corporate/commercial level and potentially at the personal/consumer level.

### **Initiative 4: Evaluate Taxi fares and driver pay.**

It is important that fares are sufficient to enable the Taxi industry to thrive financially. In particular, Drivers must be compensated fairly, and Taxi fares must be set at such a level that the sector can remain competitive and attract both Drivers and passengers. TLC will review Taxi fares, taking into consideration taxes and fees levied by the City and State, the taxes and fees levied on other licensed sectors, and operating costs, including expenses and lease prices. Where appropriate, TLC will consider restructuring fares in order to increase Driver pay. For example, Section 6, below, includes an initiative to increase the flat fare from John F. Kennedy Airport to Manhattan and create a flat fare from LaGuardia Airport to Manhattan.

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Section 2: Modernizing Vehicle Equipment

Equipment inside Taxicabs has remained largely unchanged since the introduction of technology systems (formerly known as TPEP) in 2009. In 2016, TLC ran the Alternative Technology Pilot, which resulted in the introduction of software-based meters and streamlined TLC rules, primarily surrounding Taxi TV. 12 With the myriad technological advances in recent years, TLC and the Taxi industry need a fresh approach to the way technology is used in the Taxi sector. The initiatives in the Modernizing Vehicle Equipment section focus on improving the passenger and driver experience in Taxis and ensuring that the Taxi industry has the technological flexibility it needs to compete with other sectors going forward.

**Initiative 5: Require software-based Taximeters fleetwide.**

Software-based Taximeters were first introduced in New York City in 2016 as part of TLC’s Alternative Technology Pilot.13 Software-based meters are easier to update and configure, are better able to handle complicated fare structures, and can be installed on commercially available tablets. While the Taxi fleet has been slowly converting to software-based Taximeters, there are still many that have not upgraded. In order to leverage their full capability, TLC will consider requiring all Taxis to be equipped with software-based Taximeters. Such action will require research regarding suppliers, costs, and market competitiveness.

**Initiative 6: Digitize items displayed in Taxis where appropriate, including rate cards, driver licenses, and informational notices.**

Current TLC regulations mandate printed driver licenses and rate cards (notices describing the rates of fare) be displayed in Taxis.14 Furthermore, certain notices, including decals informing passengers of the State seatbelt law and penalties for assaulting a driver, must be posted. These requirements mean vehicle owners must install equipment to display items or affix decals directly to the inside of the vehicle, which can be onerous and result in a cluttered visual experience for passengers. In order to support the trend towards digitization and an improved Driver and passenger experience, TLC will consider ways to create and issue rate cards, driver licenses, informational notices, and other equipment as appropriate that can integrate with the in-vehicle technology system or passenger devices.

**Initiative 7: Reevaluate in-vehicle advertising operations and content.**

When TLC first introduced technology systems to Taxis in 2009, it allowed advertising to be played on the passenger information monitor (PIM) to offset the cost of the technology system. This content, better known as Taxi TV, currently results in an approximately \$20 per month discount on technology systems, less than the average amount of a single fare. Conversely, TLC prohibits advertising in FHV’s and the recent Black Car and Livery Task Force Report did not recommend a change to this policy.15 Taxi drivers have also expressed frustration at listening to repetitive content loops playing from the Taxi TV throughout their working day. In order to provide a more comfortable ride for both Drivers and passengers, TLC will consider reevaluating in-vehicle advertising operations and content.

**Initiative 8: Update in-vehicle camera system requirements.**

Dramatic advances in camera technology have made TLC’s rules on in-vehicle camera systems (IVCS) severely out of date. While intended to ensure driver safety, few camera systems on the market still meet TLC’s standards, making compliance more difficult and expensive over time. In fact, soon there may be no readily available systems allowed by TLC rules. Additionally, FHV owners are not required to have an IVCS, but are instead permitted to use any system they choose.16 However, with this modern technology comes policy challenges, as available and inexpensive cameras now take high-quality video and audio rather than only still photos, presenting complicated questions related to privacy, cloud storage, and law enforcement access, among others. TLC will work to revise its IVCS rules in light of these challenges, balancing the need for Driver and passenger safety, modern vehicle technology, the expense of compliance with TLC rules, and Driver and passenger privacy.

**Initiative 9: Streamline taximeter and technology system rules.**

Taxi technology systems and taximeters are in practice two inseparable components of the same equipment. However, several rules treat them as separate components or are otherwise antiquated and unnecessarily burdensome for Licensees. For example, the taximeter manufacturer’s license is arguably unnecessary because taximeter manufacturers are already licensed as technology system providers (TSPs). Furthermore, Taxis are permitted to be driven with an inoperable technology system for 48 hours, but are not permitted to be driven with an inoperable meter at all, though in reality the two are one-in-the-same. In order to eliminate redundancy and outdated provisions, TLC will consider streamlining its taximeter and technology system rules.

