

Taxi Workers Alliance of Pennsylvania

4134 Lancaster ave . Phila.Pa. 19104

(215) 279-0472

www.twapa.org

twapa1@yahoo.com

Philadelphia Parking Authority
Taxi and Limousine Division
c/o Mr. Charles Milstein
Assistant to the Director
2415 S. Swanson st.
Philadelphia, Pa.19148

Comments addressing the proposed amendment changes :

I. Elimination of Intra-Industry Disputes.

As the taxi regulator, it is the Philadelphia Parking Authority(PPA) responsibility to balance justice involving all parities, riding public, taxi drivers, medallion owners, radio dispatch companies, and others. If a customer is over charged, the PPA handles it. If a medallion owner doesn't pay his radio dues or assessment fees, the PPA handles it. However, where does a driver turns to when he needs justice. For example, when the driver owns the vehicle and is involved in an accident. The insurance company cuts the check to the medallion owner. In some cases the medallion owner keeps some if not all of the money even though it is the driver's vehicle. What happens when a driver takes someone to the airport and the customer chooses to use a credit card, but the credit card system is malfunctioning? The customer has a flight to catch and is running late. Who compensates the driver for his lost fuel and time. The only remedy for the driver seems to be at 34 S. 11th street, using a completely different justice system. The PPA has a moral obligation to protect the weakest entities of the industry. Currently, the drivers have no place for justice within the PPA's system when they are abused by passengers, medallion owners, dispatch companies, enforcement officers, and other that the regulators are suppose to be regulating.

II. Issuing Executive orders

While we agree that during emergency situations, emergency executive orders should be used to maintain stability in the industry, we feel that a permanent order needs to go through a democratic process. There should be a public hearing along with oral and written comments. The recommendations from the public hearing should be made public prior to the Board's voting on the issue so that the public may make a formal rebuttal. Finally, we believe that an expiration period should apply to all executive orders in order to see if they are still relevant. The PPA would more effective if it received data from the entire industry prior to issuing these types of orders, and the industry would be less frustrated and resistance to these radical changes.

III. Appearance Before the Authority

From the taxi driver perspective, money and time is key to whether they are able to pay their rent, children expenses, and even their lease agreements. Requiring drivers to pay collateral prior to receiving a hearing is an unnecessary hardship. The Authority can simple suspend a driving certificate if the fines are not paid. In New York for instance, drivers are not required to post any collateral. Nor are civilian drivers required to post anything for PPA's meter ticket hearings. Still further; in Traffic court, people are not required to post collateral.

Why can't a driver represent other drivers before the Hearing Officer? In the PPA's adjudication hearings for metered tickets, anyone can represent the motorist. In traffic court no lawyer is required. It's discouraging to drivers who face for example a \$150 ticket and feel that they are innocent and have no logical way of defending himself. It cost \$125.00 for a hearing and another \$200.00 for a lawyer that understands PPA's regulations. Anyone in his right mind would just pay the ticket. To add insult to injury, this same driver would have to pay \$146.00 to have an appeal heard at Commonwealth court. The PPA can simple have a driver representative meeting off the record with the judge or PPA's attorney to negotiate these tickets.

IV. Criminal Records

Does the Authority plan to penalize drivers who are currently working or does these changes take effect after being approved by the Board? On May 12th, 2008 Amos Tamam, president of Verifone was served with a lawsuit for molesting his daughter, Karren Miguel, over a 12 year period. If Mr. Tamam is convicted of these crimes of moral turpitude, how will these proposed amendments affect the GPS/Credit Card project? The Authority needs to be careful about excluding people who have paid their debt to society. There are not many incidents of customers being raped, robbed, assaulted, or murdered by taxidriviers. Usually it's the other way around. Still further, checking the immigration status of drivers, seeing whether they are still in school, and seeing whether they are paying their taxes have nothing to do with the public's interest. It goes way beyond the scope of being a regulator. It is my humble opinion that these amendments will greatly decrease the pool of drivers, costing a hardship for the riding public and medallion owners. To amend these regulations in order to weed out an activist driver is not in the public's interest.

V. Limousine Mileage

The Authority shouldn't be bias when dealing with the mileage issue. If concessions are being made to the Limo industry for economic hardship, then imagine how hard it is for lease taxi driver who is barely making ends meet. The eight(8) year limit for taxicabs legislated in Harrisburg is all that is needed to supplement the rigorous inspections by the PPA to guarantee the public's safety. Please do not be blatantly oppressive to the taxi industry.

VI. Reinspections of Taxicabs

We are asking that taxicabs not be put out of service unless it is a serious threat to the public. If a dome light is out or a trunk is dirty, drivers should be given 48 hours to comply. To take a whole days pay plus still paying a lease is too severe of a punishment for these drivers. The Authority should have more fines that are correctable than punitive. For instance, a \$750 fine

for a bad tire is cruel and unusual. A basic new tire costs about \$70 dollars. Why should a driver lose a week and a half wages for this tire. This particular fine should be about \$150, still painful enough for the driver to learn a lesson. If the fines imposed on drivers are to help cover the TLD's budget, then maybe the TLD should cut cost.

VII. Post Accident Inspections

There is no accident that cost less than \$500.00. The Authority is a little too rigid with this amendment. Serious damage to vehicles are around \$2,000.00 and above.

VIII. Driver Courtesy

This amendment should also be expanded to include procedures for taxi drivers to complain about discourtesy from dispatchers, medallion owners, passengers, and enforcement officers. Presently, drivers have no recourse for justice when taxi inspectors, dispatchers, passengers or medallion owners use profanity or other intimidating acts.

IX. Delay implementing this amendments

As the Authority is aware, there is a hearing scheduled in front of the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court to decide whether the Authority is in fact a State agency and should be following the State Document Law. We are asking that any new amendments, regulations, and fines be delayed until this matter is resolved.

Respectfully submitted ;

Ronald Blount – President
Taxi Workers Alliance of Pennsylvania