

Glad that's fixed

By Don McCurdy

There are stories about the new and improved rideshare and taxi loading procedure at LAX. Well, new and improved for somebody, but not for drivers or passengers.

Reports are that a formerly seven minute wait has now ballooned to an hour wait, and in some cases two. Taxicab loading has long been an afterthought in the minds of airport managers with gate space, schedules and security way up the priority list from ground transportation.

Gridlock may just bump ground transportation up the list since drivers are complaining that it can take fifteen to twenty minutes to get from the holding area to the loading area at the best of times. Over an hour in the worst of times.

LAX is reported to be expanding their pickup area in an attempt to get the problem under control. Good luck with that.

“AND I'm waiting for you to follow me.”

Or so goes *The Who's* ditty on one of their biggest albums. For former Uber CEO and co-founder, Travis Kalanick, it meant the end of the lockup period and his first chance to sell some of his stock in the company. To his credit he didn't sell it all, but he is reported to have taken in around \$547 million.

He never calls me so I only have the print reports to go on, but that is said to be only 21% of his holdings in the company with an estimated two billion dollars' worth left.

I'm not a broker, but seeing as how the price of Uber stock is headed in the general direction of the New York City medallion price it might just be wise to unload while the stock still has some value.

While New York Stock Exchange is seeing record highs Uber is seeing record lows. Maybe a rising tide doesn't raise all ships.

Why would that be important?

Perspective is important. From Uber and Lyft's perspective the new California “gig economy” law is meaningless because they claim they're not providing rides, but rather a platform for drivers to provide rides.

All of those independent contractor drivers are actually providing the rides, Uber and Lyft are merely a “platform” which they use to make the connection. Uh huh. That didn't raise a lot of caterwauling among media types until it was discovered that “freelance” writers could only sell thirty-five articles to the same outlet before they had to be considered employees.

Hey, wait a minute! From a driver's perspective being an employee would seem to be a positive thing, especially if you're full time. For a freelance journalist being an employee would be like, GASP, having a job.

Let's skip past all of the whiners and think about it from a politician's perspective. That half a million, depending on who you listen to, employees will now all be included in the unemployment tax rolls. Not only that, but their pay will be subject to payroll deductions for state income tax with less chances to under report income.

Yeah, the journalists weren't upset for the drivers, the drivers weren't upset for the journalists, but now everybody is upset. Well, except for those trying to reduce the state's budget deficit.

Taxi king can sing!

Reports from Albany say that the former “Taxi King,” Evgeny “Gene” Freidman copped a plea to tax fraud and turned state's evidence against Michael Cohen. He claimed he also got President Trump named as an unindicted co-conspirator.

Freidman is reported to have already paid a million dollars which is reported to have elicited comments from the judge that, given the state of his business, his ability to pay restitution was “spectacular.” That probably set off alarms somewhere.

While the prosecutors claim king Gene is exaggerating I wouldn't at all be surprised to see him negotiating with Adam Schiff to confess to congress that he was the bag man between Putin and Trump. After all, he is a native of Russia.

Well, that's some of it.

TLC Magazine recently received an email from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health regarding taxicab driver safety. Some are doable, others require regulatory assistance and still others are not as easy as they sound.

One of my favorites, that would require regulatory assistance, would be the ability to be a cashless cab. While limiting cash on hand is the stated safety item, many jurisdictions require drivers to accept cash.

Almost everyone has a card of some kind that they can use, but most drivers don't want to accept cards. The reasons are twofold:

- one is that the credit card requires a percentage to the processing company, and
- the other is that drivers have no desire for anyone to know how much money they make.

Some companies and/or jurisdictions require drivers to accept credit cards while charging them higher than necessary fees to process the cards. That's great as a revenue stream, but don't claim your concern is driver safety.

One of the attractions for Uber, from a driver perspective, is that no cash changes hands. The driver knows that they're getting paid. Fare jumpers, dead beats and robbers are minimized.

Currently, I know of no jurisdiction that allows a company to be cashless, or a driver to be cashless, or a taxicab to be cashless after 9 pm.

