

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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October 16, 2020  
Start: 2:11 p.m.  
Recess: 4:33 p.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing - Virtual Room 3

B E F O R E: Ydanis Rodriguez  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Ydanis Rodriguez  
Fernando Cabrera  
Andrew Cohen  
Chaim M. Deutsch  
Ruben Diaz, Sr.  
Robert F. Holden  
Peter A. Koo  
Stephen T. Levin  
Mark Levine  
Carlos Menchaca  
I. Daneek Miller  
Antonio Reynoso  
Donovan J. Richards  
Deborah L. Rose  
Eric A. Ulrich

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

Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk  
Chair  
Taxi and Limousine Commission

Rebecca Zack  
Assistant Commissioner  
Intergovernmental and Community Affairs

Joshua Benson  
Deputy Commissioner for Traffic  
Operations  
New York City Department of  
Transportation

Bhairavi Desai

Aziz Bah

Jen Hensley

Jason Gross

Suvez Birogi

Gerson Fernandez

Mohammed Marbo

Augustine Tang

Richard Chou

Ashraf Ahmed

Mohammed Hussain

Raul Rivera

Osman Chowdury

Kubersancho Persaud

Valentin Georgiev

Irhan Tonsel

Galena Kamenker

Eugene Pamov

Kuba Rama

Depan Das

1  
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS DAUTAJ: Are you good  
3 with it? You're on mute.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS MARTINEZ: Yes. Shall I  
5 begin?

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS DAUTAJ: Yes.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS MARTINEZ: Good  
8 afternoon and welcome to today's remote New York City  
9 Council hearing of the Committee on Transportation.  
10 At this time would all panelists please turn on their  
11 video. To minimize disruption, please place all  
12 electronic devices to vibrate or off. If you wish to  
13 submit testimony you may do so at  
14 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that's  
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you for your  
16 cooperation. We're ready to begin. Mr. Chair, I  
17 hand it to you, whenever you're ready.

18 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Hang on one  
19 second. Great, OK. Thank you all for joining our  
20 virtual hearing today on TLC response to COVID-19 and  
21 driver assist programs, and three pieces of  
22 legislation, Intro 18, preconsidered Intro and  
23 Resolution number 98. First I'm going to turn it  
24 over to our committee counsel to go over some  
25 procedure items.

1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I'm  
3 Elliot Lynn, counsel to the Transportation Committee  
4 of the New York City Council. Before we begin I want  
5 to remind everyone that you'll be on mute until  
6 you're called on to testify, at which time you will  
7 be unmuted by the host. Please listen for your name  
8 to be called. I will be periodically announcing who  
9 the next panelist will be. The first panelist will  
10 be from the administration. First, from the Taxi and  
11 Limousine Commission Chair Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk  
12 and from DOT assistant commissioner for  
13 intergovernmental and community affairs, Rebecca  
14 Zack, and deputy commissioner for traffic operations,  
15 Joshua Benson. During the hearing if council members  
16 would like to ask a question please use the Zoom  
17 raise hand function and the chair or I will call on  
18 you in order. We will be limiting council member  
19 questions to five minutes. Please also note that for  
20 ease of this virtual hearing we will not be allowing  
21 a second round of questioning. Thank you. Chair  
22 Rodriguez.

23 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. Thank  
24 you, Elliot. And if you don't mind before you  
25

1  
2 continue can you [inaudible] the council member who  
3 are already with us?

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: At this time we've  
5 been joined by Council Members Diaz, Koo, Menchaca,  
6 Ulrich, Reynoso, and Holden.

7 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. Good  
8 afternoon and everyone. Today the Committee on  
9 Transportation convenes remotely to hold a hearing on  
10 the following, eh, oversight topic - TLC response to  
11 COVID-19 and the driver assistant programs. In  
12 addition, we will be hearing three pieces of  
13 legislation which I will refer later on. In the past  
14 month our life has dramatically changed, as everyone  
15 know. Work for many has changed [inaudible] with  
16 large numbers of people working remotely, although  
17 for some remote work is not an option, has not been  
18 an option. For those it is [inaudible]. Our for-  
19 hire drivers, including taxicabs, livery, green car,  
20 black car, and for-hire vehicle drivers do not have  
21 the luxury to work at home. Their job transporting  
22 people to and from their homes, the jobs, medical  
23 appointments, and to visit their family and friends.  
24 It's vital to the economy function of our city.  
25 Before the pandemic the TLC drivers faced many

1 challenges and the pandemic has only magnified these  
2 challenges. Average daily trip numbers from yellow  
3 taxi, street hail livery, and high-volume for-hire  
4 vehicles declined by 84% from the pre-COVID levels by  
5 the beginning of April. Only 26% of all drivers were  
6 still operating and weekly earning from those still  
7 in operation dropped by 49%. As a month has gone,  
8 has gone by, drivers trip numbers and drivers  
9 earnings have [inaudible] rising. As of the end of  
10 June the latest data TLC has released trips numbers  
11 were still down 71% compared to June 2019. The  
12 industry is rebounding but we cannot stop there. We  
13 need to ensure that TLC is effectively providing  
14 resources, services, and information to drivers. And  
15 of course this is more than agency. This is about  
16 OMB. This is about the administration. At today's  
17 hearing we hope to hear testimony from TLC and the  
18 industry regarding the effectiveness for resources to  
19 assist TLC drivers. This include the TLC driver  
20 resources center created by council legislation, the  
21 TLC food delivery program created in response to the  
22 pandemic. We also hope to hear from TLC about the  
23 health and safety guidance it is providing to drivers  
24 and riders, including resources offered by other  
25

1 industries as stakeholders. As we will eventually  
2 put this virus behind us, we also want to use this  
3 hearing to question TLC regarding its plan for the  
4 future and how they will ensure that drivers and  
5 vehicle owners can operate safely and effectively.  
6 In addition to this important oversight topic, we  
7 will be hearing Intro number 18, introduced by  
8 Council Member Cabrera, which is a local law allowing  
9 for-hire vehicles to operate with an initial 30 days  
10 inspection grace period. We will also hear two bills  
11 I have introduced, a preconsidered Intro which will  
12 suspend monetary liability for parking violation  
13 issued to essential workers from the beginning of  
14 COVID-19 pandemic to September 30, 2020. I know that  
15 there will be probably some pushback from the  
16 administration on that and some of them will be  
17 addressed issue related on Vision Zero. I would not  
18 compromise anything related to Vision Zero. Second,  
19 I know that there can be concern about we need to  
20 raise revenue. Well, if we would be in the same  
21 financial situation that we were before the pandemic  
22 it would have budgets similar to the executive one  
23 that the mayor proposed on 99 billion dollars instead  
24 87, similar to the one that we have in 2011, then I  
25



1  
2 will understand that we can, we had different other  
3 way on how to help drivers. We need to continue  
4 fighting so Washington, D.C. providing financial  
5 support to the city, and hopefully there's gonna be a  
6 change in D.C. and we will have a friend of the City  
7 of New York who will help us to balance the deficit.  
8 But right now we need to use the tools that we  
9 control in order to help drivers. Resolution number  
10 98, which calls on the New York State legislation and  
11 governor to adopt legislation making it a felony to  
12 assault a TLC licensed drivers, drivers is also  
13 included in this hearing today. I will now call on  
14 the council member, I'm sorry, I think that Council  
15 Member Cabrera doesn't have the opening statement eh,  
16 eh, and of course if he, he would like he can say  
17 anything on his bill. Eh, I would like to, eh,  
18 sorry, the acknowledgement already been done. I  
19 would now have our moderator and committee counsel  
20 call on the administration to testify and to  
21 administer the oath.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Before I call on the  
23 administration, we have also been joined by Council  
24 Members Cohen, Levine, and Richards. I will now call  
25 on the following members of the administration.

2 Chair of the Taxi and Limousine Commission, Aloysee

3 Heredia Jarmoszuk; DOT Assistant Commissioner of

4 Intergovernmental and Community Affairs, Rebecca

5 Zack, and DOT Deputy Commissioner for Traffic

6 Operations, Joshua Benson. I will now read the

7 affirmation. And then I will call on each individual

8 to confirm their response for the record. Please

9 raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the

10 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in

11 your testimony before this committee and to respond

12 honestly to council member questions? Chair Heredia

13 Jarmoszuk?

14 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: I do, yes.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Assistant

16 Commissioner Zack?

17 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Yes.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner

19 Benson?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may

22 begin your testimony when ready.

23 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Good afternoon,

24 Chair Rodriguez and members of the Transportation

25 Committee. I am Aloysee Heredia Jarmoszuk,

1 commissioner, I'm the chair, and chair of the New  
2 York City Taxi and Limousine Commission. Thank you  
3 for inviting me to speak with you about TLC's  
4 response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the support  
5 that we offer licensees, ah, the industry. New York  
6 City has changed since the last time I sat before you  
7 in early March to testify about TLC's budget and our  
8 short and long term goals. However, one thing that  
9 has not changed is our agency's commitment to the  
10 health and well-being of all New Yorkers, sorry, the  
11 health and well-being of, of all of our, ah,  
12 licensees and the passengers that we serve. Despite  
13 the challenges that all New Yorkers had faced since  
14 March, I feel fortunate to share that we have  
15 maintained critical agency services while creating  
16 new opportunities for drivers to help New Yorkers in  
17 need. Before I go into greater detail about the  
18 TLC's response to COVID-19, I want to remember the  
19 tragic deaths of TLC drivers over the past few  
20 months. We are aware of more than 50 drivers who  
21 have passed away during this time. We were terribly  
22 saddened to hear of those losses in our community.  
23 I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge a staff  
24 member of ours from the licensing and standards  
25

1 office, David Lee, who also passed away from COVID-19  
2 in April. He was a, a young man, ah, and very  
3 committed, ah, and very committed and dedicated  
4 public servant. Ah, and we are incredibly sorry for  
5 his loss. The Taxi and Limousine Commission has  
6 remained fully operational during the COVID-19  
7 pandemic, offering services to current and  
8 prospective licensees without interruption since  
9 March. We never stopped working or serving the city  
10 and we were proud that we were able to do so while  
11 having many of our staff work from home. Our  
12 licensing and vehicle inspection facilities and staff  
13 continue to serve drivers throughout the worst of the  
14 crisis, with over 50,000 vehicles inspected since  
15 March and over 400 vehicle licensed during this time.  
16 It was, it was and is imperative to TLC that we  
17 continue keeping the public safe by making sure TLC  
18 licensed vehicles meet our rigorous safety standards.  
19 Our uniformed officers and many of our office staff  
20 were redeployed to staff food distribution sites  
21 across the city, to deliver critical PPE to those in  
22 needs, and to assist the sheriff's office in keeping  
23 the city safe by ensuring that out of town visitors  
24 took measures to safely quarantine and protect New  
25

1  
2 Yorkers. And throughout this time our call center  
3 and external affairs teams continued to speak with  
4 drivers, answers their questions, and make them aware  
5 of critical COVID services and benefits to help them  
6 and their families. In March when the COVID-19  
7 pandemic hit New York City we were acutely aware of  
8 the toll this would take on our licensees who depend  
9 on the consistent flow of tourists, business  
10 travelers, and busy New Yorkers to make ends meet.  
11 We also knew that thousands of New Yorkers were being  
12 impacted by job loss for a low and economic slowdown  
13 with elderly and immunocompromised residents  
14 struggling to safely leave their homes to purchase  
15 food or medicine. I knew TLC licensed drivers could  
16 help bridge this gap, an idea which turned into a  
17 massive food delivery program developed in  
18 partnership with the Departments of Sanitation, Parks  
19 and Recreation, Information Technology, and  
20 Telecommunications, and of course New York City  
21 Emergency Management. This program helped nearly  
22 10,000 TLC licensed drivers earn a total of 39  
23 million dollars while feeding thousands of New  
24 Yorkers at the same time. We have heard from our  
25 licensees that they are extremely grateful, not only

1 for the opportunity to earn some money during this  
2 trying time, but to also serve their city and fellow  
3 residents. I am grateful for and proud of the TLC  
4 uniformed officers who have staffed the food sites  
5 every day for the past seven months and the TLC staff  
6 from literally every division of the agency who help  
7 run the sites by doing everything from assisting  
8 drivers use the new city designed delivery app to  
9 loading boxes into vehicles as they were being  
10 dispatched to those in need. We knew that the food  
11 delivery program cannot be a panacea for the  
12 struggles of TLC licensed drivers and owners during  
13 this tough time and we worked to provide access to a  
14 number of other resources. Before the pandemic hit  
15 New York, TLC was planning to launch an in-person  
16 Driver Resource Center in Queens. Once it became  
17 apparent that it would not be safe to serve large  
18 numbers of drivers and owners in person, we quickly  
19 moved to provide remote online and phone based  
20 assistance to drivers and owners in need. Since the  
21 remote launch in May we have served over 600 drivers,  
22 which includes pairing close to 350 medallion owners  
23 with outstanding loans to financial counseling and  
24 legal services, as well as connecting them with  
25

1 available city and state benefits to help with  
2 payments for food and utilities. As soon as it is  
3 safe to do so we plan to launch our in-person center.  
4 Of course, helping owners with debt requires  
5 cooperation from the lenders and some of them are  
6 working with medallion owners. One lender has  
7 resolved tens of millions in outstanding unpaid loan  
8 amounts associated with 518 medallions, which has  
9 resulted in debt forgiveness of over 70 million  
10 dollars. This lender has also reduced monthly  
11 payments by an average of over a thousand dollars per  
12 month. Many lenders have offered loan payment  
13 holidays during the COVID-19 pandemic, but borrowers  
14 will need extended relief as they try to get back to  
15 making regular payments and trying to make the  
16 backlog of deferred payments. Unfortunately we are  
17 hearing reports that some lenders have ended payment  
18 holidays, referred owners to collection agencies, and  
19 begun court proceedings against borrowers who have  
20 fallen behind in payments. While the city does not  
21 regulate the lenders, we can say that taking action  
22 against borrowers in the middle of a global pandemic  
23 is unhelpful and may harm the medallion market. Even  
24 with the tremendous disruption that the city has  
25