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12 TLC Alternative Technology Pilot Report, August 2017, available at [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/tlc/downloads/pdf/alternative\\_technology\\_pilot\\_report.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/tlc/downloads/pdf/alternative_technology_pilot_report.pdf).  
13 *Ibid.*  
14 See, e.g., TLC Rules §§ 58-32 and 58-33.  
15 Black Car and Livery Task Force Report, December 2021, available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/tlc/downloads/pdf/black-car-and-livery-task-force-report-2021.pdf>.  
16 Livery vehicles can install and IVCS in lieu of a partition. See TLC Rule § 59A-32.

Section 3: Improving E-hail Service

Mobile e-hail applications have provided passengers a way to summon Taxis since 2013.<sup>17</sup> While the use of mobile applications has become commonplace in the FHV sector, the adoption of apps has been limited in the Taxi industry, which still focuses on street hails as the way to connect Drivers and passengers. The initiatives in the Improving E-hail Service section focus on modernizing TLC rules and working with industry stakeholders to better leverage advances in mobile technology for the benefit of the Taxi industry.

**Initiative 10: Work with e-hail companies to explore ways to discourage cancellations by both passengers and Drivers.**

High-volume for-hire services discourage passenger and Driver cancellations through cancellation fees and rating systems. Lyft, for example, charges a \$2 fee for three or more passenger cancellations of any type in a 15-minute timeframe,<sup>18</sup> and Uber also has a cancellation fee after a passenger is matched with a Driver.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, HVFHSs employ ratings systems whereby Drivers rate passengers and vice versa to encourage good behavior, and HVFHSs use Driver acceptance rates to incentivize Drivers to accept and not subsequently cancel trips. If a passenger does cancel, Drivers are often entitled to passenger no-show fees.<sup>20</sup> These systems are currently lacking for e-hailing Taxis, which has led to complaints from Drivers, passengers, and industry members about the unreliability of e-hail. TLC will work with e-hail companies to explore ways to discourage Driver and passenger cancellations, including through incentives, ratings, and penalties, in order to increase the reliability of e-hail Taxi service and thus help the industry attract and retain more Drivers and passengers.

**Initiative 11: Evaluate the viability of shared rides in Taxis.**

In 2017, Via and Curb announced a collaboration that allowed passengers to book shared Taxi rides on the Curb app, with Via providing the back-end technology to match Drivers and passengers.<sup>21</sup> While this service was not ultimately offered, both Uber and Lyft have shared ride platforms. A U.S. Federal Highway Administration study from 2021 found that shared ride users on HVFHS platforms tend to be younger and are more likely to be transit riders than those who prefer individual rides.<sup>22</sup> With New York City’s exceptionally high transit usage, the appeal of shared rides to younger, more eco- and cost-conscious riders not typically seen as the Taxi sector’s core ridership could help to expand the Taxi passenger base. Additionally, advanced technology could do a better job of matching the limited number of Taxis to passengers in the outer boroughs where additional transportation options are most needed. TLC will work with e-hail providers and other industry members to identify previous challenges to the viability of shared rides in Taxis and explore their potential use going forward, with the goals of facilitating more efficient service and getting more passengers into Taxis.

**Initiative 12: Work with e-hail companies to integrate Taxi service with popular trip planners like Google Maps.**

Currently, HVFHS companies are integrated into many apps that provide transit directions, including Google Maps and the Transit app. Integrating Taxis into mobility apps will allow passengers to locate vehicles, request trips, and compare prices and trip times with other modes of transportation, ensuring that more passengers see—and ultimately choose—Taxis as an option. Curb is already moving in this direction by integrating its service in the Transit app so that users can compare Taxi trips to public transit and HVFHSs. Other cities and regions are working to standardize on-demand service data, including e-hail Taxi data, with the non-profit organization MobilityData, so that app developers can more easily access data and integrate on-demand services into a wide variety of transportation platforms.<sup>23</sup> This effort to create a General On-Demand Feed Specification (GOFs) is analogous to previous successful efforts to create data specifications for transit (GTFS) and bike- and scooter-share programs (GBFS). TLC will work Taxi technology providers, industry stakeholders, mobility data experts, and other jurisdictions to explore improving and standardizing data so that New York City’s Taxi data will be accessible for app developers.