There are other recommendations on the list. If you wish to see them all visit:

[cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2020-100/pdfs/2020-100.pdf?id=10.26616/NIOSH PUB2020100](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2020-100/pdfs/2020-100.pdf?id=10.26616/NIOSH PUB2020100)

or click [here](#) to read, *How to Prevent Robbery and Violence When Driving a Taxi*

For those of you setting the rules for taxicabs here is an opportunity to think outside the box.

This just in.

A recent study in Beijing touted the idea that taxicab drivers could make more money by sorting their trips and only taking longer trips. That is probably true, however, your service would be terrible.

By instituting full GPS dispatch at a big city taxicab company I made some interesting observations. The number one thing that I discovered was that the more information given the driver prior to accepting a dispatched trip the higher the likelihood the trip offer would be rejected.

Some jurisdictions around the world swear by destinations being given in the trip offer which leads to historically poor service.

Under a zone dispatch system, with the zone number being the only information provided, our company would routinely have over 100 trips in any given afternoon not assigned to a taxicab. After removing the zone number from the offer and switching to GPS dispatch the number of unmatched trips dropped to single digits.

Moreover, the number of customer callbacks and driver no loads dropped off dramatically. Moral of the story? Make it binary, you either want a trip or you don't, no other information. If you want to compete with the Ubers and Lyfts of this world poor service is not the answer.

Johnny is on the spot!

To help refresh your memory Johnny Cab was the autonomous taxicab in the Arnold Schwarzenegger film Total Recall. Well, Waymo is reported to have put their autonomous taxicab on the street without the "safety driver." In what is reported to be a limited roll out, selected customers have been given the opportunity to be the first to utilize Waymo's fully automated taxicab.

Various scenarios were discussed with Waymo offering its technology to a vehicle manufacturer for shared ride services. Riders are reported to have to sign a non-disclosure agreement which makes sense. Waymo is also reported to be testing the system with Peterbilt trucks.

The uncertainty of regulation appears to be the only unknown at this point in the story. Regulators have often instituted misguided regulations they consider necessary in the interest of safety.

It most certainly would be a study of interest to compare the number of collisions of autonomous vehicles with human operated vehicles. The "to the airport and step on it" days appear to be winding down.

Déjà vu all over again.

In March of 1988 I was hired by the taxicab company I drove for to become the Communications Manager. Basically, I oversaw the department that dispatched trips to taxicab drivers and answered the telephone.

It didn't seem that complicated at first look, but it turned out that the staff that was currently employed didn't like the idea of an outsider coming in with new ideas about how things should be run.

I was low key at first and studied the operation as it was and considered ways to improve efficiency. What I discovered was that the company had a huge technological advantage it did not use. It had not only become complacent in the way it had been doing business but was corrupt. The favoritism shown to a small group of drivers, some with family in the department, was pervasive and obvious.

Having been in the industry for a number of years, I knew a few of the staff but had no idea of the level of animosity felt by the rest. To make matters worse, my every decision was second guessed by the corporate headquarters as soon as the "spies" in my department notified their friends at corporate.

One employee went so far as to sabotage the computer system which would have helped the company to be more effective if she hadn't bragged about it to a driver I knew. All that aside, I gradually replaced the staff that couldn't get with the program and the company began to perform at a more efficient and profitable level.

I've relived all of that to say this: this is exactly what Donald Trump is dealing with in Washington DC. The staff, the bureaucracy, doesn't like the way he's changing things. Corporate, the congress, is attempting to micromanage the entire affair.

He is an outsider, hired by the company, American voters, to fix the problems that the company sees as important. The staff has availed themselves of every opportunity to sabotage him, with all manner of fake news and outright lies.

Essentially, he is dealing with the same problems of intransigent staff whining about the way we've always done it except on a much grander scale.

I wish you all the best President Trump, please don't give up. The elite bureaucracy has gotten us into a \$20 trillion dollar hole. If you can simply turn the ship of state in a positive direction you will easily be the best president of my lifetime.

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