1  
2 experienced, I have been able to learn a remarkable  
3 about through frequent communication with drivers,  
4 owners, and businesses that we license. Since my  
5 tenure as commissioner began in February I have  
6 personally met with and spoken nearly every day to  
7 drivers, medallion owners, and other industry  
8 stakeholders about their ideas and concerns. It is  
9 my goal to be accessible to any TLC licensee both  
10 during this pandemic and afterwards. We have also  
11 provided a wealth of information to our licensees  
12 regarding health and safety tips and policies,  
13 developed in consultation with the Department of  
14 Health and Mental Hygiene, reminding drivers to wear  
15 masks and clean their vehicles frequently, sharing  
16 COVID testing details, and offering updates on COVID-  
17 specific agency policies, such as the new option for  
18 FHV owners to install temporary partitions. Besides  
19 our own policies, we have shared information a number  
20 of local and state resources that may be beneficial  
21 to our drivers - unemployment benefits, food  
22 assistance, legal services, housing and eviction  
23 prevention assistance, and much more. And of course  
24 this work will continue because the pandemic is not  
25 over. But our hard-working licensees will continue



1 to serve our city in many ways and they deserve our  
2 support. I would like to speak briefly about what  
3 the TLC has planned for the future. The COVID-19  
4 pandemic remains a very real threat to our drivers,  
5 both in terms of the public health impact and the  
6 economic impact. As the city continues to reopen the  
7 TLC will need to think creatively about how to help  
8 the industries we regulate adjust to this new normal.  
9 We will work to help drivers transition from the food  
10 delivery program back to driving passengers. We are  
11 also well underway with our 90-day review of the, of  
12 agency performance and processes. And we will have  
13 more to share in the near future about our findings.  
14 As part of this review, we will be working to become  
15 an even more client-oriented agency, notably in  
16 regards to interactions between our licensees and TLC  
17 Enforcement. Staff who have been working remotely  
18 since March have begun returning to our offices in a  
19 staggered and safe manner, allowing us to continue  
20 serving licensees and the public. We hope to open a  
21 physical location of our Driver Resource Center in  
22 Long Island City as soon as possible. And we will  
23 continue meeting with drivers and other licensees to  
24 learn from their lived experience and work to develop  
25

1 policies that better serve them. Finally, I would  
2 like to discuss the legislative items on the agenda  
3 today: Intro 18 of 2018, preconsidered Intro T20-  
4 26751, and Resolution 98 of 2018. First, Intro 18 of  
5 2018 would allow any TLC license for-hire vehicle to  
6 operate for up to 30 days prior to an initial  
7 inspection, provided that passengers in the vehicle  
8 are informed that the vehicle has not been inspected  
9 by TLC. Safety is one of the core values of the Taxi  
10 and Limousine Commission and we are in discussions  
11 with the bill sponsor and look forward to, to a  
12 meeting of the minds. We are committed to working  
13 with bases and vehicle owners to ensure the quickest  
14 possible inspection process and we look forward to  
15 working with the bill sponsors on this important  
16 issue. Second, Preconsidered Intro T20-206751 would  
17 suspend monetary liability for parking violations  
18 issued to essential workers. While we can only speak  
19 to the part of this bill that impacts TLC licensed  
20 drivers, we do want to mention that many of these  
21 drivers are covered under a traffic rule recently  
22 promulgated by DOT that exempts drivers and vehicles  
23 delivery-free meals to participants in the New York  
24 City Emergency Management TLC Temporary Emergency  
25

1 Food Delivery Program from parking and standing rules  
2 for a period of up to 20 minutes. With respect to  
3 the safety impacts of the legislation we will defer  
4 to our colleagues at the Department of  
5 Transportation. Lastly, Resolution 98 of 2018 calls  
6 upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the  
7 governor to sign legislation making it a felony to  
8 assault a driver licensed by the TLC. Although in  
9 most cases a person who assaults a driver can be  
10 charged with a felony, the resolution supports  
11 legislation that would make it an automatic felony to  
12 assault a driver, similar to assaults of a New York  
13 City bus driver. TLC licensed drivers perform an  
14 essential transportation service and are often  
15 vulnerable because of their work and that is why  
16 we're deepening our cooperation with the NYPD to  
17 ensure drivers are able to provide critical  
18 information so that investigations can begin quickly  
19 and that drivers have access to the available  
20 resources. We have issued guidance to drivers on how  
21 we are reporting assaults and we encourage drivers to  
22 call 911 if they ever experience this horrible crime.  
23 We have observed that many driver assaults have  
24 occurred during the course of an unlicensed trip,  
25

1  
2 either involving an unlicensed driver or vehicle, or  
3 involving passenger solicitation without a trip sent  
4 by a TLC licensed base. I continue to encourage  
5 drivers to never take an illegal street hail, both as  
6 a way of protecting the public and upholding the TLC  
7 rules, and also as a way to keep them safe,  
8 themselves safe. Thank you for the opportunity to  
9 speak about TLC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic  
10 and I am happy to take any questions you may have for  
11 us.

12 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: So, eh, what,  
13 what is the position of the team from DOT? I'll also  
14 join you when it come to that bill, eh, that is  
15 aiming to provide amnesty, eh, for the previous time  
16 of the coronavirus for those drivers that have some  
17 pending parking violation.

18 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Sir, I, I will  
19 defer to my colleagues at the DOT.

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Elliot,  
21 would you like us to read our testimony and then  
22 we'll take, I'm not quite sure how we?

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair, would you like  
24 DOT to read their testimony and the bill first?

1                   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: I can begin  
2  
3 the testimony, sure. I'm ready if you are.

4                   ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: OK.

5                   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Um, good  
6  
7 afternoon, Chair Rodriguez and members of the  
8  
9 committee. I am Joshua Benson, deputy commissioner  
10  
11 for traffic operations at the New York City  
12  
13 Department of Transportation, and I am joined by  
14  
15 Rebecca Zack, assistant commissioner for  
16  
17 intergovernmental and community affairs. Thank you  
18  
19 for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the  
20  
21 administration on the chair's preconsidered Intro.  
22  
23 COVID-19 has changed our lives and our city in ways  
24  
25 that were unimaginable only a few months ago. As  
Commissioner Trottenberg has previously testified,  
together with our sister agencies DOT has worked  
tirelessly to continue managing the city's vital  
transportation infrastructure responsibly, safely,  
and creatively for this ongoing crisis, all the while  
following health guidance and maintaining essential  
functions. Throughout this challenging time we have  
remained committed to supporting essential workers,  
equity in the areas hit hardest by COVID-19. Since  
the start of the pandemic we have aimed to provide

1 essential workers safe options for traveling to work.  
2 We have worked with the MTA to impression a record  
3 bus lane expansion. We have expanded the city's bike  
4 lane network and brought City Bike to new  
5 communities. And even worked to get donated bikes  
6 into the hands of hospital employees. And City Bike  
7 has provided over 19,000 critical workers with nearly  
8 700,000 free City Bike trips to date. For some  
9 people, driving during this time remains the best  
10 option, a preference or a necessity, but everyone  
11 must continue to follow all of our traffic rules so  
12 that we can keep New Yorkers safe, keep emergency  
13 vehicles, buses, trucks, and other traffic moving and  
14 keeps our curbs clear for needed business activity.  
15 Our roads are a shared public resource and the rules  
16 are there to make the system work and support Vision  
17 Zero. During the height of the health emergency the  
18 mayor recognized the need for many healthcare workers  
19 who were laboring under extraordinary conditions  
20 during a variety of shifts to have access to parking  
21 near their hospitals and clinics. And DOT worked  
22 with Health and Hospitals, the Greater New York  
23 Hospital Association, and other organizations to  
24 distribute over 14,000 permits for workers at close  
25

1 to 60 different hospitals across the city. Now,  
2 turning to Chair Rodriguez's proposed bill, while DOT  
3 is always happy to discuss ideas for legislation,  
4 this bill would effectively preempt an extremely  
5 broad category of New York City residents and  
6 visitors from nearly all parking violations any time  
7 during the covered period, anywhere in the city with  
8 the exception of hydrants, bus stops, and bus lanes.  
9 This legislation raises significant problems for  
10 Vision Zero and the city's other transportation  
11 goals. We strongly agree with the focus on  
12 supporting our heroic essential workers and we are  
13 proud of our work together with our partners to  
14 provide travel options and support bus, bike, or car  
15 trips through priority treatments, subsidized trips,  
16 or parking permits. However, the city's ability to  
17 enforce parking violations remains essential for  
18 managing our streets, even and in some cases  
19 especially amidst the crisis we have been  
20 experiencing. All street users, including essential  
21 workers themselves, whatever their mode, rely on  
22 enforcement of our parking rules for everyone's  
23 safety and to maintain access for all. Drivers who  
24 park illegally cause a multitude of problems and  
25

1 threaten the safety of all street users. They can  
2 obstruct crosswalks and pedestrian ramps. They can  
3 block our daylighting efforts, reducing visibility  
4 for both pedestrians and drivers, or interfere with  
5 safe roadway geometry. And when double parked they  
6 can cause congestion, block bike lanes, forcing  
7 cyclists to enter traffic to move around them. These  
8 violations unfortunately can have deadly  
9 consequences. In June we lost 38-year-old cyclist  
10 Jose Luis Astudillo Garcia, an essential worker on  
11 his way home from his job at a restaurant serving  
12 employees at several nearby hospitals. He was killed  
13 while trying to maneuver around a double-parked  
14 vehicle on Park Avenue in the Bronx. Moreover,  
15 violating meter regulations or loading zone  
16 restrictions creates increased congestion as drivers  
17 are forced to search longer for parking as well as  
18 leading to more of the kind of unsafe double parking  
19 that I mentioned. To mitigate these impacts we must  
20 continue enforcing parking regulations. This is the  
21 only way we can maintain critical safety regulations,  
22 effectively allow for loading and unloading of  
23 essential goods and passengers, create parking  
24 availability in shopping and business areas, and  
25



1  
2 prioritize parking for people with disabilities. In  
3 conclusion, we at DOT will continue working with the  
4 council and our partners to support essential workers  
5 and creatively respond to this unprecedented and  
6 challenging time for our city. And always look  
7 forward to further discussion. At the same time, we  
8 want to emphasize how important it continues to be  
9 for all drivers to comply with parking regulations so  
10 we can safely and effectively manage our streets, and  
11 therefore DOT has significant concerns with this  
12 legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to  
13 testify, and I will be happy to answer any questions.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We have  
15 also been joined by Council Members Cabrera and Rose.

16 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Look, I'm, I'm  
17 happy to be working with the administration, DOT  
18 commissioner, and you guys part of a team. But this  
19 is not, this it not, this is not about the good or  
20 the bad, eh, eh, cop. This is about, you know, eh,  
21 eh, how can we look on what happened during the  
22 pandemic. We are not talking about changing those or  
23 reducing the, the enforcements for anyone that  
24 violate our parking regulation. And I did from the  
25 administration point of view. The concern is raised

1  
2 about safety, because I consider no one [inaudible]  
3 more safety and especially [inaudible] by myself. So  
4 this is about what happened during the coronavirus,  
5 eh, oh, eh, our day, you know, is there a possibility  
6 that we can provide an amnesty [inaudible] not to  
7 incentivize anyone to violate or to change the  
8 cultural, eh, that we are developing in our city to  
9 make our city more population [inaudible]. So this  
10 is about, you know, eh, eh, a area what I feel that  
11 there were essential workers, eh, that they were  
12 going to the hospital, going to clinics, and at some  
13 point there were so many, you know, the city was not  
14 moving at all, eh, eh, in many areas where we have  
15 all those parking signs and I think that if we look  
16 and, again, as I said, you know, I, we also know  
17 that, eh, that we are operating a deficit in our city  
18 and we have to continue raising the revenue. But  
19 this is about how can we work to provide amnesty,  
20 amnesty, not to include any drivers who park in a bus  
21 lane, not to include to any driver who park close in  
22 a fire, in front of fire [inaudible]. So let me ask  
23 you. How many tickets are pending for parking  
24 violation during the time of coronavirus, especially  
25 from February, from March to September right now?

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Ah, thank  
3 you for the question, Mr. Chair. Um, you know, the,  
4 in terms of just the, the raw number of violations,  
5 um, um, I'm just looking through my notes here. I  
6 believe it's, it's approximately, um, 2 million, ah,  
7 800,000 parking, ah, summonses issued from March 13  
8 to September 30.

9 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Is that, what  
10 does it represent in dollars if we look at an  
11 average?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Ah, I'm not  
13 sure of, of the, the dollar amount. And, and when  
14 you say pending I'm not really sure, you know, these,  
15 this is just the number that were issued, so, um,  
16 some of them may have been, been, ah, adjudicated or,  
17 or paid already.