17 Notice of Promulgation of Rules, January 2015. [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/tlc/downloads/pdf/newly\\_passed\\_rules\\_ehail.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/tlc/downloads/pdf/newly_passed_rules_ehail.pdf)  
18 <https://help.lyft.com/hc/e/articles/115012922687-Cancellation-policy-for-passengers>  
19 <https://help.uber.com/riders/article/canceling-a-ride?nodeId=56270015-1d1d-4c08-a460-3b94a090de23>  
20 <https://help.uber.com/riders/article/canceling-a-ride?nodeId=56270015-1d1d-4c08-a460-3b94a090de23>  
<https://help.lyft.com/hc/e/articles/115012922847-Cancellation-and-no-show-fee-policy-for-drivers>  
21 <https://www.pymnts.com/news/2017/curb-and-via-team-up-to-challenge-uber/>  
22 <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop21011/fhwahop21011.pdf>  
23 <https://mobilitydata.org/the-gofs-project-first-phase-is-in-the-book-whats-next/>



Section 4: Modernizing the Taxi Fleet

TLC’s vehicle requirements for Taxis are designed to ensure that the provision of for-hire transportation is safe and attractive for Drivers and passengers. This is accomplished in numerous ways, including through various vehicle specifications and by requiring vehicle inspections and vehicle retirement after seven years. This section includes initiatives that will re-evaluate TLC’s Taxi vehicle requirements, with the goal of modernizing the Taxi fleet and continuing to allow the industry to provide world-class service.

**Initiative 13: Evaluate existing vehicle retirement requirements.**

Currently, Taxis are subject to a seven-year retirement schedule, with extensions granted for certain hardships. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many medallion owners applied and were granted vehicle retirement extensions. For-hire vehicles are not subject to the same retirement requirements as Taxis, and TLC does not have the authority under local law to adopt vehicle retirement schedules for Black Cars;<sup>24</sup> however, HVFHS companies do impose their own vehicle requirements.<sup>25</sup> TLC will evaluate potential retirement qualifications to bring parity across the industry while still accounting for the operational differences between sectors.

**Initiative 14: Pursue the standardization of vehicle inspection schedules across sectors.**

All Taxis and FHV’s are required by local law to be inspected three times per year.<sup>26</sup> Pursuant to local law, the State Implementation Plan for the federal Clean Air Act, and a 1972 federal court consent decree, inspections for Taxis occur at TLC’s Woodside inspection facility.<sup>27</sup> FHV’s, on the other hand, are only required to be inspected at TLC’s facility once every two years, with the other inspections occurring at facilities approved by the State DMV.<sup>28</sup> While these federal, state, and local laws constrain TLC’s ability to change inspection requirements in some respects, TLC will explore changes to these laws as well as changes to TLC rules with the goals of ensuring that inspections for TLC vehicles are structured for optimal safety and environmental benefit and ensuring that the amount and type of vehicle inspections for Taxis are in line with other sectors.

**Initiative 15: Modernize vehicle specifications and in-vehicle requirements to better accommodate new makes and models and improve the Driver and passenger experience.**

Only TLC-approved vehicles may be licensed and used as Taxis. While the list of approved vehicles is extensive, including wheelchair-accessible, electric, and hybrid vehicles, and there are a range of vehicle sizes and manufacturers, TLC recognizes that there would be value in providing drivers with a broader range of vehicle options in an ever-evolving industry. TLC is already addressing the need for more electric vehicles through its Battery Electric Vehicle Taxi Pilot, which expands the number of EV makes and models available to medallion owners by broadening permissible vehicle specifications. Similar efforts could be made to review vehicle specifications for non-EV Taxis, including WAVs. TLC will review its Taxi vehicle specification requirements and list of approved vehicles to determine whether changes to accommodate more makes and models, especially for EVs and WAVs, are needed. TLC will also consider streamlining and clarifying our vehicle specification rules to

ensure they are easy to understand and comply with.

**Initiative 16: Adopt an electric vehicle (EV) plan to increase their use as Taxis.**

TLC recognizes that vehicle electrification is important for New York City’s future and is committed to electrifying our Taxi fleet. In an effort to increase EVs, the Battery Electric Vehicle Taxi Pilot was established in May of 2021 to expand the number of EV options available to medallion owners.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, TLC is partnering with utilities and other City agencies to support the expansion of the City’s EV charging network. Furthermore, TLC is engaging in conversations with manufacturers to ensure there are accessible EV models, including EV WAVs. As this work continues, TLC will adopt an electric vehicle plan that represents the future of the Taxi Industry.

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24 New York City Administrative Code § 19-544.  
25 <https://www.lyft.com/driver/cities/new-york-ny/driver-application-requirements>  
<https://www.uber.com/us/en/drive/new-york/get-started/vehicle-requirements/>  
26 New York City Administrative Code § 19-504(f).  
27 <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/tlc/vehicles/vehicle-inspections.page>  
28 *Ibid.*  
29 <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/tlc/downloads/pdf/bev-pilot-resoluton.pdf>

Section 5: Updating the Regulatory Environment

*As the Taxi and for-hire industries change, so too must TLC’s rules, policies, and practices. The initiatives in the Updating the Regulatory Environment section aim to keep TLC responsive to these changing conditions by updating certain rules and policies.*

**Initiative 17: Clarify that Taxi Drivers are allowed to use smartphones to accept dispatches.**

TLC rules are currently unclear about whether Taxi Drivers are allowed to use smartphones to accept dispatches. In one section of TLC rules, only FHV and street hail livery (SHL) Drivers are exempt from a general prohibition on the use of electronic communications devices,<sup>30</sup> while in another section Taxi Drivers are permitted to use an electronic device to access an e-hail application.<sup>31</sup> In order to avoid confusion, ensure parity among the licensed vehicle sectors, and recognize the reality of app-based Taxi dispatches, TLC will clarify in its rules that Taxi Drivers are permitted to use smartphones solely for the purpose of safely accepting dispatches.

