

The Austin Taxi Confidential

Volume 1, Issue 2

The Official Newsletter of the Taxi Drivers Association of Austin

October 2010

Cancelled Contracts? We Say "NO WAY!"

Taxi Cab Task Force passes the buck!

By: Ann Darbonne
Lone Star Cab 53

Resolution 60 brought forth many issues to be looked at. Few issues were resolved satisfactorily, but there is one big issue that remains totally unresolved. It is a "Cancellation Appeals Process for Drivers". The "Taxi Task Force" recommended that "the city should not become involved" in arbitration between the cab companies and the drivers, this is **UNACCEPTABLE!**

The TDAA has put together an Appeal Process Proposal for City Council. We will not sit idly by while the cab companies continue to **abuse** and **exploit** the drivers with no regard to the damage they are causing in people's lives. If the cab company has its operating authority revoked, suspended, or denied, - there is an "Appeal Process" available to them. If the City of Austin revokes, suspends, or denies a driver's chauffeur permit - there is an "Appeal Process" available to them, and if a driver has their privileges revoked, suspended, or denied at ABIA - there is an "Appeal Process" available to them.

What makes the cab companies special? Why are they beyond reproach? Who are they to be given the authority to ruin people's lives without so much as one question allowed to be asked? Why are they above the law?

Well we say they are NOT "*special, or beyond reproach, or above the law*". We will not accept this decision and go quietly away with our tails tucked between our legs like the cab drivers of old who had no choice. We will fight for our rights as human beings, to be treated with **Dignity** and **Respect**. We will not allow the cab companies to use us and then throw us away like yesterdays trash without so much as a second thought.

WE WILL FIGHT!!!, but we need your support. - become a member of the Taxi Driver Association of Austin (TDAA) today. Membership dues are only \$50 per year (that is only 14 cents a day). Help us help you. If you have had your contract cancelled unfairly and are willing to stand up for your rights, come to us - fill out the complaint form and let's get started down the road to "fair treatment" and "equal rights".

Want to Join the TDAA?

Do you want to be a member? There are several ways you can join:

- Email info@austintaxidriver.org and ask for a membership application
- Send a letter of inquiry to: Taxi Drivers Association of Austin, PO Box 29734, Austin, Texas 78755
- Ask one of the Board members of the TDAA for an application directly.

Joining is quick and easy. Membership lists are not shared with the franchises, and participation can be limited to what each individual feels comfortable with. What is important is that we all stand together and support the cause in any way we can!

DRIVE SAFELY!

You Win Some, You Lose Some!

In Response to the "City Manager's Report on Taxicab Issues:"

By: David W. Kelley
Austin Cab 85

On August 10th the City of Austin Transportation Department along with the City of Austin mediator, Larry Schooler, met with the officers of the TDAA, at city hall and presented their report on the resolution 60 meetings. At best, the content of this report was mildly disappointing. Although the Transportation Department made several recommendations that were good for drivers, many of the issues brought up at the meetings were either sidestepped with solutions that were never discussed at the meetings, or worse yet, swept under the carpet and ignored completely.

The Good News is...

The best part of the report was the decision of the Transportation Department to recommend the continued use of the meter, and not a flat rate, for airport trips to and from the central business district and the University of Texas. For those of you who were not at the meeting when this was discussed, all three franchises withdrew their support for the financially crippling flat rate after being made aware of the intense opposition to it by the TDAA and drivers in general. The TDAA also presented a comprehensive compilation of actual fares that demonstrated the huge loss of revenue to drivers that would have resulted from instituting a flat rate, or maximum rate, on these trips.

The addition of new cab stands in the warehouse district and other entertainment areas represent another plus for drivers as well as a recommendation that alternating day access at the airport is not needed. Unfortunately, the Transportation Department kept the alternating day access at the airport as an option for the future. The Legacy Permit, as proposed by the TDAA, although not adopted was also kept on the table as an option for the future pending further study.

Lastly, but not leastly, one of the most important results to come out of the resolution 60 meetings is a recommended ordinance goal to create performance measures that better align economic interests of both drivers and franchises.

