

UTCC VOICE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED TAXIDRIVERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

FINALLY—A SEAT AT THE TABLE!

UTCC'S CAMPAIGN FOR CABDRIVER INCOME IMPROVEMENT

BY PETER ALI ENGER

THE ORIGIN OF THE PLAN CAME OUT OF A meeting with Ald. Brendan Reilly earlier this year in February. He told us it is hard to sell a “fare increase” to the City Council and to the citizens of Chicago. No one likes to hear that things will cost more. Could we call it something else?

The UTCC came away with a plan to figure out multiple ways to increase drivers’ income without focusing only on a fare increase on the meter. We had meetings, we brainstormed, we talked to many drivers. And we came up with our 10 points.

Some of these were designed to cut our costs. Some of them increased our income in small ways. Some of them were designed to spark further consultation and negotiations with the City authorities. And of course, we did include that meter increase we’ve been asking for for seven years. But mainly, we cabdrivers wanted to get that “seat at the table” with the city that we need—to negotiate and decide *with* the city when they are making changes to our working conditions and our livelihood. This is the main reason that the UTCC was created. To have a voice and a vote for the hard-working, majority immigrant cabdriver workers in Chicago.

By July we were ready. We had signed up with the New York and National Taxi Worker’s Alliance to affiliate with the National Taxi Work-



Commissioner Maria Guerra Lapacek (middle on right) meets with the UTCC delegation

ers Alliance (NTWA—the national taxi union) in April, and we were in the middle of our membership drive—to gain 1200 new dues-paying members of the UTCC to qualify for national membership and affiliate with the NTWA and AFL-CIO. We wanted to show the drivers what we could do.

We got a meeting with Commissioner Maria Guerra Lapacek of the Dept. of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection in August. In this meeting we laid out our plan. We sent them the plan beforehand, so they would be prepared to discuss it in detail. It is

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THE ANTI UBER STRUGGLE GOES GLOBAL

NTWA (AFL-CIO) ATTENDS ITF STRATEGY MEET IN BRUSSELS

BY BIJU MATHEW, NTWA

EUROPE SEEMS DETERMINED TO STOP THE taxi-bandit corporation Uber from destroying the lives of taxi drivers and the taxi industry as a whole. In France lawmakers passed creative new legislation that blocks the entry of all UberX equivalents into the taxi market. In Germany, a lower court stopped UberX in its tracks and two appeals later UberX has not managed to make a re-entry. In Belgium lawmakers are getting ready to put a stop to ‘rideshare’ and in London and Madrid taxi drivers continue to bring their respective cities to a halt to increase the pressure on legislators. An “International day of Action” called by

the International Transportation Federation (ITF) produced large driver mobilizations in cities as far flung as Manila and Brussels, Chennai and San Francisco on October 7 2014.

Earlier a strategy convention organized by the ITF to develop and coordinate a global anti-UberX strategy was held in Brussels from September 15th to the 17th. Ronald Blount, VP of NTWA and the President of the Taxi Workers Alliance of PA was the sole delegate from the US. “Uber is a global firm and our strategies against it must necessarily be global” he said on his return

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A TIMELINE OF UTCC HISTORY

JANUARY 2008

» UTCC formed

MAY 2008

- » UTCC begins Violence against Cabdrivers awareness campaign—takes on issue of driver Stanley Shen to have charges against his attacker upgraded to a felony
- » UTCC presents Power Point at City Hall for fare increase
- » UTCC creates an Incident Report form to collect reports from drivers

JUNE 2008

» UTCC creates Driver Safety Placards to be installed in Chicago taxis.

JULY 2008

» UTCC signs the “Declaration of Unity and Solidarity” with New York Taxi Workers Alliance

 AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE, COMMUNITY ALLY

COMMON SENSE CORNER

BY FAYEZ KHOZINDAR

A VOTELESS DRIVER IS HOPELESS DRIVER

IN THIS ERA, WHEN POWER AND PRESTIGE AND influence go hand in hand to help reach our ultimate goals and advancing our campaigns, it is necessary for us as citizens of the world to act accordingly and claim our rights as citizens and vote.

When the leadership of your Union realized the hardship our drivers are facing as a result of the invasion of Ride Share Transportation into Chicago, it was clear that we have to reach out to the decision makers to submit to them the UTCC ten point plan for cabdriver income improvement.

During our meeting with the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), the Commissioner and her team received our ideas to reform the taxicab industry with ut-

most appreciation, and agreed to adopt six out of ten of our ideas to improve our drivers' income during this hardship they are facing.