**Initiative 18: Continue to limit the number of new licensed vehicles to mitigate congestion and unfair competition.**

In August of 2018, the City Council enacted a pause on the issuance of new FHV licenses to address traffic congestion and driver pay.<sup>32</sup> In August of 2019, TLC extended the license pause and committed to reviewing the pause every six months to determine, based on congestion levels, driver wages, wait times, and other factors, whether or how many new FHV licenses should be issued.<sup>33</sup> TLC will continue to carefully evaluate the number of active FHV licenses every six months and ensure that new FHV licenses are only issued if doing so is necessary and would not undermine the many beneficial consequences of the license pause.

**Initiative 19: Improve data collection and analysis to better inform policies that support licensed vehicle industries.**

Data can improve urban mobility by better managing road space and vehicle pickup and drop-off locations, as well as by enhancing road safety, ensuring sustainability, and mitigating congestion. Data is also integral to forecasting future transportation needs, including the demand for TLC-licensed vehicles. TLC collects a significant amount of data and will work towards getting real time data from all licensees to better understand and design transportation systems and policies. This must include building capacity to process and analyze data, as well as increased collaboration with governmental partners and industry stakeholders. TLC will also work with academic institutions to collect and analyze data, including by surveying Drivers, other industry members, and passengers to better understand the state of the industry.

**Initiative 20: Update, streamline, or repeal antiquated, overly complex, and burdensome rules.**

TLC has done much work in recent years to ensure that its rules keep pace with industry trends and practices, but certain rules remain that present a burden for industry compliance and may no longer serve an adequate public or regulatory purpose. For example, in addition to the rule changes mentioned as part of other initiatives in this Strategic Plan, rules pertaining to two-way radios, long-term driver affidavits, off-duty codes, and terms like “TPEP” and “TLC Tribunal” are now obsolete; licensing processes could be streamlined and standardized across sectors; Taximeter businesses should be explicitly permitted to hack up SHLs; and rules relating to illegal street hails could be strengthened by prohibiting vehicle owners from allowing their vehicles to be illegally “operated” for hire rather than just “dispatched” for hire. TLC will continue to conduct a top-to-bottom regulatory review of its rules to ensure that its regulations are effective, streamlined, and adapted to the 21st-century needs of Drivers, passengers, and industry members.

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30 TLC Rules § 80-14(g).  
31 TLC Rules § 80-22(f).  
32 Local Law 147 of 2018.  
33 TLC Rules § 59A-06(a). For the reports required by this rule, see <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/tlc/vehicles/fhv-license-pause.page>.

## Section 6: Improving the Airport Experience

*TLC-licensed Drivers and vehicles are essential to ensuring smooth operations at LaGuardia and JFK Airports. TLC has worked closely with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the agency that regulates the roadways and ground transportation at both airports, to ensure that Drivers and passengers have the best experience possible using Taxis at airports. The initiatives in the Improving the Airport Experience section includes initiatives to improve the Driver experience at airports and compensate Drivers more fairly for time spent at airports, as well as initiatives to improve passenger information and wayfinding and modernize the dispatch and Taxi pick-up processes at airports.*

**Initiative 21: Increase the flat fare from Kennedy Airport to Manhattan and create a flat fare from LaGuardia Airport to Manhattan.**

While airport trips remain a major source of industry revenue, long waits for Drivers in airport hold lots—time where Drivers are working but not being paid—create a strong disincentive for performing those trips. This is a particularly acute problem for Drivers who just completed a drop-off at an airport and who would rather “deadhead” back to Manhattan without a passenger than wait for an airport pickup. To address this issue, TLC will consider restructuring its fares for airport trips in two ways: first by increasing the flat fare for trips between Manhattan and John F. Kennedy Airport from \$52 to \$65, and second by creating a flat fare of \$39 for trips between LaGuardia Airport and the Hail Exclusionary Zone, Manhattan south of West 110th Street and East 96th Street. These fares, formulated based on Driver wait times at the airports, are designed to compensate Drivers for this time spent without a passenger. The net result of such a change would be a raise for Drivers of about 25% for both Kennedy and LaGuardia trips.