18 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Look, I have a  
19 lot of respect for the work that you do in your  
20 division for the work, you know, that we've been  
21 doing to continue making our city, eh, safe so as  
22 working with you and also working with the advocate  
23 group, TA and others. We know that, I can say that  
24 we've been so lucky to find different partners,  
25 including yourself, TA [inaudible] and the council

1 and, and so for me I know, I know [inaudible] means  
2 with using, you know, eh, eh, the level of  
3 enforcement that we need to [inaudible]. So I, and I  
4 also get it from the administration point of view  
5 also the need that we have. So how to plan to  
6 continue raising revenue. So I just, you know, I  
7 understand what, you know, what you have explained.  
8 I just like for us to leave the window open to  
9 continue looking and, and, see how, you know, eh, eh,  
10 eh, knowing that from the beginning we can, we are  
11 seeing different approach in how to look at this  
12 situation. But for me this is about can we provide  
13 some, you know, relief for first responder, for  
14 anyone that they were working during those period of  
15 time that they didn't have any other choice  
16 [inaudible] park, you know, close to a hospital or  
17 close to a area, eh, that was critical during that  
18 period of time. So if we can, you know, at least  
19 look at more details like how many of those violation  
20 tickets are pending, you know, where did those  
21 violation happen so that probably could be something  
22 that I would like to put on the table and see how you  
23 feel about it.  
24

1  
2                   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Thank you,  
3 Mr. Chair. I, we appreciate working with you, of  
4 course, and all the good work we've been able to do  
5 together and, you know, um, it was nice seeing you  
6 last week to launch the 149th Street bus lane in the  
7 Bronx and, um, you know, I think from the DOT  
8 perspective we're not really looking at, at the  
9 dollar amount of this. We're just looking at, you  
10 know, the, the totality of, ah, essential workers and  
11 how they get to work and, and balancing that and, um,  
12 you know, many of them, as you know, are taking  
13 transit or biking and so I think, um, we have a  
14 concern about sending, ah, a message out that, um,  
15 it's OK to violate parking regulations because that  
16 would be, um, that would work against, ah, many of  
17 the other essential workers who, who are, um, in  
18 fact, you know, counting on us to, to enforce those  
19 regulations so they can get to work safely and on  
20 time. Um, but I do think, as you mentioned, it makes  
21 sense to look a little more into the data and see,  
22 um, you know, what a little more, get a little more  
23 nuance of what's going on here because I don't think,  
24 um, this, the, the 2 million 800 number is not  
25 representative of, of the category necessarily that,

1  
2 um, that you're talking about. Um, but, but again, I  
3 mean, just like, the, the, um, we always take our  
4 first perspective on things through the lens of  
5 safety and, and that's where we're coming at it from  
6 and, and that's why, um, we mentioned, um, the, the  
7 unfortunate, um, crash in, in June involving a  
8 cyclist, um, who, who was, ah, trying to avoid an  
9 illegally double-parked vehicle and, you know, those  
10 are the kind of situations that, that keep us up at  
11 night and we don't want to, um, encourage that type  
12 of, of issue to happen again.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: But, but,  
14 Chairman, I'll just say, we wanted to make sure that  
15 you heard from us today. We know this was added kind  
16 of last minute, but we know that, that this was  
17 important for you to, to hear from us. But we're  
18 always happy to, to keep talking as this moves  
19 forward. There's obviously a lot of agencies also,  
20 to also, ah, coordinate with since in terms of like  
21 the details of the summonses and what's pending.

22 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. No,  
23 no, I, I agree. I just want to be clear, first of  
24 all, that, you know, for the record or anyone,  
25 especially those who that we've been working and

1 making a lot of progress on Vision Zero. One is that  
2 we are not sending the message that we want to, eh,  
3 eh, eh, eh, for anyone to believe that we are trying  
4 to encourage drivers to violate any parking rules.  
5 We want to continue first and, and if we can work on  
6 helping the first responders, especially during the  
7 period of time where they working, and, again, I'm,  
8 we are not aiming or trying to have conversation  
9 about let's bring permanent changes to these rule, we  
10 are trying to look in which area can we alleviate,  
11 you know, the [inaudible] situation of anyone that  
12 working during that period of time can have amnesty  
13 for any debt that they have pending. But as you said  
14 there's different of issue involved, eh, eh, traffic  
15 is involved, so I'm more than happy that we continue  
16 looking at, but again for the men and women, you  
17 know, especially advocating for to make the city more  
18 safety for pedestrian and cyclist and no mean we mean  
19 to say, you know, we want to do something that affect  
20 the first respondent. We want to help the first  
21 respondent and we don't want to [inaudible].

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Absolutely,  
24 and I think that's why we're so proud of the permits  
25 that we were able to issue so quickly, um, in those

1  
2 early days to get them so they, they could get to  
3 work as quickly as possible. But absolutely know  
4 that safety is, has been the hallmark of, of your,  
5 ah, time in the council. So we're right there with  
6 you and we're happy to continue talking.

7 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: OK. Thank you.

8 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ZACK: Thank you  
9 so much.

10 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Now going back  
11 to, to, eh, our TLC commissioner and, and you only  
12 have been a great honor to be working with you, eh,  
13 and, and but also we know that the agency also, the  
14 fact that is working also on trying to help the  
15 drivers, also, you know, everyone had to deal with  
16 some [inaudible] in their budget and, and I know that  
17 there was a lot of recommendation that we made as  
18 part of the yellow taxi medallion task force that,  
19 that, eh, eh, had not been a follow-up when it come  
20 to the implementation because in many area you, you  
21 required financial commitment from City Hall. Eh,  
22 eh, so one of those, one of them, the one related to  
23 the Driver Resource Center, eh, what can we expect  
24 when it comes to the possibility to, eh, eh, opening  
25 [inaudible] centers, eh, the services in a physical



1  
2 space for those drivers that don't have access to,  
3 eh, do it remotely?

4           CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: So we are, we,  
5 we are, um, evaluating what the timeline will be to  
6 open the actual brick, ah, and mortar building, um,  
7 in Long Island City. I don't have a timeline, ah, at  
8 this time. Ah, however, it was very important that  
9 we launch virtually and if, if a driver does not have  
10 access, um, to online resources if they call our  
11 External Affairs number and, and we share that number  
12 pretty regularly in our direct correspondences, ah,  
13 to licensees, we can provide assistance over the  
14 phone. You don't need, ah, to have access to the  
15 internet to tap into the resources from, ah, at the  
16 Driver Resource Center. So anyone, any driver,  
17 licensee that need, um, any types of the supports  
18 that we're offering at the driver resources center,  
19 whether it's mental health services or financial  
20 guidance or, or legal assistance they can access  
21 those, ah, via the telephone. We're happy to work  
22 with them, ah, by phone to set up an appointment for  
23 that, for that type of engagement. So, again, we  
24 don't, you don't need, a driver does not need to have  
25 access to the internet, um, to, to tap into the

1 services. They are available for everyone, um,  
2 online or by telephone.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Eh, Commissioner,  
5 what has TLC been able to do to partner with drivers,  
6 representatives, advocate organization, to maximize  
7 resources, to provide information, benefit, and  
8 services to drivers?

9 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: So we, we  
10 communicate pretty often, ah, either through monthly  
11 or weekly notices. Ah, we set up a website, a COVID-  
12 19 website at the beginning of the pandemic which we,  
13 ah, update pretty regularly, and there drivers can  
14 find, um, information about the Driver Resource  
15 Center, about New York State and federal unemployment  
16 benefits, food assistance, ah, public benefits  
17 applications, ah, information about our driver  
18 protection unit, legal services, um, housing, ah, and  
19 eviction prevention assistance, even voter  
20 registration, um, and, and, and I think census  
21 information. So we, we have all of those online.  
22 All of our, um, ah, all of our employees at the call  
23 center and at External Affairs also have, ah, access  
24 to all of this information to share with any licensee  
25 that calls by it by telephone. Ah, so we are

1 constantly, um, communicating all of this  
2 information, um, ah, to our drivers through every  
3 medium that we have available, including, um, social  
4 media.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: And can you  
7 describe the process that TLC license for-hire  
8 vehicles can go through?

9 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: What process,  
10 sorry?

11 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: The on hold.

12 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Oh, the, ah,  
13 it's a vehicle license storage. Yes, um, if any, um,  
14 right now, um, and, and during the pandemic, and I'm  
15 not sure when we will end this program, um, we are  
16 making an allowance for, for drivers who are not  
17 operating their car for hire that would like to, um,  
18 take advantage of, of, um, not, ah, of, of lowering  
19 their insurance expenses. They can, um, put their  
20 vehicle license in storage. Um, at this time the DMV  
21 is reopened so they would have to surrender their,  
22 their plates. Um, but they can, they can put their  
23 vehicle license in storage without any cause for  
24 concern and, and come back to retrieve it when  
25

1  
2 they're ready to, to begin providing for-hire  
3 transportation [inaudible] for passengers.

4 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: And how long do  
5 you think that that process will continue, that, eh,  
6 eh, eh, will continue, that program will continue  
7 being offered to those?

8 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Certainly,  
9 certainly through, through the end of this year, um,  
10 I think, ah, we need to really evaluate, I haven't  
11 determined the date as, as of yet. We, I would like  
12 to see, um, more passenger demand before we, um, ah,  
13 eliminate the program. So I haven't, we haven't made  
14 a decision just yet.

15 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: OK. I have other  
16 question, but I'm gonna be, eh, eh, giving the  
17 opportunity to Council Member Cabrera who also have  
18 joined us if he would like to say something about his  
19 bill and also to follow with any question that he may  
20 have.

21 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Sure.

22 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair, I think  
24 Council Member Cabrera had to leave the hearing.

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 37  
2 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: OK. Is there any  
3 council member ready to ask any question? Let's move  
4 on to [inaudible].

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, we can do that.  
6 Ah, we'll now call on council members in the order  
7 that they have used the Zoom raise hand function.  
8 Ah, council members, please keep your questions to  
9 five minutes. Ah, the Sergeant at Arms will keep a  
10 timer and let you know when your time is up. Um,  
11 Council Member Reynoso will be first. Council Member  
12 Reynoso.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you. Ah,  
15 thank you, Commissioner, and, ah, ah, the Department  
16 of Transportation, happy to see you here. Um, ah, I  
17 want to ask just a couple of questions. I know it's  
18 been a, a tough time for taxi drivers because of the  
19 pandemic. I think we're, we, we've all suffered in  
20 the pandemic and we're trying to be creative and  
21 thoughtful about how, ah, we help people, um, and one  
22 of the first things that TLC did, ah, that I thought  
23 I was actually a fan of originally, was the meal  
24 delivery. Um, but initially I got some of the  
25 drivers that told me that they didn't think that that

1  
2 program would be successful. Um, can you give me  
3 some information or some data as to how many drivers  
4 participated and, um, the amount of funding that came  
5 from the city to those drivers for that work?

6 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Well, yes.  
7 Thanks for, thanks for the question, um, and it's  
8 nice to see you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Nice to see you,  
10 too.

11 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Um, we, thank  
12 you. We, ah, yes, this, this program was so  
13 important to me, um, ah, and it was so critical for  
14 us to launch it. Um, there were a lot of, you know,  
15 millions of New Yorkers who have food vulnerabilities  
16 and, and thousands of our drivers were, were out, out  
17 of work, especially when the city went into  
18 quarantine, and, and they were out of work because  
19 there were no rides, there was no passenger demand,  
20 very little, um, and they were, ah, I was afraid of  
21 how much they would be struggling, um, as a result  
22 and so, um, getting this program under way and making  
23 the delivery portion of it paid, um, and exclusive  
24 only to TLC licensees was, was a huge, um,  
25 opportunity and a huge, I would say, a huge win for

1  
2 us, um, and, and for the drivers. So we had about  
3 20,000 drivers that registered, um, and I'd say  
4 roughly about 10,000 to 11,000 participated, um, and  
5 to date we've paid, the city has paid about 39.5  
6 million dollars in direct, um, wages, ah, to those  
7 drivers. So they have, um, ah, had that opportunity  
8 to, to access supplement income, not a replacement  
9 for their salaries, um, but some, something to bring  
10 home to put food on the table quite, quite literally,  
11 um, and I'm very proud of the program. I'm very  
12 grateful for the drivers. Um, I would go out to the  
13 food sites at the height of the pandemic. Our  
14 drivers were delivering a million meals a day.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Wow.

16 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: I, I mean, if  
17 you think about delivering 50, 50 million-plus meals  
18 to people in need, um, ah, it's no small feat. And  
19 they are so selfless. I mean, they're really heroes,  
20 they are really, there's, there's no, heroes and  
21 heroines, they're a lot of men and women out there  
22 doing this, this delivery. Um, it's hard work, um,  
23 ah, but, ah, you know, resounding, the resounding  
24 feedback is that they were proud to do the work. New  
25 Yorkers are gritty. They love giving back to their

1 communities, um, and, and I think that this was a  
2 huge success, um, and I'm, and I'm very grateful to  
3 the city, ah, for providing, um, this, um, the  
4 funding for this during, during the pandemic and when  
5 the city was in a financial crisis. I know that, um,  
6 it's, it's not enough for everybody. But I think it  
7 was an example of how the city prioritizes our, our  
8 licensees and recognizes, um, their, their needs, um,  
9 and that they contribute, um, to the city and that  
10 they are part of the city, um, and so I think this  
11 was important and for that I am extremely grateful.

12  
13 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Well, I'm, I'm  
14 grateful for that work as well, and I'm actually  
15 getting calls now from some of those members that,  
16 ah, were skeptical in the beginning are now saying we  
17 hope that this program doesn't get drawn down to  
18 zero. We, we, it was a lifeline for some of these  
19 drivers. So, um, I understand that the need has  
20 changed since the beginning of the crisis, ah, but  
21 always keep in mind that, ah, the, the TLC drivers  
22 seem to be ready to go, um, ah, when you need them  
23 for, for these type of crises. So thank you for  
24 that. Um, look, I, I want to be honest. You become  
25 commissioner and then you're, you're dealt the hand



1  
2 of COVID, um, immediately during that time. I don't  
3 think anyone wanted to be you or in your seat,  
4 Commissioner. Um, so, I, I want to make sure that  
5 it's with a grain of salt the conversations we have  
6 and understanding that it's like crisis level  
7 management day one for you, and I really appreciate  
8 you, you doing the best to take care of these  
9 drivers. I do, I, I got a couple of seconds. I want  
10 to talk about Marblegate, um, and really understand  
11 how, ah, if in any way has Marblegate, ah, assisted  
12 drivers, 'cause I think a big issue here is of course  
13 the financing and the mortgages and the loans that  
14 they have, um, and we're, we're trying to be  
15 creative. Ah, we wouldn't...