Last February, we urged the drivers to register to vote to cast their vote when the fare increase was on the ballot. Today, we are urging you again to do the same and exercise your duty as a citizen of this country and make sure that you will be able to vote during this coming election whether it will be in November for the State and Federal elections, or in March for the mayoral election.

Voting is the most important element of citizenship and an indicator of your existence during which you strive for justice and equality, and that will not occur unless there is hope. Hence the title—a voteless driver is hopeless driver. ■

Introducing Ashley Debilzen, UTCC's newest organizer!

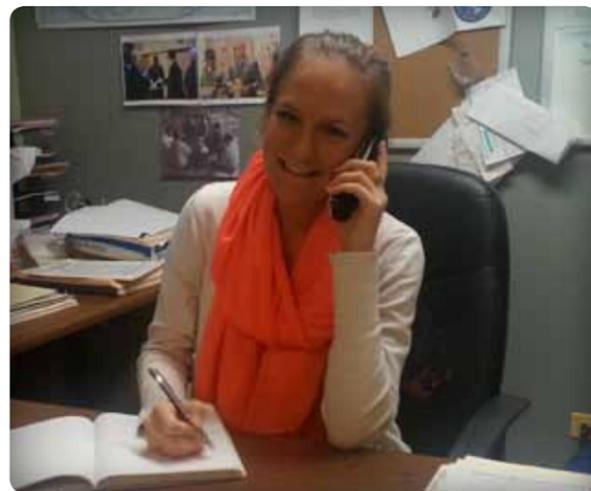
Hello dear UTCC members, supporters, drivers, readers, and friends. I am pleased to introduce myself as UTCC's newest organizer and intern for the 2014-2015 academic year. My name is Ashley Debilzen and I am a second-year graduate student, studying Social Work and International Social Welfare at the University of Chicago, and I will be working with UTCC until mid-June when I graduate.

I am from Minnesota, where I grew up on a small farm with cattle, chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, and turkeys—I love animals! Coming to Chicago two years ago was quite a change for me, but I am adjusting nicely now.

I am studying Social Work and International Social Welfare because I am very interested in international affairs and I believe that all people, no matter where they come from, what culture they are a part of, or what language they speak deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. During the past few years I have spent time in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, where I have learned how social programs are administered in those parts of the world. I am excited to be back in the US and am looking forward to learning more about social work in Chicago.

In the short time I have been with UTCC I have seen the determination of the drivers and UTCC to organize and advocate for more just treatment of taxi drivers in Chicago. Their dedication is inspiring and contagious and I believe that, if we all work together, we will continue to address the real issues on the streets of Chicago and will indeed reach our goal of becoming affiliated with the National Taxi Worker's Alliance and AFL-CIO.

Over the past six years the UTCC has worked on



behalf of drivers to publicize our low-income status, advocate for "living wage" fare increases, end lease overcharges, increase the safety of drivers, defeat fabricated traffic tickets, remove parking restrictions for taxis overnight in four northside wards, and protect the overall well-being of drivers. As of March of 2014, UTCC has won \$27,000 in settlements on lease overcharge cases. The United Taxidriver Community Council's successes are real and important. I urge drivers to inform fellow drivers, friends, and family to join UTCC in its quest to improve the lives of Chicago taxi drivers.

As an organization that is "by the drivers, for the drivers," we are ready and willing to discuss drivers' daily experiences on the streets of Chicago and to take action to address any injustices you face. I am happy to talk with drivers about any questions, concerns, or ideas you have and I encourage drivers to

UTCC
UNITED TAXIDRIVERS
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

OUR VISION

To organize and unify all licensed chauffeurs in the Chicago area, so we can collectively overcome oppression and achieve economic and social justice.

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We welcome your contributions feedback and letters!

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contact me at utccchicago@gmail.com. I also welcome drivers to stop by our office at 2040 N. Milwaukee. Our hours currently are Monday from 1-7 pm, and Tuesday and Wednesday from 1-5 pm. Our phone number is (773) 342-8822.