**Initiative 22: Continue working with the Port Authority to improve Taxi service at airports.**

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey exercises primary control over New York City’s airports, including by controlling the dispatch process for Taxis and FHV’s. TLC will continue to work closely with the Port Authority to address issues of importance for TLC Licensees and passengers, including:

- Finding Taxis. Arriving passengers, particularly during periods of construction at airports, may not know exactly where to go to get a Taxi. TLC will continue working with the Port Authority and terminal operators to improve signage and wayfinding for passengers to make it clearer and easier for passengers to find Taxis, thereby increasing the number of trips performed by the sector.
- Improving the Taxi line and dispatch process. Drivers and dispatchers who violate established rules and procedures unnecessarily insert a disorderliness to the process and harm the experiences of Drivers and

passengers alike, making airport Taxi trips less attractive for both. TLC will continue to work with the Port Authority to improve the dispatch process, making it more convenient for Drivers and passengers.

- Increasing access to Taxis. E-hails and Accessible Dispatch are currently not permitted at New York City’s airports. This restriction deprives passengers, and particularly passengers with disabilities, of a convenient way to use Taxis at airports, leaving those who prefer more tech-savvy dispatching options with no choice but to use an app-based FHV. TLC will continue to advocate for the Port Authority to allow e-hails and Accessible Dispatch at airports and will work with the Port Authority to address any concerns in implementing these passenger options.

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Section 7: Restructuring Fares and Fees

The initiatives in the Restructuring Fares and Fees section focus on leveraging the capabilities of advanced technology to attract new passengers, create equity across sectors regarding existing taxes and fees, and ensure that compliance with collection processes is not burdensome.

**Initiative 23: Evaluate the viability of alternative pricing models for Taxis.**

The rigid, predetermined fare structure for Taxis can be attributed primarily to the street hail: passengers need to know what the rates of fare will be before they get into the back of a Taxi. However, there is some concern that knowing the rate of fare but not the total fare itself until the end of the trip signifies a lack of price transparency and is a downside to using street-hailed Taxis as compared to e-hailed Taxis or prearranged FHV trips. At the same time, the lack of price variability prevents Taxis from being as responsive as other sectors to market conditions such as times of high passenger demand or times of low Driver supply. TLC’s Flex Fare pilot, which began in 2018, attempted to address these issues by allowing upfront fare quotes and price variation from the metered fare. The results, however, were limited. As TLC noted in its one-year evaluation report, over 99% of Flex Fare trips at that point were not routine e-hail trips but were rather arranged through Access-A-Ride, and there was little experimentation with price variation or other service models such as shared rides.

TLC will explore various next steps for alternative pricing models for Taxis, including upfront pricing for street hails and dynamic pricing. For upfront street hail pricing, such models could include a system whereby the passenger’s destination is inputted upon their entry into the Taxi and a total fare is calculated on the basis of time or distance, or through pre-set zone- or distance-based flat fares, potentially attracting passengers who would find this option appealing. Additionally, dynamic pricing could be further explored, particularly for e-hails, as a way to attract and pay more drivers during times of high demand and thus ensure that passenger demand is always satisfied.

**Initiative 24: Review fees, taxes, and surcharges across all sectors with a view towards parity and sector health.**

Otherwise identical Taxi and FHV trips include very different fees, taxes, and surcharges. For example, Taxi trips currently incur an MTA tax of \$0.50, a Taxi Improvement Fund (TIF) surcharge of \$0.30, and, if the trip begins or ends in Manhattan below 96th Street, a congestion surcharge of \$2.50.<sup>34</sup> FHV passengers, on the other hand, pay a Black Car Fund surcharge of 3%, a State sales tax of 8.875%, and, if the trip begins or ends in Manhattan below 96th Street, a congestion surcharge of \$2.75—unless it is a shared ride, in which case the congestion surcharge is \$0.75.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it is unclear what role congestion pricing will play in this dynamic. TLC will examine the differences and justifications for the diverging fees between sectors and engage with the State to work towards greater parity in fees and charges levied across sectors.

**Initiative 25: Advocate for the exclusion of Taxis from any additional fees as the MTA implements congestion pricing.**

All Taxi trips that begin or end in Manhattan below 96th Street are subject to a congestion surcharge of \$2.50—what has been called “phase one” of congestion pricing.<sup>36</sup> Unlike other sectors, nearly all Taxi trips begin or end in this zone, with the majority of remaining trips performed at airports, which are now subject to their own access fee as well.<sup>37</sup> With the MTA preparing to implement phase two of congestion pricing for vehicles entering the congestion zone of Manhattan below 60th Street, TLC is concerned that additional fees will be imposed on Taxis, and that these fees will have an outsized impact on the sector because of the high percentage of its trips that are conducted in the congestion zone. TLC will work with industry stakeholders and governmental partners to advocate that Taxis be excluded from congestion pricing.