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you,  
18 Sergeant. Ah, just very quickly. Ah, it's the  
19 biggest issue that they have, um, and now that the  
20 crisis exists unfortunately unless we get a ton of  
21 cash coming from the federal government I just don't  
22 see how we're going to be able to assist these  
23 drivers with debt relief, which is what my ideal goal  
24 would be. But I want to be realistic and  
25 understanding the financial situation of the city

1  
2 it's just not something that I can see immediately.  
3 So I just wanted to ask, if Marblegate is supposed to  
4 be the middle ground, helping refinance a lot of  
5 these loans, how is that going? Can you just give me  
6 some statistics as to how many people they've helped,  
7 um, so that if it's working that we can, we can ask  
8 more drivers to participate in this program. So just  
9 want to understand if it's working or not. So if you  
10 could just give me a rundown.

11 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: So the, the  
12 entity that you reference is one of the many lenders  
13 on, in, that hold, um, loans, ah, for, um, medallion  
14 owners. Um, they specifically have on, they have  
15 resolved or restructured loans for about 518  
16 medallions. They've done about 70 million dollars  
17 in, in debt forgiveness and they've been able to  
18 reduce, um, payments for a fair amount of drivers,  
19 roughly average about a thousand dollars less, ah,  
20 per month for, for a lot of their loan holders that  
21 were willing to work with them, um, on  
22 restructurings, and restructures are, are  
23 complicated. They're, you know, there are down  
24 payments that need to be made. Um, however, in a  
25 climate like this, um, where at some point the

1  
2 holiday reprieves will end, um, anyone who can draw  
3 their loan down from, you know, from \$600,000 to  
4 \$300,000, that's a significant, um, ah, shift, um,  
5 they, they are not the only lender that's done  
6 restructurings. We have a lot of, um, ah, a lot of  
7 lenders who have been highly cooperative, um, during  
8 this process, um, not hounding the, the drivers or  
9 the, the owners on providing the holiday reprieve,  
10 um, and, and our Driver Resource Center, NYLAG is, is  
11 the person, is the entity that's helping our drivers,  
12 um, ah, with, ah, legal, ah, ah, with the financial  
13 assistance for guidance. Um, they have been working,  
14 you know, with about, ah, 500 to 600 of our, our  
15 drivers to try to find, um, ways to reduce, um, their  
16 overhead and their, their expenses, and quite a,  
17 quite a number of, of the lenders have been, um,  
18 really cooperative in restructuring, um, loans and,  
19 and I think that, you know, 518 medallion owners were  
20 able to resolve 70 million, that's money back in  
21 their pockets for their families and month that they  
22 are not paying, um, to a lender. Ah, and I know that  
23 this is complicated and, and that a lot of our  
24 drivers, um, and, and a lot of us don't have  
25 favorable, um, points of views, ah, ah, towards the

1  
2 lenders, um, but the ones that are cooperative, you  
3 know, we're, we're grateful for that partners and we  
4 hope to see more of it. I, I, I compel all of the  
5 lenders to work with their borrowers to reduce, um,  
6 their, their loan payments and to restructure where  
7 it's possible.

8 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Eh, thank you.

9 Eh, before, and Commissioner, before going to the  
10 next, eh, council member that has question, I want to  
11 say in Spanish that [speaking in Spanish]. I just  
12 wonder how TLC also can work with those to be sure  
13 that [inaudible] with the commissioner. They also  
14 can talk to the MTA to expand the participation not  
15 only of the high-volume company that has been used by  
16 MTA to provide services during the time that the  
17 trains are not working from 12:00 to 6:0 a.m. but  
18 also to include the livery bases. So, Commissioner,  
19 what do you think about, how do you see the  
20 partnership that the MTA have established with other  
21 high-volume, eh, eh, company and what opportunity can  
22 be there to also fight to include livery bases as  
23 part of those used by MTA to provide alternative  
24 transportation during the time that the trains are  
25 not in service from 12:00 to 6:00 a.m.

1  
2 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: When, when the  
3 MTA, um, set, launched its program and, and I think  
4 that they're not, um, doing the program anymore but  
5 I'm not sure of that, um, they, they definitely  
6 reached out and, and they are, are a willing partner  
7 and are, always solicit our input, which I'm grateful  
8 for, when, ah, at the height of the pandemic when the  
9 trains went out of service overnight, as I'm aware  
10 the MTA worked with [inaudible] that has access to,  
11 um, ah, a plethora or a variety of livery bases.  
12 They've worked with the Curb for yellow cabs, um, and  
13 I think they work with another company called CTG,  
14 but I would have to look at my notes to, to confirm  
15 that. Um, so it seemed to me that when they launched  
16 that service, which is independent of the TLC, um,  
17 that they, ah, had a balance of the different, um,  
18 types of providers that were representative of the  
19 communities that the passengers live in.

20 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: The, the livery  
21 bases was not part of that [inaudible] and that's  
22 something...

23 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: I believe...

24 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Like I...  
25

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 46  
2 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: I believe that  
3 they...

4 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, sorry.

5 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: As I, as I  
6 understand it, they, they offer the program to  
7 [inaudible] which dispatches, um, livery-based cars.  
8 I don't, I don't have access to the MTA data to, to,  
9 to be able to speak from a place of certitude, um,  
10 how many were dispatched through those. But I, I do  
11 know that they contracted with, um, with Curb with  
12 [inaudible] for livery-based dispatch cars and CTG.

13 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: OK. So let's  
14 follow, let's [inaudible] more information...

15 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: ...and, and, and  
17 then also it is, eh, eh, a concern that, you know,  
18 that there's no services then provided the MTA has  
19 suspended the services from 12:00 to 6:00 a.m. So  
20 everyone know that when we talk about essential  
21 workers there's [inaudible] the doctors, the nurses,  
22 the technician that they work at the hospital is the  
23 men and women, many of them documents that they've  
24 been working at night, that they come out at 12:00,  
25 they come out at 1:00 in the morning. So what we are

1  
2 saying is that there's no transportation right now  
3 provided to those individuals. OK. Now let's go  
4 with the next council member that has question.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do we have any other  
6 council members who would like to ask questions of  
7 the administration? Chair, it doesn't look like we  
8 have any other questions at this time.

9 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: OK. So, so  
10 Commissioner, where do you think, um, we are right  
11 now when it came to the sector that they are leasing,  
12 that they have license to lease vehicles, eh, eh, how  
13 many licenses do we have right now that they are  
14 under control of the leasing sector in New York City?

15 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Um, I will have  
16 to come back to you with that information. I, I  
17 don't know how many vehicle licenses are, are, are,  
18 or belong to, um, ah, lessors. I don't actually have  
19 that information in front of me. I'm sorry.

20 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Do you, do you  
21 see as a program when it comes that reality, that you  
22 know like it's happening that you knowing, you person  
23 that ride in the City of New York that driving a taxi  
24 was the first, eh, eh choice for them to get a job  
25 and it wasn't very easy, I myself being one of those

1  
2 that bought my car together with my brother-in-law,  
3 work at night during the time that I was going to  
4 City College during the daytime. So right now a  
5 person that arrived in New York City they don't have  
6 the opportunity to get into that industry unless they  
7 go to the leasing company because they are the one  
8 that have the opportunity to [inaudible] cars, eh,  
9 with the plate and the plaque to be able to get  
10 someone driving as a livery taxi driver, eh, driver.

11 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: There, there's,  
12 there's definitely, um, opportunity for anyone who  
13 wants to operate, become a TLC licensed driver to, to  
14 do that. We, we are able to license drivers. We,  
15 we, um, appreciate and respect that a lot of our  
16 licensees and potential licensees are, are not, um,  
17 come to this country or they come to the United  
18 States to work and that this is a viable opportunity,  
19 um, and, and there are different ways to drive as a  
20 TLC licensed, um, ah driver. You can, um, you can  
21 lease a, a yellow taxi. You can lease a, a black  
22 car. Um, and if you have the resources to you can,  
23 um, you can get a vehicle license for an energy-  
24 efficient vehicle or for a wheelchair, um, accessible  
25 vehicle, um, and those plates remain, ah, available



1  
2 to anyone who, who would like to provide that  
3 service.

4                   CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: So, let's, let's  
5 follow to see how we can also, eh, push together to  
6 see how we can expand the incentive, eh, when it come  
7 to the electrical vehicle, eh, eh, since that, those  
8 are the two area that is still [inaudible] provide  
9 opportunity for someone to go directly to TLC and not  
10 necessarily go into the, eh, anyone that has a  
11 leasing company because even though I do believe that  
12 we have good actor of individual that they are  
13 leasing vehicle, there's other that they're not.

14 And, and, and someone that is leasing a car, paying  
15 \$350 a week, when we add those numbers, like by the  
16 time when that individual finish, eh, the contract  
17 with that leasing they already have paid double the  
18 cost, the value of the car, without being able to  
19 maintain the license. So I think that if we also can  
20 explore some way that, you know, even in some changes  
21 saying even someone that has started leasing by the  
22 time when he or she is ending that contract, we  
23 should be able to say TLC should be work, were able  
24 to work so that that person can get it on a license  
25 and plaque from the TLC and not necessarily paying

1  
2 the car without having the opportunity to maintain  
3 that plaque because that plaque doesn't belong to her  
4 or him, that plaque belong to the leasing company.

5 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: Sure, I mean,  
6 any, anyone who entered into a lease prior to 2018,  
7 there is a select group of people that are able to  
8 lease to own. Um, but at this time because we are  
9 not, um, ah, ah, provisioning, ah, new vehicle  
10 plates, FHV plates, there, there really isn't, there  
11 is not an opportunity, ah, for lease to own. But  
12 similar to you I am concerned about anyone who is  
13 taking advantage of drivers. Um, that is, is not  
14 something, um, that, that I want to see happen, um,  
15 and it's, it's something that we should work together  
16 to ensure, um, we, we eradicate and, and perhaps this  
17 is something that we can take on in, in the livery  
18 task force, um, because we're, as we embark on that  
19 work.

20 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: OK. Thank you.  
21 So from my end, thank you, Commissioner, thank you,  
22 eh, eh, again like the members of DOT, eh, eh, for  
23 being here with us today. I think that this hearing  
24 has been shorter than what we anticipated, eh, eh,  
25 and also we'd like to invite everyone to also join

1  
2 the next hearing that we will have on the end of this  
3 month. Elliot, if you can also share the date of  
4 that hearing, but the next one is gonna be about  
5 moped. It's gonna be about, you know, how we need to  
6 learn from what happened with Rebel and, and what  
7 changes should, changes should we make, eh, to anyone  
8 that would like to bring any type of moped to New  
9 York City, eh, so, eh, if we can share the date of  
10 that hearing it would be great. And with that, thank  
11 you, Commissioner. Thank you, DOT, and I, if Elliot  
12 can share the date, I don't have it front of me right  
13 now, then we can adjourn the hearing after that.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair...

15 CHAIR HEREDIA JARMOSZUK: [inaudible].

16 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Gracias, thank  
17 you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair, ah, that  
19 hearing has not been noticed at this time, but we  
20 will share the date as soon as that takes place. Um,  
21 we will now turn to public testimony. I'd like to  
22 remind everyone that unlike our typical council  
23 hearings we will be calling individuals one by one to  
24 testify. Each panelist will be given two minutes to  
25 speak. Ah, please begin once the sergeant has

1 started the timer. Ah, council members who have  
2 questions for a particular panelist should use the  
3 raise hand function in Zoom and I will call on you  
4 after the panelist has completed their testimony.  
5 For panelists, once your name is called a member of  
6 our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms  
7 will give you the go-ahead to being, ah, after they  
8 set the timer. Please wait for the sergeant to  
9 announce that you may begin before delivering your  
10 testimony. Ah, I would like to now welcome our first  
11 panelist, ah, Bhairavi Desai.

12  
13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Thank you. I'm actually  
15 testify in front of Gracie Mansion where many drivers  
16 have gathered to protest the lack of option by the  
17 city on debt forgiveness. I have to respond and say  
18 what Marblegate has put together is not a program.  
19 It is an offer for debt forgiveness at \$300,000. You  
20 have to pay \$25,000 cash up front, \$1700 monthly  
21 mortgage. This is not sustainable. It is not a  
22 resolution. This is an offer that many people who  
23 are feeling desperate may be entering into. But  
24 shame on any member of this city that thinks that  
25 that is somehow a resolution. This is such a serious

1 crisis. The city has known about it, not just for  
2 weeks or months, but for years now. Meanwhile, we  
3 have a proposal on the table. If the city can offer  
4 that for any loan that is reduced to \$125,000 the  
5 city can act as a backstop where if that loan is  
6 defaulted and the medallions were closed on the city  
7 would place a minimum bid at a public auction equal  
8 to whatever is the balance of the loan at that time  
9 or foreclosure. The city does not have to pay for it  
10 if somebody else bids higher. If the city does end  
11 up purchasing it they can still go ahead and resell  
12 it. We have put together a financial model, a  
13 financial model that is interactive, where you can  
14 play with the different components. We're asking the  
15 city, please, City Council hear us, but no one in the  
16 administration is listening to us. We're talking  
17 about at least 6000 families. If owner-drivers are  
18 not allowed to continue in this industry this  
19 [inaudible] sector is not going to survive. This is  
20 a dire matter. Please try, stop trying to put a  
21 Mickey Mouse Band-Aid...