I want to thank Fayez, Chairman of UTCC; Peter, lead organizer and Secretary/Treasurer of UTCC; AFSC; and the drivers for this opportunity. I look forward to working with you all and am excited about what this year will bring! ■

UTCC TIMELINE (cont'd)

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2008

- » Proposes centralized dispatch system be created to provide full fleet service to Chicago citizens
- » In meetings with Deputy Commissioner of Consumer Protection, UTCC proposes a set of reforms: Standard Lease Form, Driver's Bill of Rights, a biennial review by an independent analyst of the cost of doing business as a cabdriver, and a robust enforcement of lease and other violations of the companies

NOVEMBER 2008

- » UTCC begins first Membership Drive
- » UTCC application for 501-C3 Not-For-Profit status accepted by federal government

DECEMBER 2008

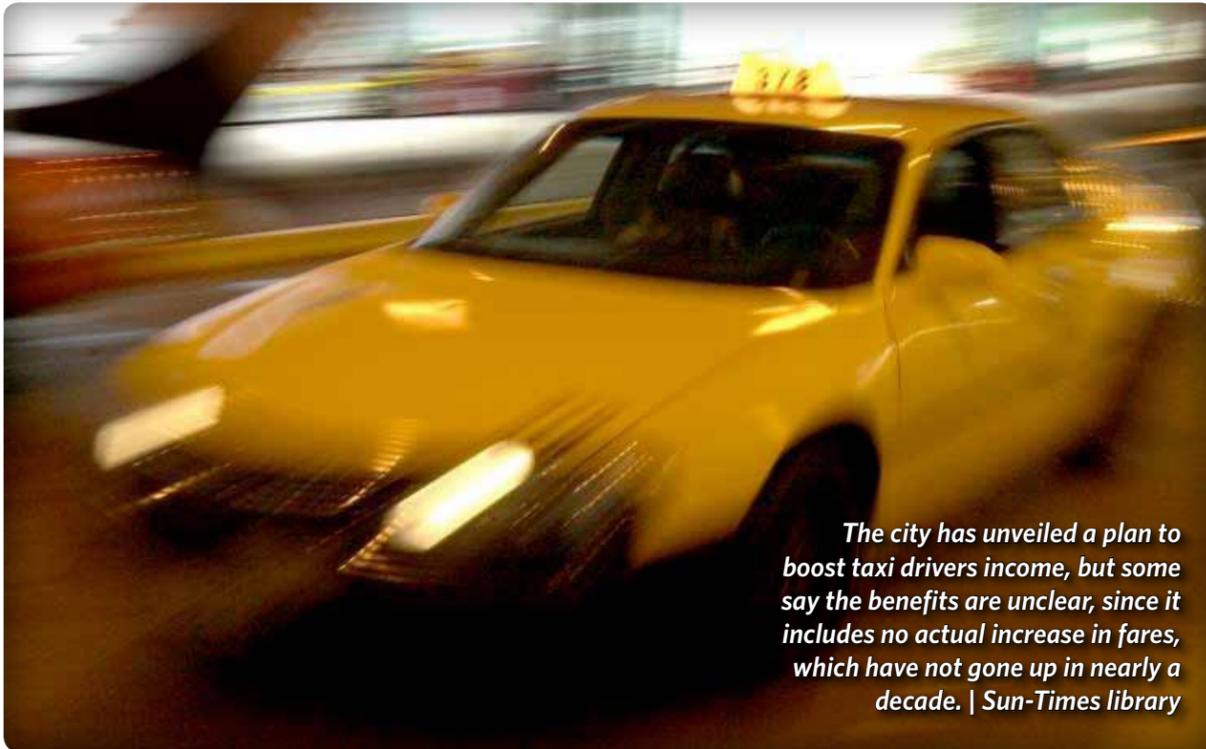
- » UTCC calls for a 16% fare increase; lease rate freeze and enforcement of lawful leasing practices; restoration of meter and a half to Skokie, Burbank, and Elk Grove Village; and a moratorium on issuing new medallions.

APRIL 2009

- » Driver Stanly Shen's attacker pleaded guilty and was found guilty of assaulting Shen.
- » UTCC worked with O'Hare's Office of Aviation to protect drivers from receiving parking tickets in O'Hare's parking lot while they prayed in the shelter.

City plan bolsters cabdriver income — without raising fares

BY FRAN SPIELMAN, REPRINTED FROM THE CHICAGO SUN-TIMES



The city has unveiled a plan to boost taxi drivers income, but some say the benefits are unclear, since it includes no actual increase in fares, which have not gone up in nearly a decade. | Sun-Times library

CHICAGO CABDRIVERS DESPERATELY NEED a fare increase, but they'll have to wait until after the election to get it, an influential alderman said Tuesday, after Mayor Rahm Emanuel proposed bolstering driver income without raising fares.