**Initiative 26: Move TIF collection and payment responsibilities from the medallion owner to the technology system providers.**

Following recent State legislation, starting on July 1, 2021, technology system providers (TSPs) have been responsible for filing and payment responsibilities for the \$0.50 MTA tax and the \$2.50 congestion surcharge.<sup>38</sup> This change streamlined the process and lifted the administrative burden of filing and payment from medallion owners. While State legislation was required for these State-imposed taxes, the filing and payment processes for TLC’s Taxi Improvement Fund (TIF) is at TLC’s discretion. TLC will consider making an analogous change to TIF, moving responsibility for filing and paying TIF fees from medallion owners to TSPs.

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34 <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/tlc/passengers/Taxi-fare.page>  
35 <https://www.tax.ny.gov/bus/cs/csidx.htm>; <https://www.nybcf.org/about>  
36 <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/tlc/about/congestion-surcharge.page>  
37 <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/tlc/passengers/taxi-fare.page>  
38 <https://www.jfkairport.com/to-from-airport/taxi-car-and-van-service>; <https://www.laguardiaairport.com/to-from-airport/by-taxi>

Section 8: Improving the Driver Experience

*Drivers are the core of the Taxi industry, but many members of the industry have reported difficult in attracting and maintaining Drivers, especially in such a competitive labor market. This group of initiatives focuses on improving the Driver experience in order to make driving a Taxi a more desirable livelihood and thus ensure a stable and sustainable Taxi industry.*

**Initiative 27: Continue to improve Driver training on safety, customer service, and industry best practices.**

TLC’s highest priority is the safety of Drivers, passengers, and all street users. In 2021, TLC updated its Passenger Assistance and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Training Course, in conjunction with the disability community and the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities, to better reflect the needs of passengers with disabilities. The new course includes in-vehicle training, as well as updated print and video materials. In the fall of 2021, TLC also launched a renewal course that is required for all driver license renewals. This course is a wide-ranging opportunity for professional development and includes updated material on the City’s Vision Zero safety initiative, what to do if you receive a summons, how to use new technology such as e-hail, and City resources such as the Office of Financial Empowerment and NYC Well that are available to Drivers. TLC will continue to make adjustments and improvements to its Driver training and professional development curricula in order to be responsive to industry needs.

**Initiative 28: Improve the Driver leasing process.**

For Drivers who are not themselves medallion owners, the Taxi leasing process is their entry into the Taxi sector and in many ways establishes how financially beneficial their experience driving a Taxi will be. In order for the industry to attract and retain Drivers, and in order for Drivers to prosper in the industry, leases and the leasing process must be fair and transparent. Leasing agreements, however, may be fairly complex and can vary widely depending on the garage. TLC will consider requiring that Taxi lease agreements be written in clear, unambiguous, plain language—requirements that already apply to FHV leases—to better ensure that Drivers understand the terms of the agreement. Additionally, it is a common industry practice for a Taxi lessor and lessee to make agreements that fall outside of the lease; for example, to deduct certain costs relating to vehicle repairs for previous damage. Often these side agreements are merely verbal, which invites conflict and makes enforcement by the parties or TLC much more difficult. TLC will explore requiring that any side agreement to a lease also be written in clear, unambiguous, and plain language, signed by all parties, and made available to TLC.

**Initiative 29: Consider ways to improve financing mechanisms to help Drivers afford new vehicle purchases.**

From individual Owner-Divers to large fleets, financing new vehicle purchases can greatly increase the cost of operating a Taxi. However, it is important for the health of the Taxi industry as a whole that vehicles be fairly new and well-maintained. Furthermore, it is a priority of the City and TLC to convert the fleet to electric vehicles, which obviously requires existing gas-powered vehicles to be replaced. TLC will explore ways to work with outside partners to improve vehicle financing arrangements to increase access to and reduce the financial burden of new vehicle purchases, especially for owner-operators and electric vehicles.

**Initiative 30: Improve the health and wellness of Drivers.**

Supporting the health and wellness of licensed Drivers is of paramount importance to TLC. Recent efforts in this area include partnering with the City to address the COVID-19 pandemic by scheduling vaccine appointments for Drivers and facilitating testing and vaccine pop-up events. Additionally, TLC has conducted numerous outreach initiatives focused on informing Drivers about NYC Well, health enrollment assistance and benefits, free health screenings, and wellness programs and counseling. Going forward, TLC will forge more partnerships with health care providers, non-profit organizations, Driver groups, and governmental entities to ensure that Drivers have access to adequate health and wellness services. This could include co-facilitating events that provide health screenings and opportunities to enroll in health insurance, conducting informational outreach to licensees on health and wellness topics, working with the Owner/Driver Resource Center to expand health and wellness offerings, and partnering with organizations like hospitals and Driver groups to promote health and wellness programs.

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Section 9: Solidifying the Role of Taxis in the City’s Transportation Network

From airport trips to short rides in the central business district, Taxis are an integral component of the City’s transportation network. This section of initiatives recognizes that important role and seeks to improve on the ways that the City considers and incorporates Taxis into its long-term transportation plans.