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 BHAIRAVI DESAI: That's what you've been  
25 doing up to now. Listen to us. Call on the

1  
2 comptroller to at least vet our proposal. It is  
3 sound. It is low risk and low cost to the City of  
4 New York. City Council, we need you because the  
5 administration will not listen to us.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Do we  
7 have any questions for this panelist?

8 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Eh, well I just  
9 gotta say that, that, eh, as you know I am committed  
10 to work with you and all the brothers and sister who  
11 are part of those, eh, of those 6000 individual  
12 medallion owners and the drivers, so whatever we can  
13 continue, you know, partners, eh, eh, establishing  
14 partnership, we would do it. Eh, eh, I'm [inaudible]  
15 you know, I'm also, I'm gonna get back to you, eh,  
16 eh, before but we are here ready to continue working  
17 with the whole community and the taxis alliance and  
18 see how we can work. I have [inaudible] to City Hall  
19 that I understand that, eh, eh, the need, eh, to  
20 [inaudible]. I think that we need to bring together  
21 a plan that can work and I feel that, you know, we  
22 understand it that we are going through this  
23 financial crisis. We also need to be sure that we  
24 are creative on how we can work to help those, eh,  
25 men and women that they owe a lot of money because of

1  
2 the way of how, eh, the medallion was sold to them in  
3 the past for a million dollars, several hundred  
4 thousand dollars, and the [inaudible]. So I'm more  
5 than happy to continue working again with the taxis  
6 alliance, with the administration to see how we can  
7 help them.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Could we unmute  
9 Bhairavi?

10 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Thank you. Chairman  
11 Rodriguez, we have a proposal. The city just needs  
12 to vet it. Please ask the comptroller, ask the  
13 Office of Management and Budget to vet our proposal.  
14 [inaudible] million dollars over 20 years. The  
15 Taxicab Improvement Surcharge Fund alone, according  
16 to the comptroller, as of February 2020 had a 50  
17 million dollar surplus. We understand there is a  
18 crisis across the city. We're not seeking special  
19 treatment. We're asking you to recognize a deep  
20 crisis that you know has unfolded under the city's  
21 watch and much of it because of the city's own  
22 actions. Our proposal is low cost and the money is  
23 separately there for our solution. Ask the  
24 comptroller to vet our proposal, sir. That's what we  
25 need.

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 56  
2 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Let's continue,  
3 let's, let's continue again, let's get some time. I  
4 promise you if we don't talk today let's talk  
5 tomorrow and see how we continue starting action  
6 together.

7 BHAIRAVI DESAI: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Are there  
9 any other questions for this panelist? OK. I would  
10 also like to announce that members of the public will  
11 be called on and they do not need to use the raise  
12 hand function, ah, we will call on them to testify.  
13 Um, I would next like to call on Aziz Bah. Aziz.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 AZIZ BAH: Thank you. Um, thanks,  
16 Chairman. My name is Aziz Bah. I'm the, ah, um, I'm  
17 a driver and, um, organizing director of the  
18 Independent Drivers Guild. And I'm, ah, gonna  
19 deliver this, um, testimony from, ah, Brendan Sexton,  
20 who is the executive director but couldn't make it  
21 here, um, today. Um, Mr. Chairman, we have been, ah,  
22 through some tough times, to say the least. Over the  
23 last seven-plus months and counting drivers across  
24 all industry sectors, FHV, medallion, and liveries,  
25 are some of the true unsung hero of this crisis. A



1 majority of our 80,000 drivers were out of work for  
2 month and many still are. New York State [inaudible]  
3 handle thousands of pandemic unemployment assistance  
4 claim, leaving our drivers stranded for month  
5 without, with mounting bills and no way to support  
6 their families. Some remain on the job making that  
7 as little as they could, you know, shutting doors,  
8 um, shuttling doctors, nurses, and other essentially  
9 workers to and from work. Others delivered meal to  
10 those in need. So for the while we did not have the  
11 needed support and protection, PPE, cleaning  
12 supplies, dividers. We all were given confusing  
13 advices and directions from all level of government.  
14 Drivers were afraid to go to doctors or emergency  
15 rooms because they lack health insurance. Some  
16 drivers got sick. Some drivers died. Some have and  
17 continue to suffer from depression, anxiety, and  
18 other mental disorder. Many drivers have been  
19 financially devastated, have simply left the  
20 industry, filed for bankruptcy, or the brinks of  
21 doing so. From the very beginning of this crisis  
22 drivers should have been given the PPEs and supplies  
23 by the city and app companies. From the very  
24 beginning drivers should have been told...

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Two minutes.

AZIZ BAH: ...that the city hospitals free of charge for testing and treatment. From the very beginning drivers should have been massively enrolled in their free benefits. So I want to, um, thank the commissioner and her TLC team. They were accessible to us and, ah, throughout this entire crisis. Um, I believe they did, they could, you know, ah, they fell into a very complicated, ah, situation, complicated circumstances and trying to do the best they could. But I need you to recognize quickly the ability, the inability of institutions to acquire and distribute PPEs for the drivers. PPE, supplies were scarce and overpriced. In partnership with the Blackout Fund we feel the void and were able to pack and distribute over 20,000 PPE kits to all drivers, including FHV, liveries, and taxi workers. Thank you. Thank you. Now, ah, may I continue with my, ah, own statement? If you'll allow me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Go ahead.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has started now.

AZIZ BAH: Again, my name is Aziz Bah.

Um, good afternoon. Um, if there is anything unique about New York it's that that's the city that never

1 sleeps. The devastating reality of the pandemic  
2 brought that to a screeching halt. All of the  
3 familiar vehicles rolling down streets and avenues,  
4 taking New Yorkers where they need to go, were all  
5 off the road. They were parked. After the first  
6 month went by without driving, every driver turned to  
7 us with the same question. Are we still going to  
8 keep paying high insurance costs even though we were  
9 not driving? The answer couldn't be more  
10 complicated. The pandemic and New York [inaudible]  
11 have dramatically reduced FHV business, traffic, car  
12 accident, and accident claims, creating a windfall in  
13 saving and profit for insurers. However, the  
14 insurance companies did not reduce premium for  
15 drivers. FHV drivers pay an average of \$350 per  
16 month or more for insurance for the risk associated  
17 with our work. We should not have to pay for  
18 coverage when we are not working or our work has been  
19 significantly reduced, especially when it is due to  
20 no fault of our own. So the answer should be simple,  
21 right? I thought so. But the governor moratorium on  
22 payment deferral went into effect at the end of  
23 March. It didn't help much because drivers still  
24 have to pay higher monthly premium for the next 12  
25

1 month. For the majority of drivers who have been  
2 basically out of work for six months, that's a burden  
3 of over \$2000 for six months of insurance when we  
4 couldn't, when we couldn't even work. So with the  
5 uncertainty of the industry, which lost over 80% of  
6 daily trips, it's hard to predict when things will  
7 get to pre-pandemic levels...

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 AZIZ BAH: ...at making a living again.

11 Then came the TLC license storage program designed to  
12 allow drivers to store their vehicle plates for  
13 initially 90 days and later extended to 180. I would  
14 like to thank the commissioner again for taking these  
15 steps to address the burden on drivers. But the  
16 complications ranging from insurance brokers  
17 requiring mandatory plate surrender, making it  
18 impossible to park the plateless vehicles on the  
19 streets, withholding portions of monies from drivers  
20 that had already paid their policies in full, and not  
21 to mention like TLC rules having not much to do with  
22 the storage program at all left drivers in limbo.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 AZIZ BAH: Ten more seconds, please.

25 There must be a simpler approach to get to the simple

1  
2 answer. Drivers are looking forward to common-sense  
3 measures that will help us avoid bankruptcy and be  
4 able to continue serving the city. When the city  
5 needs drivers we always answer the call. This time  
6 we need assistance in fixing the very [inaudible]  
7 insurance regulations that are stuck up against us.  
8 So, Chairman Rodriguez, members of the Transportation  
9 Committee, and, ah, Commissioner Jarmoszuk, we are  
10 asking you all to come to the rescue of drivers with  
11 regard to high insurance costs by providing the  
12 simple answer drivers are waiting for. Drivers  
13 [inaudible] New Yorkers and visitors. And while the  
14 industry is down due to the pandemic, our immigrant  
15 community should not be taken for a ride. So the  
16 [inaudible] has a petition signed by 11,000...

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Sir, your time is up.

18 AZIZ BAH: ...[inaudible] and please take  
19 a look at that, ah, ah, into it. Thank you. Thank  
20 you for your time and if you have any questions.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
22 testimony, Aziz, and for reading Brendon Sexton's  
23 testimony as well. Are there any questions for this  
24 panelist? OK, seeing none, our next panelist will be  
25 Jen Hensley. Jen.

1                   SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

2                   JEN HENSLEY: Hi. Thank you so much for  
3 having me. I'm Jen Hensley, ah, senior director of  
4 policy at Lyft, and I wanted to share today some of  
5 the ways, ah, that Lyft has worked with the TLC to  
6 respond to the needs and changes related to COVID-19.  
7 Lyft was very pleased when in early May in response  
8 to the challenges posed by the pandemic the TLC  
9 announced a temporary expansion of their partition  
10 program. We know that partitions, um, can make  
11 riders feel safer and make them more willing to  
12 utilize ride share at a time when demand was, ah,  
13 extremely low and challenged. So this would create  
14 more ride opportunities for drivers. Um, we quickly  
15 submitted an application to become an office TLC  
16 approved installer of partitions, um, sourced  
17 products, and developed installation procedures in  
18 accordance with the rules and guidelines. Um, and  
19 today any driver on the Lyft platform can make an  
20 appointment for a free partition and a free  
21 installation at our driver center in Long Island  
22 City. To our knowledge, we're the only installer to  
23 have offered completely, um, free partitions and  
24 installations during this time, and we're seeing  
25

1 hundreds of drivers a week and very positive reviews  
2 overall for the service. We also provide all Lyft  
3 free deep car cleanings in our driver center. And,  
4 of course, PPE kits with sanitizers and masks. Lyft  
5 was also happy to spread the word to our drivers  
6 about the TLC's driver assistance program, which you  
7 heard so much about earlier today. Um, because that  
8 program was administered by the city we don't  
9 actually know how many of our drivers participated or  
10 what their earnings were. Um, but we do know that we  
11 also partnered with dozens of other nonprofit  
12 organizations locally to offer ride credits to be  
13 shared with those in, most in need, equally helping  
14 the community and providing a boost, ah, in rides to  
15 drivers who were still out on the road. We know that  
16 these have had a tremendous positive impact on  
17 organizations like the Asian American Federation...

18  
19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 JEN HENSLEY: ...the Met Council, and  
21 others, and we've submitted our full written  
22 testimony, ah, for the committee's review.

23 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.  
24  
25

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 64  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Are there  
3 any questions for this panelist? OK, seeing none,  
4 our next panelist will be Jason Gross. Jason.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 JASON GROSS: Hi, my name is Jason Gross  
7 and I am vice president of Mobil at Curb. We wanted  
8 to take this opportunity to commend TLC Commissioner  
9 Jarmoszuk and the entire TLC staff for their tireless  
10 work to support not only licensed taxi drivers, but  
11 also the essential workers and other residents of New  
12 York City during the COVID pandemic. Beginning with  
13 an initial late night call in mid March, the TLC has  
14 routinely and proactively reached out to a variety of  
15 stakeholders throughout the transportation industry  
16 to see how the TLC can help connect city agencies and  
17 other organizations in need of transportation with  
18 drivers in need of income during this extremely  
19 challenging time for the transportation industry. At  
20 Curb we are proud to have been one of those to answer  
21 the calls, both figuratively and literally. The list  
22 of agencies we've been able to assist with the Curb  
23 app, web platform, and 24/7 call center is long and  
24 still growing daily. From the Department of Homeless  
25 Services, the Department of Correction, and the



1  
2 Mayor's Office for Criminal Justice, the New York  
3 City Health and Hospitals, the Board of Elections,  
4 the Department of Education, and many others. The  
5 outcomes have been both rewarding and improve. To  
6 date, yellow taxi drivers, green street hail livery  
7 drivers, and black car drivers on the Curb app and  
8 platform have completed over half a million trips on  
9 behalf of city and state agencies, to transport  
10 doctors, nurses, hospital staff, and other essential  
11 workers, as well as multiple residents and visitors  
12 during the pandemic. This has generated millions of  
13 dollars in much-needed income for thousands of  
14 drivers over the past seven months, not to mention  
15 supporting the hard-working employees here at Curb  
16 and our families. Although we represent only one  
17 part of a much larger effort by the commissioner and  
18 her staff at the TLC, we are thankful for the  
19 opportunity to help and we are truly amazed by the  
20 persistence and dedication of the drivers who have  
21 risked their lives day in and day out to keep our  
22 city moving. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
24 testimony. Do we have any questions for this  
25 panelist?

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 66  
2 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: How many, how  
3 many bases, local bases, are part of those, eh,  
4 groups that you were able of, eh, to partner with?

5 JASON GROSS: Um, so I can't give you a  
6 count of basis, Councilman, at this moment. What I  
7 can tell you is with respect to livery bases, we've  
8 been working under our E-Hail license through which  
9 we work with Green Street-Hail Liveries. So I can,  
10 if you'd like, get you guys a count of the bases with  
11 which those vehicles are associated.

12 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: OK. So let's see  
13 how we can follow up, you know, eh, outside, you  
14 know, the hearing right now to see how we can share  
15 more details, because, you know, for me, I, I do  
16 believe also it is important for the local bases to  
17 be partnered with institution that they can provide,  
18 you know, the infrastructure that they need to, to be  
19 connected with the opportunity. But at the same time  
20 everything is local.