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I WANT YOU
TO JOIN THE TDAA

The Bad News Is...

As mentioned earlier, several issues discussed at the resolution 60 meetings, were met with, what the transportation department called solutions, but offer little help to the plight of City of Austin taxi drivers!

The issue of arbitrary termination of drivers, as outlined in the lead article of this issue remains unaddressed. In addition to this indignation, the Transportation Department report offers up a last minute plan, never discussed at any of the meetings, of adding either a nickel, or a dime, to the drop, that will in some way compensate drivers forced from service by inconsiderate customers who (and I searched for a polite term for this) toss their cookies. As we all know this is a tipping profession and a miniscule payment added to the drop merely translates into a lessening of the tip by that amount, since most customers round off tips to the nearest dollar. In addition, it is irresponsible to charge all customers for the actions of a few. The TDAA proposed plan of a cleanup fee, up to \$250 to be paid by the perpetrator of the abomination, is listed as an option, but not recommended. Another plan, even more preposterous, proposed by the department, calls for adding a quarter to the drop, once again money lost on a smaller tip, only now the driver owes this quarter to the franchises every time he/she turns on the meter. This plan not only, once again, attempts to charge everyone to pay for the few, it would create an additional beaurocracy for the franchises. Just the excuse they will need to say they need to raise the fees to drivers.

Finally, in answer to our request to have a minimum fare, of \$20, out of the airport, since the elimination of the short trip, (a system that offered a fair solution to the economic hardships caused by getting a trip to the group of hotels located at Riverside and Ben White), the Transportation department is recommending a minimum of \$11.65, an amount that is approximately equal to the standard fare to this nearby location. A briefing on this report was presented to the city council on September 30th.

TDAA Wins "Best of Austin" Award...



From left to right: TDAA officers Ann Darbonne & Dave Kelley, enjoy a cocktail; the food line was long but worth it; & the awards booth.



On September 16th, the TDAA was honored to receive a Best of Austin award at the 21st annual award party. This gala event was attended by representatives of all the award winners and featured music, dancing, food and beverages as provided by the award winners themselves. The TDAA won a critics pick award for best "Short-Haul Solidarity". Thank you, to all our members and Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, who made this award possible.



RAFFLE!!

Drawing Oct. 20th, to enter, see any TDAA Board Member

Cheryl's Corner Offers Welcome Refreshments!

Kudos goes out to Cheryl Jones, who drives Austin Cab 59. For the past several months, on her own initiative, she has kept a fresh supply, of an assortment of refreshments, available to drivers working at the airport. A variety, of both hot and cold beverages, can be enjoyed by drivers while waiting in the long lines at the airport staging area. Miss Jones has the approval of the airport management, and even provides sugar free choices for drivers that are diabetic or simply enjoy watching their calorie intake. Who doesn't enjoy a hot chocolate, coffee, or tea, when it's cold or a nice ice cold drink when it's cold? And by the way, she does this by accepting donations only, so if you have a beverage while waiting in the staging area, don't forget, put a buck in the box!



Cheryl checks her inventory. She makes sure there is always a good supply of drinks, cups, spoons and condiments for drivers at the airport.

TDAA Partners With the Austin Interfaith Alliance

On Thursday, September 30th, the TDAA board of directors, voted unanimously, by a vote of 5-0, to partnership up with the Austin Interfaith Alliance. This group is a long standing political group here in Austin and will be a great partner in the fight for Taxi Driver rights.

Answer to Meet Your Fellow Hack

The answer to last issues article titled "Meet Your Fellow Hack" is Nelson Saga, he drives Austin Cab 17. Nelson will be in the recording studio in February and will perform an acoustic show at "Esquina Tango", at 211 Pedernales Street, on December 5th, from 6-8 pm.



Nelson relaxes at the airport staging area. You can often find him here; just follow your ear to the salsa music!

TDAA Officers Are:

Ann Darbonne.....President
 Anna Fendlason.....Vice-President
 Chris Obioma.....Treasurer
 David W. Kelley.....Financial Secretary

DRIVE SAFELY!