**Initiative 31: Better integrate licensed vehicles in New York City and regional transportation planning efforts.**

Licensed vehicles play an important role in the City and regional transportation network by complementing other transportation modes and providing services to individuals who have limited access to transportation, including people with disabilities, those living in areas underserved by public transportation, and those who do not own a car. Furthermore, licensed vehicles ensure flexible, around-the-clock service when needed. TLC will work closely with agencies responsible for multimodal planning, including the New York City Department of Transportation, the New York City Department of City Planning, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the New York City Transit Authority, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to ensure cooperative, comprehensive transportation planning and improved transportation options and passenger service for New York City.

**Initiative 32: Explore the feasibility of autonomous vehicle use for the Taxi industry.**

Rapidly changing innovations in the mobility sector include the possibility of autonomous or “self-driving” vehicles. To stay ahead of the curve, TLC will consider whether autonomous vehicles are feasible for use as Taxis, including by looking at the particular attributes of this sector such as the use of street hails. Additionally, there are limitations regarding the extent to which autonomous vehicles can meet certain passenger needs, including assistance with mobility aids like wheelchairs or help loading and unloading luggage. Based on these limitations, TLC will consider potential challenges to and requirements around the use of autonomous vehicles in order to ensure that such use is safe and meets the particular needs of the industry.

**Initiative 33: Expand pickup and drop-off areas and relief stands for Taxis.**

As the City has successfully repurposed significant portions of our streetscape for a wide variety of more efficient and equitable uses, including bike lanes, bus lanes, pedestrian plazas, and on-street dining facilities, space for the safe pickup and drop-off of passengers can be a challenge for Taxi and other for-hire Drivers. Similarly, there are only a limited number of areas where Drivers can park their vehicles to take breaks and use the restroom. TLC will work with the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) to expand Neighborhood Loading Zones, which allow pickups and drop-offs, as well as commercial deliveries and loading and unloading of personal vehicles,<sup>39</sup> and Taxi/FHV stands where there is a need for areas dedicated to for-hire pickups and drop-offs. TLC will also work with DOT to increase the number of Taxi/FHV relief stands—places where drivers can safely and legally park their vehicle to take a break or use the restroom—available to Drivers citywide, targeting

areas where Taxi service is most prevalent.

**Initiative 34: Promote the use of licensed vehicles in public contracting.**

Providing services through government programs and initiatives can increase opportunities for Drivers to make money while providing a valuable service to governmental entities. In the past, TLC has partnered with several agencies to expand work for Drivers, including delivering food during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as transporting medical personnel to administer at-home vaccines and visit seniors in their homes. Additionally, the New York City Department for the Aging and the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities have a pilot program whereby older New Yorkers and people with disabilities receive stipends for on-demand licensed vehicle rides. Providing services through Access-A-Ride is another significant opportunity for Drivers to increase trips through a program for people with disabilities run by the MTA. TLC will work with government partners to expand opportunities available for licensed vehicles to provide transportation services for needed programs and initiatives, increasing trips and earnings for Drivers.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/nlz.shtml>



Section 10: Expanding Accessibility

TLC is committed to ensuring accessibility in the Taxi fleet for passengers with disabilities. Taxis provide essential transportation to passengers with disabilities through the MTA's Access-A-Ride program, TLC's Accessible Dispatch program, and through routine street hails and e-hails. The initiatives in the Expanding Accessibility section seek to build upon the progress made through these programs and places a focus on different ways to improve accessibility—through increasing the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles on the road, increasing incentives for Drivers so that passengers are picked up in a timely manner, and improving access for passengers who are blind or have low vision and passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Initiative 35: Increase the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles on the road.**

Accessibility in the Taxi fleet has long been a priority for TLC. The agency currently has a goal of wheelchair accessibility for 50% of the fleet and has been working with Medallion Owners and Drivers to encourage the purchase of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs). While most Medallion Owners will be required to purchase WAVs upon retirement of their current vehicles, TLC will explore other ways to encourage WAV ownership, through expansion and promotion of the Taxi Improvement Fund program, recruitment and outreach to drivers regarding WAV purchase or lease, and coordination with fleets to encourage the utilization of WAVs over other vehicles. Ultimately, the goal should be a 100% accessible Taxi fleet.

**Initiative 36: Work with New York State to increase compensation for Access-A-Ride trips.**

For several years, the MTA has utilized TLC-licensed Drivers and vehicles to conduct Access-A-Ride (AAR) trips. This partnership has benefited many parties. Taxi and other for-hire Drivers have received increased numbers of trips, passengers with disabilities have received improved service and faster pickup times compared to typical AAR service, and the MTA has improved service while achieving cost savings. However, there is concern that the flat rates of fare are not competitive with standard metered fares. To ensure that this program remains viable for Drivers as well as passengers and the MTA, TLC will work with the State to increase compensation for Access-A-Ride trips, either through increased flat rates or other mechanisms.