21 JASON GROSS: Correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: So when, I'm,  
23 I've been a former driver in the Eighties, knowing  
24 that when there's [inaudible] for proposal it  
25 sometimes the local one, they are not the one that

1  
2 are in the better position to respond. So, eh, I  
3 feel that, you know, I appreciate anyone that play a  
4 role, you know, eh, eh, responding to any need that  
5 we have as a city. But I also think that it is  
6 important also to look on how to expand opportunity  
7 to local bases that connect drivers that they being  
8 provided the services in underserved communities.

9           JASON GROSS: We are very happy to do  
10 that. We have an open door policy and we are, you  
11 know, happy and willing to work with any driver,  
12 licensed TLC driver who wishes to be on the platform.

13           CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: I just, I just  
14 think that whoever, and I don't question because, you  
15 know, [inaudible] this so I don't want to starting  
16 have any doubt of the intention. But I feel that,  
17 eh, in its period of time I would say that the  
18 coronavirus and the George Floyd, you know, put a  
19 face of [inaudible] equity, lack of access, and I  
20 think that, you know, we have seen academic,  
21 cultural, any private sectors about we have open  
22 door, but the question is do we go extra mile, you  
23 know, to, to connect with the local bases, those who  
24 were there when we have [inaudible] homicide in the  
25 northern Manhattan, the same thing in the Bronx, so

1  
2 that they also can share the opportunity of the  
3 benefit. So more than happy to continue, you know,  
4 to contact with you to see what opportunity are there  
5 in the process that, you know, is you guy who are  
6 leading this, eh, services that you've been able to,  
7 to provide but, you know, connecting opportunity to  
8 the local one.

9 JASON GROSS: That, that is our business  
10 model. So we would appreciate the opportunity to  
11 follow up with you on that.

12 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: OK, thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Ah, if  
14 there are no further questions for this panelist, ah,  
15 we will move on to the next panelist. And I  
16 apologize for mispronunciation of anyone's name. Ah,  
17 the next panelist will be Suvez Birogi.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 UNIDENTIFIED: Mr. Birogi, we can't hear  
20 you. You have to unmute yourself.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Birogi, could you  
22 unmute yourself?

23 UNIDENTIFIED: You have to turn on your  
24 microphone.

25 SUVEZ BIROGI: Good?

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can hear you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes. Time starts now.

SUVEZ BIROGI: Oh, sorry for that. Um, hi, good afternoon, Chairman [inaudible]. Thank you for letting, ah, for testimony. I am Suvez Birogi, medallion owner. Um, my medallion number is 4W31. I bought it 2014, last auction. Price was 851 something. I paid \$100,000, but all the money from loan. Some of money from my life insurance, some of, um, some of my parents' month. This money I give to city via my broker, Omega. I pay \$3900 monthly mortgage up to three years, 2014 to 2017. Next three years, um, I paid \$3200, 2017 to 2019. And to now I am paying, um, \$2063, 2019 through 2020. I paid work income. I paid insurance. I lost my month. I lost my health. I lost my family fees. I lost everything. So I am requesting to ask that give me my money back. I am member of Taxi Workers Alliance. I explain my pain to my leader, Bhairavi Desai. You will know details from her. This is accessible medallion. I have no driver for a long time. I am driving alone. So I am very, very sick under the hand COVID-19. My family very afraid to meet.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 70  
2 SUVEZ BIROGI: I, I cannot go to work  
3 right now. How long this situation I don't know,  
4 nobody knows. So please give us a day of forgiveness  
5 now. Help me and to help my family. Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
7 testimony. Um, does anyone have a question for this  
8 panelist? OK. Ah, our next panelist will be Gerson  
9 Fernandez.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 GERSON FERNANDEZ: Hello, you can hear  
12 me?

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

14 GERSON FERNANDEZ: Yeah. I am a yellow  
15 taxi medallion owner. I am 66 years old. The last  
16 four years I am not able to make my payments  
17 properly. But of course I paid them on time and all  
18 this, what do you call that, automatic. But it's  
19 becoming very difficult. So I would just ask the  
20 City Council if it's possible, I know it's difficult,  
21 and especially what Ms. Desai has proposed, if you  
22 could make it \$125,000, where we pay \$750 a month,  
23 this way it becomes practical, not [inaudible] to me,  
24 maybe to the other medallion owners. That's all I'm  
25 asking. Thank you very much.

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 71  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
3 testimony. Do we have any questions for this  
4 panelist? OK, seeing none, we will move on to the  
5 next panelist. Our next panelist will be Mohammed  
6 Marbo.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 MOHAMMED MARBO: Hello. You hear me?

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can.

10 MOHAMMED MARBO: OK, yes, you can?

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

12 MOHAMMED MARBO: OK. Um, thank you for  
13 taking me and thank you for taking my call. Um, I,  
14 ah, pay my respect to the, ah, the, the chairman of  
15 Transportation Committee, Chair Rodriguez, and I pay  
16 my respect Ritchie Torres, and I pay my respect  
17 Chairwoman Adrienne Adams, and, and, um, I pay my,  
18 ah, I just want to, ah, say to my leader, Bhairavi  
19 Desai, ah, we really are protesting and all those  
20 fightings over the years her leadership, and I thanks  
21 for her and, ah, I really, ah, hear, ah, the  
22 commissioner, TLC commissioner's, ah, ah, opinion  
23 about our driver. Ah, Commissioner, really I doubt  
24 it, ah, he, she talked to the driver. Ah, that's all  
25 our cosmetic, ah, advice. This is not real, it's not

1 gonna help the driver, I can tell you that. And, ah,  
2 all those rules comings, I hear it, I don't know, I  
3 don't have details. So, um, all the rules have to be  
4 strictly, ah, ah, oversee and everything have to be,  
5 ah, very carefully, ah, [inaudible] because the  
6 broker bank, ah, um, money managed company, all those  
7 interest group is very notorious...

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 MOHAMMED MARBO: Ah, are the killers and  
11 they gonna kill again. So please help us for the  
12 debt forgiveness and we'll be, ah, thank you. Thank  
13 you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
15 testimony. Ah, do we have any questions for this  
16 panelist? OK, seeing none, ah, our next panelist  
17 will be Augustine Tang.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 AUGUSTINE TANG: Hi, my name is Augustine  
20 Tang, and I, I'm an owner-driver and I inherited a  
21 medallion, ah, as well as a loan for \$530,000 after  
22 my father passed five years ago. I ended up having  
23 to make a decision to move back in and take care of  
24 my 90-year-old grandmother as well as juggling, ah,  
25 having to learn about this industry. Ah, what I have



1 learned is that this job is very lonely. Ah, when I  
2 first started I crossed paths with the late Kenny  
3 Chou, who was kind enough to answer questions I had  
4 about the job and about the industry. Ah, he was  
5 hopeful in 2016 that the city will help medallion  
6 owners and that we shouldn't worry too much. Ah, he  
7 owed about \$700,000 to Melrose. Um, he ended up  
8 committing suicide in mid 2018. Before the pandemic  
9 I wasn't, it wasn't easy to make ends me. Ah, but I  
10 least had a partner to help me support, ah, to help  
11 support me. Ah, you drive day after day as business  
12 had gotten worse and worse and traffic increasing  
13 more. Ah, it really takes a toll on the body and the  
14 mind. I started meeting older medallion owners who  
15 were more seasoned than I was. Ah, that would say,  
16 say to me it used to be worth it to putting  
17 themselves through that. Ah, putting these long  
18 days, week after week, to be able to support, ah,  
19 their families. And to be honest the pandemic, ah,  
20 gave me just a little bit of time to breathe. Um, we  
21 got a chance to organize and luckily with Taxi  
22 Workers Alliance, ah, kind of opened our eyes about  
23 what kind of life we didn't want to go back to. Ah,  
24 we started sharing stories and hardships and, ah,  
25

1  
2 that was out of our control. It was, it was pretty  
3 cathartic, to be honest. We knew it all came down to  
4 our city, ah, to our city will decide to do. Our  
5 lives are, are predicated on how urgent and serious  
6 you take this crisis. Ah, we are dying...

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 AUGUSTINE TANG: Ah, just one more  
9 second. We are dying. Um, we just want our lives  
10 back. Um, please take a moment and review this well-  
11 thought-out proposal. Ah, it's a low risk for the  
12 city and it will save many of my colleagues' lives  
13 and families. Um, I think this is the only way we  
14 can survive. Um, thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
16 testimony. Ah, are there any questions for this  
17 panelist? OK, seeing none, we will move on to our  
18 next panelist. Ah, our next panelist will be Richard  
19 Chou.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 RICHARD CHOU: Hello, can you hear me?

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes, we hear you.

24 RICHARD CHOU: OK, hi. My name is  
25 Richard Chou. Good afternoon, Transportation

1  
2 Committee Chairman Mr. Rodriguez and everyone. So  
3 I'm driving for yellow cab for 15 year. I'm the  
4 owner-driver. I'm also [inaudible] member. In 2018  
5 nine driver was committed suicide, one of my brother,  
6 Kenny Chou, so Yu Ming Chou was included, because of  
7 the financial hardship. City [inaudible] allow to  
8 Uber, Lyft, and other app to limit regulation and  
9 figure [inaudible] to yellow cab very heavy  
10 regulation. That's why we lost exclusive right and  
11 then we, I'm also, um, look at the, *New York Times*  
12 reported all the banks, the credit unions, the  
13 predatory lending [inaudible]. That's totally  
14 unacceptable and this is with the crisis and unfair  
15 to the medallion owner. I'm also supporting the New  
16 York State attorney general to sue the New York City  
17 so we lost our investment and our retirement.  
18 Medallion values should not be inflated by the banks  
19 or broker or credit union and the city. Extra  
20 \$250,000 does not help us. We don't want to pay  
21 \$250,000. We don't want to pay another extra  
22 \$125,000 more than the principle in our plan. I have  
23 pay [inaudible] proposal. So medallion values should  
24 be, you know, directly related to the driver's income  
25 and earning. During the pandemic time no business,

1 driver are not enough making money to pay the  
2 medallion mortgage and the [inaudible]. How do the  
3 driver survive? Medallion value is only \$70,000.  
4 Who wants to buy the medallion, pay \$250,00,  
5 especially the pandemic time?  
6

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 RICHARD CHOU: Yeah, give me one second.  
9 And then we support [inaudible]. We propose the  
10 extra \$125,000, [inaudible] paying, um, focus on  
11 fixing 20 year for mortgage payment [inaudible]  
12 proposal [inaudible] very low cost to the city and  
13 then very [inaudible]. Very low risk. So  
14 [inaudible] resource centers under the mayor office  
15 so they should be helping us, no, no discourage us.  
16 So we want, we want, we don't want an individual  
17 solution. We want the universal solution, one  
18 solution across all the crisis, 3000 medallion owner,  
19 so refinancing [inaudible] to finish it. So we got  
20 to do one solution to finish the crisis, solve the  
21 crisis. And then we also, the mayor's office, I'm  
22 gonna call the mayor's office, so also the bank,  
23 credit union, and the [inaudible], the City Council,  
24 attorney general, bring it to the table and then we  
25 solve the refinance, you know, solve the crisis so

1 driver, we [inaudible] so driver livable income and  
2 survive, we want to solve this crisis as soon as  
3 possible and [inaudible] industry. Thank you very  
4 much.  
5

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
7 testimony. Are there any questions for this  
8 panelist? OK, our next panelist will be Ashraf  
9 Ahmed. Ashraf.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 ASHRAF AHMED: Hi, how we doing  
12 everybody? Eh, I'm a medallion owner. I came here  
13 to New York like, ah, 25 years ago. Like any  
14 immigrant, I started as New York cab driver, working  
15 hard the 10 years, saved all money I got it, and  
16 after that I decide to buy a medallion. I would at  
17 this time like \$125,000 down payment. Ah, the  
18 medallion was like 650. We're talking about 2011,  
19 2010. So at this time I still, ah, the Marblegate  
20 asking me like \$460,000. I never did refinance. I  
21 never buy any house. I was working hard. I never  
22 stopped to make any payment the last, ah, 11 years.  
23 Never stopped, never delay any payment. I would like  
24 to leave to my kids something is going to help them  
25 after I die. But now I am thinking, what I can leave

1  
2 to my kids when I die? Ah, even I think it's pushing  
3 me to do bankruptcy. Even the name, I keep it.  
4 Credit card was excellent still, so far excellent.  
5 But after bankruptcy I leave to my kids, what I gonna  
6 leave? I leave what, bad name, bad credit report,  
7 whatever I have. So who's gonna help? I imagine  
8 myself now, I walk in desert and I studied in high  
9 school save our souls, when you live, you're gonna  
10 live, you're gonna see you're gonna die, [inaudible]  
11 sign SOS. We need someone SOS, ah, Commissioner, ah,  
12 Council, we need some people working hard to help us  
13 to give us some hope. We sleep every night with bad  
14 dream. I said when I wake up I need to cover my  
15 kids' costs. I have three kids, I have wife. I have  
16 to be good American person all my life until to die.  
17 Who's gonna help us? I have no ideas. The  
18 commissioner, [inaudible] commissioner said oh,  
19 Marblegate is give some good deals...

