

**Testimony of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission
before Borough President Gale Brewer
September 17, 2015**

Good morning, Borough President Brewer and Dean Yassky. My name is Bill Heinzen, and I am Special Advisor to the Commissioner of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission. With me today is Rodney Stiles, the TLC's Executive Director of Policy and Analytics. Commissioner Meera Joshi is chairing a meeting of the TLC this morning, and so she is unable to be here with you.

The TLC appreciates the opportunity to speak with you today regarding traffic congestion in Manhattan, which is a topic of significant concern to the TLC. As your opening presentation detailed, congestion is a complex issue, and vehicles regulated by TLC are just one part of it.

Much of the discussion about congestion and TLC vehicles involves two trends: the number of For Hire Vehicles, or "FHV"s, is increasing, and that increase is concentrated in Manhattan. Indeed, the number of FHVS Citywide has increased since 2012 by more than 30,000 to over 68,000, and recent data we have obtained indicates that a large percentage of trips provided by these additional cars occurs in the Central Business District ("CBD"). During this same period, as you have just heard from DOT, average traffic speeds are decreasing in

the CBD. Today I want to address the impact of congestion on the industries that the TLC regulates.

As you acknowledge in your invitation, Mayor deBlasio recently commissioned a multi-agency study of the For Hire Vehicle industry in New York City, focusing on the potential impact of its rapid growth on traffic congestion and related areas of public concern. As part of the Study, the City will develop recommendations for addressing any impacts identified. TLC is one of several participating agencies, and the Study is ongoing. I am certain the City will have more to report to you and the public in the near future, including findings and recommendations, but in the meantime, we want to share with you the TLC's perspective on congestion impacts.

Given the TLC's mission, we are constantly evaluating how congestion affects passengers and drivers. At a basic level, congestion costs TLC passengers money if they are spending more to get to their destination over a longer period of time. It also costs money, for both TLC and non-TLC passengers, if it represents lost economic opportunity when people could otherwise be working and producing, rather than navigating traffic.

Because accessibility is a major component of the TLC's mission, we also must consider how congestion affects our mobility-impaired passengers.

Congestion increases wait times for all passengers, but the effect is magnified for passengers who require accessible transportation. It comes down to a question of supply.

The City's yellow taxi industry is subject to a federal court mandate that 50% of the yellow fleet be accessible by 2020, and the TLC is working to meet that goal, in partnership with the industry. Additionally, the City has committed to making the green taxi fleet 50% accessible. Ideally, more licensed drivers and vehicles would result in more options for passengers with disabilities, but, while more yellow and green cabs will be made accessible, it is the FHV sector that is growing fastest, and these vehicles are not accessible. Essentially, then, the only accessible, on-demand vehicles doing pickups in the Manhattan Core, including the Central Business District, are yellow cabs. The City may therefore face a situation where a shrinking sector of yellow and green taxi drivers is required to assume the responsibilities of accessibility, while the non-accessible sector continues to grow.

How can the TLC address this potential shortage of accessible vehicles? To encourage a greater supply of accessible vehicles, and thus control wait times for people with disabilities, the TLC incentivizes yellow taxi drivers who drive accessible vehicles. Additionally, a portion of each yellow or green fare goes to a fund that will support purchasing and equipping more accessible taxis. But will these approaches continue to work if the number of black cars increases, particularly when there are already 5 times as many FHV's as yellow taxis?

In addition to passengers, the TLC must also consider how congestion affects our licensed drivers. At a basic level, congestion hurts drivers' income if it limits their ability to get to the next fare. Increased congestion can increase cruising time, which is not profitable for the driver. Congestion also reduces driver income by increasing fuel costs. More congestion generates more idling, which uses more gas. Not only does increased fuel consumption have negative environmental effects, it further erodes driver income by increasing their daily business costs.

As the TLC seeks to answer these questions, the facts on the ground change daily. A fuller analysis of TLC-licensed vehicles' role in traffic congestion requires equivalent data from all sectors, and we continue to work toward that goal.

TPEP and LPEP, which are the devices in yellow and green taxis that provide passengers with information about their metered fares and also allow them to pay by credit cards, yield this data directly to the TLC. Through this technology, the agency collects information, which does not reveal individual passenger information, but which tells us about fares, pick up and drop off times, and locations. But as different providers offer more passenger options, passengers shift among those options, meaning we can rely less and less on yellow and green taxi data to assist in our policymaking. In January 2015, the TLC started collecting pick-up data from the FHV industry. Ideally, all TLC-regulated vehicles would provide complete trip and fare data to the TLC on a regular and unmediated basis. We get a lot of interesting data, but we are always looking for more relevant information to assist us with consumer protection, driver safety and also to further our understanding of traffic congestion, not just in Manhattan, but Citywide.

What we do know from the data is that the number of FHV's in Manhattan is increasing. Citywide, the number of licenses that the TLC issues has greatly increased, while we also know that the volume of trips originating in the CBD has grown. Of course growth in any one sector is not a negative in itself, but growth in the number of For Hire Vehicles operating in the City is the undeniable reality,

and the Study will help the City to know more about its impacts on other street users, the environment, drivers and passengers. At the same time, the City must evaluate how to leverage that growth, which may represent an opportunity to make strides in key parts of the TLC mission: customer service, driver protection and accessibility.

Thank you for inviting us today. The TLC appreciates the opportunity to share its perspective on the potential impacts of Manhattan traffic congestion, and we look forward to working further with you and your office.