**Initiative 37: Improve compliance with the Accessible Dispatch program.**

TLC's Accessible Dispatch program connects passengers to wheelchair accessible Taxis and Street Hail Liveries through a mobile app, a dispatch center via phone, and a web-based booking tool. Trips arranged through Accessible Dispatch can be requested in advance or on demand, and passengers pay the standard metered rate. Depending on the distance required to pick up the passenger, Drivers receive "deadhead" payments, ranging from \$15 to \$35, on top of the metered fare. TLC has identified that despite this additional incentive, many Taxi Drivers do not choose to accept Accessible Dispatch trips. Some Drivers report experiencing some confusion related to Accessible Dispatch trip notifications on their driver information monitor (DIM). TLC will work

with Drivers and the Accessible Dispatch contractor, Medical Transportation Management (MTM), to improve Driver compliance with the system. Additionally, TLC will consider methods of increased outreach and education for Drivers, who may not be aware of the incentives available for Accessible Dispatch trips. TLC will also consider additional incentives for such trips and penalties for non-compliance if determined to be necessary for the success of the program.

**Initiative 38: Review in-vehicle requirements to ensure accessibility for passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing and blind or low vision.**

TLC has long focused on wheelchair accessibility in the Taxi sector, requiring medallion owners to hack up vehicles with ramps and securements to safely accommodate passengers who use wheelchairs. Conversely, TLC has done less to ensure that the regulated industry accommodates passengers with other disabilities, including passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing, and passengers who are blind or have low vision. All Taxis and Street Hail Liveries are required to include Braille and raised lettering to identify the medallion number within the Taxi and information for making a complaint through 311. Additionally, all Taxis are equipped with Accessibility Mode on the passenger information screen to assist passengers who are blind or have low vision as well as individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Nearly 3,000 Taxis, specifically the Nissan NV200 "Taxi of Tomorrow" model, are equipped with induction loop systems that transmit sound directly to cochlear implants or hearing aids with a T-coil to ease communication between Drivers and passengers who have hearing loss. TLC will review its existing in-vehicle requirements and identify improvements to better serve people with disabilities and ensure full accessibility in the Taxi fleet.

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Section 11: Improving Enforcement Practices

Effective and equitable enforcement is at the core of TLC’s mission as a regulatory agency. The Improving Enforcement Practices initiatives aim to improve TLC’s enforcement of its rules to ensure the safety and well-being of both drivers and passengers.

**Initiative 39: Expand efforts to address illegal street hails.**

Unmarked or illegal rides can be dangerous for Drivers, passengers, and other road users. The Driver may not be licensed by TLC, meaning that the Driver has not passed a background check or completed safety and other training; the vehicle may not be properly licensed or insured; the Driver may charge an unfair rate; and the trip is not documented for TLC or law enforcement purposes. Additionally, illegal street hails siphon trips from legitimate for-hire purveyors, including the Taxi industry. TLC will continue to expand its myriad communications and enforcement strategies to address the problem of illegal street hails, including:

- Expanding outreach efforts, such as the #PlateSafe campaign, to warn passengers and members of the public about the dangers of hailing unlicensed vehicles and how to ensure that the vehicle and driver are appropriately licensed by TLC.
- Considering new enforcement strategies, in partnership with NYPD, for a more targeted approach to street hail enforcement. Such strategies could include focusing on high-violation areas based on TLC, NYPD, and other data sources.
- Continuing efforts to coordinate with the Port Authority on the enforcement of unlicensed activity at airports.
- Exploring ways to collaborate with hotel and tourism organizations to assess the prevalence of illegal street hails at hotels and develop outreach and enforcement strategies to address the issue.

**Initiative 40: Evaluate and consider expanding the grace periods for equipment and other violations.**

TLC currently uses grace or cure periods for certain vehicle violations. For example, TLC follows State law in granting drivers a 24-hour period to fix certain vehicle violations like broken brake lights and uses a 10-day period to fix less safety-critical violations such as a dirty vehicle. In both instances, if the issue is cured within the specific time period and vehicle owners provide proof that the issue has been addressed, the vehicle owner does not have to pay the fine. TLC will evaluate these existing policies to determine whether they can be improved or expanded within the agency’s legal authority, and will work to ensure that TLC licensees know their options under these existing policies and any related new policies that TLC adopts.



# Conclusion & Next Steps

Taxis are as important to the City today as they were upon TLC’s creation 50 years ago, but it will take the deliberate effort of TLC, elected officials, other governmental entities, and the industry itself to ensure that Taxis are as central to the City 50 years from now. The set of initiatives outlined above, developed in consultation with industry stakeholders, is a first step to ensuring the continued viability of the industry. TLC looks forward to working alongside all those who care about the future of the industry to implement the initiatives presented in this Strategic Plan.

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