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 ASHRAF AHMED: ...I'm sorry, it's gonna be  
22 few seconds. It's gonna give from six hundred, two,  
23 three hundred. That's not enough. You know how is  
24 the market. You talk about \$70,000. I have no  
25 driver to drive. I have nobody to help. So I am

1 almost 52 years old. For how long I gonna be like  
2 that \$2000 payment a month. And I, and the cost, the  
3 cost is too high, insurance, maintenance, [inaudible]  
4 this is not fair competition. If you talk about the  
5 apps company, the Uber or Lyft or whatever, the  
6 driver go on inspection once every two years. Yellow  
7 cab go once every four years and you have to fix  
8 everything, you have to check everything, as the  
9 insurance is too high, our insurance \$7000, \$8000,  
10 the other. So who's gonna take care of this business  
11 and take care of 6000 families? Thank you for anyone  
12 is gonna be who is SOS, save our souls please, do  
13 something for us to keep us good American till we  
14 die. Thank you everyone.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
17 testimony.

18 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. A  
19 question, eh, how much did you pay for your  
20 medallion? How much do you still owe right now? And  
21 what is your monthly payment?

22 ASHRAF AHMED: Monthly payment \$2100. My  
23 loan like \$460,000. I buy the medallion \$650,000,  
24 eh, 10 years, 11 years ago. I never stopped any  
25 payment. The Marblegate contact me every two months.

1  
2 Come and pay \$25,000 and we'll take your loan from  
3 \$450,000, \$460,000, we take it down to \$300,000. It  
4 still \$300,000. The payment is gonna be \$1400, \$1500  
5 a month. That's with insurance, with maintenance,  
6 with a lot of stuff, it's too high, it's too high,  
7 especially if you have family, five people, and  
8 you're only the one responsible about this payment,  
9 that's too high, too much. The competition is not  
10 fair, sir. I'm sorry to talk about it, but this is  
11 what happened since the city allowed the apps company  
12 work. The apps company you go for TLC inspection  
13 once every two months, I mean, once every two years.  
14 The taxi go every four. I have to go to check the  
15 seats, the tire, the [inaudible]. The cost is too  
16 high to cover everything, especially if you drive by  
17 yourself. So the dream is gonna be now bad dream,  
18 it's not good dream. To own a medallion it's, it's a  
19 very, very bad situation for anyone who own a  
20 medallion at this time.

21 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, we need, we  
22 need to continue. As you know, we've been working,  
23 I've been working with you guys to see, you know, to  
24 how we can do the best we can to help, eh, eh, I  
25 understand the situation. I'm not in, in your



1  
2 shoulder but I know it's like we as a city also have  
3 responsibility because we sold, you know, to the  
4 medallion, eh, eh, to those individual that saved  
5 their money and they get into the medallion that the  
6 yellow one were the only one that had the exclusive  
7 to go pick and drop off in any part of the city. So  
8 I get how we as a city have failed. But also, eh,  
9 eh, allowing the high volume to come here. I just  
10 think that we need to think about, you know, how to  
11 put together the best plan, how to understand the  
12 reality that you and many other brothers and sisters  
13 are going through and, and so you know, my commit to  
14 continue working with you, to continue working,  
15 pushing hard to this end will always be there. So  
16 let's see how, you know, we don't give up and let's  
17 try to also to put together a feasible plan that we  
18 get that should be able to work to alleviate, you  
19 know, the financial crisis that you and many others  
20 are going through.

21 ASHRAF AHMED: Thank you so much, I  
22 appreciate it.

23 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you,  
24 thanks.

25

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 82  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our next  
3 panelist will be Mohammed Hussain. Mohammed.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 MOHAMMED HUSSAIN: Hello, you hearing me,  
6 please?

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, we hear you.

8 MOHAMMED HUSSAIN: Hello? Hi, my name is  
9 Mohammed Hussain. Ah, I have been taxi driver since  
10 1998. I am, I'm also the member of New York Taxi  
11 Workers Alliance. I bought medallion from the last  
12 auction 2014. The price is 400, ah, 840, ah, 854  
13 hundred grand. I invest here 133, 138 grand. My  
14 medallion number 4W27. I don't have second driver  
15 forever because [inaudible] accessible my money under  
16 [inaudible]. City sold my medallion, ah, to us and  
17 permission to work at company. All at the same time.  
18 How is possible? I lost my health. My family is  
19 everything. City got my money. City has to back  
20 every single penny with interest. I don't need two  
21 medallion. I [inaudible] my money back. I, I loan  
22 over 700 grand right now, ah, ah, how is, how to, how  
23 I can stop with my family? I don't, I don't have any  
24 money. I don't want to die. I start, when I start  
25 driving to buy, ah, all expense after I buy my

1 medallion is almost \$6000, my expense, everything.  
2 Now I paid over \$2000, every month I pay all expense,  
3 including my mortgage, insurance, everything. So I  
4 got the COVID-19. I need to live, I need to live, I  
5 don't want to die. So I don't, this is my all of  
6 money invest here. This is my, I drive over 20  
7 years. So I don't have nothing. So whatever I make  
8 the money I invest here. So my money is garbage, my  
9 life is garbage. So the...

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 MOHAMMED HUSSAIN: The, I, please hear to  
13 me, dear Chairman, Commissioner, all of, all of them  
14 here, please help us. Especially who bought the  
15 medallion last auction. We lost everything. Thank  
16 you so much and have a nice day.

17 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
19 testimony. Our next panelist will be Mohammed Khan.  
20 Mohammed.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do we have Mohammed?

23 OK, we can move on to the next panelist and come back  
24 to Mohammed if, if we are able to reach him. Um, our  
25 next panelist will be Raul Rivera.

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

3 RAUL RIVERA: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair.

4 Good afternoon, everybody. Ah, my name is Raul  
5 Rivera. I'm a TLC driver advocate. Can you guys  
6 hear me? Can you guys hear me?

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes we do.

8 RAUL RIVERA: OK, ah, my name is Raul  
9 Rivera. I'm a New York City TLC driver advocate.  
10 I'm also a Families for Safe Streets member. I'm  
11 also a crash survivor. Ah, on May 13, 2020, we, we,  
12 we sent a letter to the commissioners, ah, Pelosi.  
13 We also sent, ah, that same, ah, email and letter to  
14 Chairman Rodriguez. It's, ah, it was pertaining to  
15 makeshift partitions. We wanted to ensure, 'cause we  
16 didn't have no insurance from anyone, anyone, that  
17 drivers will receive, ah, tickets for makeshift  
18 partitions. So we, we did a video, we shared it.  
19 Ah, we got no responses from Mr. Chairman Rodriguez.  
20 Pelosi did response, ah, also Council Member Carlina  
21 Rivera responded and, ah, we just want to assure that  
22 the drivers that are working, like myself, who will  
23 never stop driving during the pandemic be protected  
24 and not receive tickets now and in the future. We  
25 need acknowledgement of that. If somebody creates a

1  
2 partition like I did for only \$22 we cannot be held  
3 accountable by, ah, by receiving tickets. It's  
4 shameful if we do receive it. From what I understand  
5 nobody's received tickets and that's great and it  
6 should remain that way. Drivers are using these  
7 makeshift partitions. A lot of them are not, ah, TLC  
8 approved but we cannot get no more tickets, ah, and I  
9 want to say also there's a big, big way to help the  
10 driver and it's a very simple way. If constituents  
11 reach out to your office the best thing you could do  
12 to help them is to answer the emails. Mr. Rodriguez,  
13 we sent a lot of emails, all due respect you're not  
14 answering the emails, or your office. And some of  
15 the biggest offenders, Council Member Deutsch...

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 RAUL RIVERA: ...and Council Member Debbie  
18 Rose. Big offenders. Please respond to the  
19 constituent. Thank you for your time. God bless.  
20 Reform the TLC. [speaking in Spanish]

21 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: I agree with you,  
22 Raul. We need to continue, again, eh, looking at all  
23 the sector of this industry to see how we can help.  
24 A question, are you a Uber or are you a livery driver  
25 or yellow?

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 86  
2 RAUL RIVERA: I, I am, thank you for the  
3 question, [speaking in Spanish]. I'm a, I'm a TLC  
4 driver, that's what we say. The license is the same.  
5 Taxi, limousine [inaudible]...

6 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: But right now  
7 [inaudible]...

8 RAUL RIVERA: The platform that I use is  
9 Uber and Lyft. I have over 17,000 ride. I've been  
10 driving for five years.

11 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Well that's fine.  
12 I just wanted, I just wanted to, you know, to see  
13 because I think it is important that drivers, we get  
14 perspective of drivers from all different sectors. I  
15 just wanted to know, let's say, eh, in your case you  
16 bring the perspective also from the Uber. You've  
17 been driving an Uber car, right?

18 RAUL RIVERA: Ah, it's not a Uber car,  
19 'cause they don't own a car, it's a, it's a, I drive  
20 the platforms, yes, I use the platforms. I use...

21 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, but it's  
22 not a livery, eh, car.

23 RAUL RIVERA: No.

24 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: It's a Uber car,  
25 right?

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RAUL RIVERA: It's, it's, I do, yes. I don't work through the base. No, no livery. But, you know, now that you bring up the question about livery, you know, I know the task force, it would be nice if I was put on to that task force, I'm really, I'm really, ah, a big advocate for the driver and, ah, I have an open mind, critical thinker, and I have a lot of supporters. It's, I think it's a, we reached out to Jumaane...

CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, but what happened is, what happened, Raul, is that we need to then work on making any change in the task force because the task force is now for the high volume, the task force is for, eh, eh, the livery and, and, and black car and the, and the family black car. So let's see how we can make any changes, because for now as it is, it's not for this task force, it's only for the small family black car and for the livery. So we can talk.

RAUL RIVERA: A lot of, a lot of livery drivers, they can't just work from the base. They're not getting the calls. So they supplement by using Uber and Lyft, which they're not supposed to, but it does happen, unfortunately, and, ah, I, I can't, I

1  
2 can't stress enough how I should be put on to that  
3 task force. I have a lot of input. I have over five  
4 years and 17,000 trips. I speak English and Spanish.  
5 And, ah, that's all I can say and I thank you for the  
6 time.

7 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: OK, OK, thank you  
8 Raul. [inaudible]

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Um, do we  
10 have Mohammed Khan now? Mohammed?

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: OK, it looks like we  
13 still don't have Mohammed. Ah, we can circle back to  
14 him. Um, our next panelist will be Osman Chowdury.  
15 Osman.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 OSMAN CHOWDURY: Hello, you hear me?

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

19 OSMAN CHOWDURY: Yeah, my name is Osman  
20 Chowdury. I'm a yellow taxi driver, driving the last  
21 24 years. I [inaudible] about the unemployment  
22 insurance that was going on long, New York State  
23 Labor [inaudible] giving us \$200. I went to work  
24 about three days. If you work three days, one day  
25 [inaudible] \$50 and they said anybody who work in the



1  
2 office they're getting eight hours, but when we work  
3 12 hours we made it like, I think the time like two  
4 hours, and [inaudible] losing the \$50 because why  
5 gonna go people to work if you don't get, you know,  
6 [inaudible] in the amount of work. That's why they  
7 need to change the law. [inaudible] taxi driver is  
8 gonna work, like passenger time they cannot report,  
9 like, like I worked three day, I made like six hours  
10 passenger time. If you don't make this law, I don't  
11 know, today I work, every day gonna the state, New  
12 York State gonna [inaudible] \$50 [inaudible]. At  
13 last if I want that time, like I made it one day,  
14 like 10 fares, I can't pay the tax, it's [inaudible]  
15 prize, state tax almost like it's \$30, whatever left  
16 of my [inaudible]. And I, and also I have to go to  
17 the garage, I have to work [inaudible] weekly, but if  
18 you don't have the weekly car have to pay \$400. But  
19 especially I have to work three, but I have four days  
20 left, I pay them the car. If you get a car for a  
21 daily basis, but there's [inaudible] for driver life.  
22 That's [inaudible] the state, any driver is gonna  
23 work, the passenger time is gonna count, otherwise  
24 we're not gonna, any driver is not gonna go to work  
25 because this is questions. And another things, the

1  
2 yellow taxi driver getting unemployment insurance  
3 from the state, like yellow taxi pay \$200, Uber now  
4 getting \$500. Then getting the difference, we pay  
5 Uber monthly pay your car insurance, almost standard  
6 \$1000. The [inaudible] driver pay [inaudible] almost  
7 \$300,000, every month gonna yellow driver paying, but  
8 we get insurance...

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 OSMAN CHOWDURY: OK, thank you very much.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
12 testimony. Our next panelist will be Kubersancho  
13 Persaud.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 KUBERSANCHO PERSAUD: Hello. My name is  
16 Kubersancho Persaud. Thank you for allowing me to  
17 speak today at the City Council. Thank you to the  
18 chair, the TLC commissioner, and DOT. Ah, my, I'm a  
19 yellow cab driver for five years now. Um, my dad was  
20 a yellow cab driver for 35 years. Ah, unfortunately  
21 he passed away in 2017 when, um, he got the  
22 foreclosure notice for his medallion, which he, which  
23 he drove. Um, as I hear from my, ah, brothers and  
24 sisters today in the cab industry it's really  
25 suffering, but it's not only in the yellow cab, it's

1  
2 all throughout the industry. Ah, I live in the  
3 Bronx, where we have livery cab drivers and taxi  
4 drivers, where we have problems where livery cab  
5 drivers do pick up street hails and pick up, um,  
6 their base calls, right? But one thing that my dad  
7 always said is that everybody got to a make a dollar.  
8 So I see that the livery cab is suffering because  
9 they have to pick up whatever they can get. Yellow  
10 cab is struggling, we cannot make our payments to,  
11 um, make our, for our mortgages and, and my dad he  
12 lost his medallion because the broker had falled  
13 behind on the mortgage and, ah, he lost his  
14 medallion, the last thing he owned in this city. He  
15 put, he had faith in the city, that the city would  
16 bring back his medallion and, and he would have  
17 something to retire to. But he ended up passing away  
18 and becoming depressed when his medallion became  
19 foreclosed on. Um, he owed about \$600,000. Um, I  
20 would like to see that maybe all these drivers could  
21 get their month back because they put their faith  
22 into the city and had a dream of driving, the  
23 American dream of owning something and being a part  
24 of the city that they loved, and the city had  
25

1 betrayed them and sold their dreams away. Ah, thank  
2 you.

3  
4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
6 testimony. Um, now we'll call one more time on  
7 Mohammed Khan. Mohammed. Seems like we've lost him  
8 again. OK, our next panelist will be Valentin  
9 Georgiev.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 VALENTIN GEORGIEV: Hi, everybody. Ah,  
12 good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and, ah, appreciate the  
13 opportunity to speak. Ah, my story is the same as  
14 most of the people that testified. I came here to  
15 America looking for a better life. Ah, started  
16 driving a cab since '92 and then, ah, continued  
17 working hard to support my family, I have a son and,  
18 um, then I got, ah, sold by the idea that, ah, ah,  
19 it's a good deal to, um, buy a medallion, city  
20 medallion, taxi medallion and, um, by doing that  
21 providing for a family, providing yourself with a  
22 job, and, ah, providing and, um, ah, providing  
23 yourself with a business, which is the ultimate  
24 American dream. Um, everything was, ah, going well.  
25 I mean, I was working almost 24 hours a day, until

1  
2 the city betrayed us sold our rights to picking up  
3 people in the street to, ah, to the app companies,  
4 which, ah, abused the drivers and, ah, um, ripped off  
5 the customers, ah, refusing to provide [inaudible] to  
6 the drivers, pensions, ah, health care, ah, anything,  
7 just ripping off everybody and, ah, just collecting  
8 the money that we, that we already paid to the city,  
9 millions of dollars. And, um, actually the city made  
10 during Guiliani and Bloomberg billions of dollars,  
11 and now it's kind of hypocritical to say oh, we have  
12 no money to help you, even though we already sold you  
13 the medallions that, ah, um, helped us, ah, managing  
14 our budgets, providing money for the, ah, teachers,  
15 for the, ah, cops, and for the firefighters, but now  
16 money is going and so...

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 VALENTIN GEORGIEV: ...[inaudible]. Ah,  
19 thank you very much, just a couple more seconds. So  
20 I'm also a member of the, ah, Taxi Alliance, and  
21 completely agree with their, ah, stand that we need  
22 to bring down the, the loans of everybody to \$125,000  
23 and, ah, \$750 a month, which is the most reasonable,  
24 um, um, bring to the end, the most reasonable  
25

2 solution of this big problem. Um, that's all I can  
3 say. Thanks for your attention. Have a nice day.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
5 testimony. Um, if there are no questions for this  
6 panelist our next panelist will be Ricardo Lopez.  
7 Ricardo.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ricardo? OK, it  
10 seems like we don't have Ricardo, so our next  
11 panelist will be Irhan Tonsel.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Irhan?

14 IRHAN TONSEL: Hello, can you hear me?

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

16 IRHAN TONSEL: OK, sorry about that. Um,  
17 good afternoon, Chair Rodriguez and members of the  
18 Committee on Transportation. My name is Irhan  
19 Tonsel. I'm a yellow taxi owner-driver and a proud  
20 member of New York Taxi Workers Alliance. Um, we all  
21 know these facts. The yellow taxi industry buckles  
22 under because of the pressure from unfair competition  
23 that ride share companies imposed on us. New York  
24 City and New York State regulators allowed these app  
25 companies to enter the for-hire vehicle industry with

1 little or no regulations, and expected the heavily  
2 regulated yellow industry to be able to compete.  
3 TLC's Band-Aid approaches have been just that, Band-  
4 Aids to a heavily bleeding wound. I'm not testifying  
5 today to beat the drums of anger many owner-drivers  
6 feel. I'm testifying to remind you that you have the  
7 power to make a difference today. You have the power  
8 to stabilize the yellow taxi industry by helping us  
9 owner-drivers get what we so desperately need, loan  
10 forgiveness. The owner-driver's ability to make a  
11 decent, respectable living from a very hard and  
12 challenging work has always been in direct  
13 correlation with the stability of the taxi industry.  
14 We cannot have stability for the yellow taxi industry  
15 without restoring the dignity that's been lost,  
16 that's been stolen from the owner-drivers. We have  
17 lost our ability to provide for our families, to send  
18 our kids to college, to retire with dignity after  
19 many decades of service. We have lost for many our  
20 only lifetime investment. We have lost all that  
21 because you stood by and did absolutely nothing when  
22 it mattered the most. Unfair competition from ride  
23 shares weakened us.

24  
25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1  
2           IRHAN TONSEL: When COVID-19, COVID-19 put  
3 all but the last nail in our coffins. And the last  
4 nail, you may ask, and that would be, that last nail  
5 will be your indifference to our needs. It's time  
6 for you to act now. There are a few options floating  
7 around for your consideration. I strongly urge you  
8 to consider the well-thought-out proposal by the New  
9 York Taxi Workers Alliance because it has the best  
10 chance to stabilize the taxi industry by giving  
11 owner-drivers back the ability to provide for our  
12 families at pre-ride share levels. This proposal is  
13 essential to stabilize the taxi industry and resolve  
14 our undisputable hardship under today's conditions.  
15 Other proposals are lacking serious conviction, as  
16 their numbers are surely going to enslave us to  
17 [inaudible]...

18           SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

19           IRHAN TONSEL: ...once again for many  
20 decades to come. Thank you for allowing me to  
21 testify today.

22           CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

23           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
24 testimony. Um, I would like to acknowledge that we  
25



1  
2 have also been joined by Council Member Levin. Um,  
3 our next panelist will be Chaim Yatso.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do we have this  
6 panelist? OK, um, we don't have Chaim. Our next  
7 panelist will be Galena Kamenker.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 GALENA KAMENKER: Um, hi. My name is  
10 Galena Kamenker and I come from the family of  
11 medallion owner-drivers. My husband is a driver-  
12 owner [inaudible] and, um, I just, you know, all of  
13 us have been talking here about, um, loan forgiveness  
14 and that's a must. I don't think we're asking, I  
15 think we are requesting this. But this it just the  
16 beginning, because [inaudible] how do we operate  
17 after that? How do the industry gets reinstated to  
18 the way it was, because we were promised exclusive  
19 rights to pick up within certain areas. I'm not  
20 against apps, ah, Uber, there are plenty of  
21 opportunities for them to do outside the central  
22 business areas. But if we're not getting the  
23 exclusive rights to that we are done, even with the  
24 loan forgiveness partial, we still have to pay out  
25 thousands of dollars, millions of dollars, to the

1 bank and, um, you know, we've been offered mental  
2 health. We're not mental health people. We are  
3 stable, we are proud people. We are being offered  
4 public assistance help with, um, paying our loans  
5 which, you know, we, we didn't come here for this.  
6 We came here to have our own faith, our own dignity,  
7 and not to go with public assistance, food stamps, we  
8 never asked for it. When we came here we know what's  
9 best and I'm not going for that, either. Mental  
10 health, we're stable people. But if [inaudible] do  
11 anything without, um, making us as a monopoly, I'm  
12 not afraid to say that. It is, we have to be in a  
13 monopoly because we invest in the city and the city  
14 has an opportunity to continue this industry,  
15 providing a lot of money to the city. The yellow cab  
16 is not going away, but you're gonna kill everybody  
17 who owns a cab now. So does the city can afford to  
18 have 6000 cabs [inaudible] with families? That's the  
19 question that I have to you, council members. But  
20 you also have to think about it, are you allowing  
21 Uber and Lyft to, to work without a license, all of a  
22 sudden the license got approved, was...

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1  
2           GALENA KAMENKER: ...[inaudible] I, I have  
3 a few more seconds for something, I have a lot of  
4 people on the call. All those questions we've been  
5 asking, Chairman, ah, [inaudible] honestly I have to  
6 say I mean we have a lot of disagreements. But she  
7 is the only one who agreed to talk to us, even  
8 though, Chairman, due to your respect, I don't see  
9 any improvements from where we are six months ago to  
10 where we are now, and we are in, in a crisis now. We  
11 were in a crisis before pandemic, but then it killed  
12 us. It's killing us. If we're not gonna make any  
13 month, if we're gonna thrive, 120,000 Ubers against  
14 13,000 yellows, you know that there are about 9000  
15 yellows on the shelf in TLC? That means we cannot  
16 make any month. Yes, we're gonna get a loan  
17 forgiveness, for what? I cannot pay \$1000. I cannot  
18 pay \$700 a month. People who are unemployment,  
19 making \$180 a week, how you, how can you pay \$1000?  
20 So, I mean, the city has an obligation. Either  
21 you're gonna have 6000 deaths on your hands? I mean,  
22 are you able to face that? How can you look in  
23 people's eyes and say you killed your parents? So  
24 there has to be a way for you to think one of them  
25 that's positive...

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION 100  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
3 testimony.

4 GALENA KAMENKER: ...[inaudible] industry  
5 is gonna bring income to the city, because city needs  
6 money now. I'm not asking for the city money. I'm  
7 asking to give us jobs that we can pay to TLC because  
8 we're supporting. We're supporting city. Without  
9 the yellow, you guys [inaudible] gonna be out of  
10 jobs.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We have  
12 other panelists who will be testifying. Thanks. Our  
13 next panelist will be Eugene Pamov.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 EUGENE PAMOV: Hello? Thanks for taking  
16 my call. Um, my name is Eugene Pamov. Ah, I've been  
17 driving taxis for a long period of time. Um, and I  
18 finally trusted the city, state, and TLC and I bought  
19 a taxi medallions for thousands of dollar, and, um,  
20 and then, ah, the corporate company like Uber and  
21 Lyft came and they ruined our business. And on top  
22 of that the state, ah, Governor Cuomo, imposed us the  
23 surtax, 250, and after that it's completely ruined.  
24 And now we have a huge debt, you know, ah, we cannot  
25 be able to pay. Ah, we're supposed, I mean, we're

1  
2 supposed to have the exclusive right to hail in the,  
3 most of the, most of the city. The city and, and  
4 TLC, ah, should oversee and regulate the finances  
5 [inaudible] medallion market, but they failed to do  
6 so. So right now, so we, we are asking, we don't  
7 have income, ah, we request to forgive our debt, you  
8 know, and let us live. Ah, we are the only ones who  
9 always served the city and on the return, um, we are  
10 suffering right now. So I have like two children who  
11 are, one is already in college, first year in  
12 college, and one is about to go to high school. Ah,  
13 I saved this money for, ah, my family and, ah, my  
14 children. Now we cannot afford that. So please help  
15 us. Help us to live. I've dreamt the American  
16 dream, but the dream is now falling apart.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 EUGENE PARMOV: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
20 testimony. Um, our next panelist will be Md Kadir.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do we have this  
23 panelist? OK, um, if not, um, our next panelist will  
24 be...

25

2 UNIDENTIFIED: Ah, hi, good afternoon.

3 Ah.

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Chaim, hold on one moment  
5 please.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Is that me?

7 UNIDENTIFIED: We can hear from him at  
8 this time.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 KUBA RAMA: All right, can you hear me?

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

12 KUBA RAMA: Ah, good afternoon

13 [inaudible]. I'm an individual medallion owner and,

14 ah, COVID-19 survivor. Um, my medallion was once

15 American dream and now it is, ah, a big burden.

16 After the arrival of app companies, yellow business

17 went, ah, very badly. And now due to the COVID-19

18 it's completely destroyed. For me it's nightmare. I

19 lost my drivers and I'm suffering from, ah, chest

20 pain, shortness of breath, and poor sleep. I have

21 big loan, around \$500,000, and monthly mortgage is

22 \$3152. I discontinued my payment since March 2020

23 due to the, ah, low income. My car is parked in the

24 streets since March 2020. I, I request to be, I

25 request to lower my debt to, ah, \$125,000 and rest

1  
2 forgiveness. That [inaudible] interest for 20 years,  
3 ah, only then I can survive. Thank you very much for  
4 hearing me.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Could you  
6 say your name for the record please?

7 KUBA RAMA: Ah, my name is Kuba Rama. And  
8 I bought my medallion in 2008. [inaudible]

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you  
10 for your testimony.

11 KUBA RAMA: And, ah, for \$500,000. And I  
12 paid sales tax to the city, \$25,000. And I, I am  
13 [inaudible] off predatory loan.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 KUBA RAMA: At that time when I put my  
16 [inaudible] in I had only \$18,000 in my bank account.  
17 How come they give me loan for \$500,000? I borrow  
18 \$69,000, ah, about \$63,900 from my brother, and I  
19 used my credit cards, \$25,000. This way I got...

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time's expired.

21 KUBA RAMA: Now I feel like I'm a victim  
22 of predatory loan.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
24 testimony. Your time has expired.

25 KUBA RAMA: So this way...

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our next panelist  
3 will be Depan Das.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Depan?

6 DEPAN DAS: [inaudible]

7 UNIDENTIFIED: You're not coming through  
8 very clear.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We're having trouble  
10 understanding you. Your volume seems to be low.

11 OK, it seems like we may have lost him. At this time  
12 are there any other panelists that we have not called  
13 on, if you could use the Zoom raise hand function?

14 OK, um, it seems this may be the end of our list of  
15 public testimony, Chair Rodriguez.

16 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. With that,  
17 thank you, Elliot. Thank you, Evelyn [inaudible] who  
18 is my legislation director, and the whole team and  
19 all the participants, eh, for being visitor. And  
20 with that this hearing is adjourned.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And as reminder, you  
22 can submit testimony for the record if you were  
23 unable to speak today.

24 CHAIRPERSON RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.  
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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 November 15, 2020