Instead of raising Chicago cab fares that rank No. 32 among big cities, Emanuel wants to create a centralized dispatch system using a "universal taxi smartphone application" akin to ride-sharing.

He also wants to cut lease rates, fines and credit

card transaction fees that gobble up driver income.

"That still don't address the issue of giving them the increase that they need," said Ald. Emma Mitts (37th), chairman of the City Council's Committee on License and Consumer Protection. "They've been crying for years for an increase. I would like to see us get them that increase. ... It will come-after the election. We'll get there."

Transportation Committee Chairman Anthony Beale (9th) said the mayor's plan could stop the bleeding caused by ride-sharing — and put big

money back into the pockets of struggling cabdrivers — without impacting hard-pressed consumers.

"We will continue to monitor this and, if it's not enough, we will look to increase fares," Beale said. He added, "I'm not saying anything about after the election."

Two months ago, the United Taxidriers Community Council now trying to unionize cabdrivers proposed a 10-point plan that includes raising mileage and waiting times by 25 percent.

Under that plan, the cost of entering a cab would have remained at \$3.25. But the charge-per-mile would have gone up from \$1.80 to \$2.40, while the waiting time would go to 20 cents for every 24 seconds, instead of every 36 seconds.

Chicago's \$13.80 fare for a 5-mile ride with five minutes of waiting time currently ranks No. 32 among the nation's largest cities. The proposed change would have pushed Chicago into the top 10.

On Tuesday, Emanuel ignored those demands but embraced many of the group's other ideas to ease the financial squeeze on cabbies in a heated competition with ride-sharing companies.

They include:

- Creating a citywide dispatch system that would require all cabs to carry a new app modeled after the one pioneered by Uber and Lyft. A central dispatch system that includes all 7,000 Chicago cabs — instead of just a few hundred — will make cabs "more competitive" with ride-sharing and improve the quality of service to underserved neighborhoods, said Business Affairs and

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City set to adopt five of UTCC's Proposed Reforms

Will take bids for "Universal Dispatch App"

BY CHRIS CHANDLER

THE CITY WILL PRESENT A SET OF SIX reforms to aid cabdrivers at the next city council meeting, including plans for a city-wide Central Dispatch system with Apps for all drivers, a system long advocated by the United Taxidriers Community Council.

Altogether 5 items in the UTCC's ten-point plan presented to the city earlier this month have been incorporated in the city's proposed ordinance. These include a reduction in lease rates for fuel efficient cabs after one year on the road that can save cab drivers thousands of dollars. There's also a reduction in maximum fines from \$1,000 to \$400, and a task force to be created to discuss reforms at the Administrative Hearing office at 400 West Superior, now called a "kangaroo court" by drivers,

"The most important reform is to establish

that central dispatch system," said Peter Ali Enger, UTCC Secretary. He noted that with a new city wide app system, cabs would be able to give better service to underserved areas, as well as to the disabled. It will also help in competition with rideshare companies, he said. The UTCC has been proposing the idea to city officials for several years.

"We appreciate the work that Commissioner Maria Guerra Lapacek has done in developing these reforms," said UTCC chairman Fayez Khozinder. "They are a step in the right direction, and will put more money in the pockets of hard working cabdrivers. But we've still got a ways to go."

Other of the city's proposed reforms include extending to an hour from 40 minutes the time allowed from O'Hare for a ride to be considered a "short trip", and reducing the percentage paid by

drivers for credit cards from 5% to 3%.

Khozindar praised city officials for the proposed reforms, but noted the next big battle with the city may come if and when the commissioner proposes rules to allow ride share companies such as UberX to work the airports. The mayor's ride share ordinance authorized the commissioner to propose such rules.

The reforms that were not included in this reform package include any reforms that would add costs to the riding public. These include increases in charges for mileage and wait time on the meter, an extra \$0.50 cents for each passenger over the first two, and removal of the straight meter rates to the suburbs. The UTCC will continue to seek other avenues to achieve these reforms that would add revenue to our hard-working Chicago cabdrivers. ■

JUNE 2009

- » UTCC and Aldermen in 'red zones' sign "Not in My Ward" pledge to address violence against drivers and demand installation of safety placards in Chicago cabs.
- » Driver Walid Ziada's attacker was found guilty of battery on June 18, 2009.
- » UTCC opened its new office at 2040 N Milwaukee Ave.

WINTER 2010-11

- » Campaign to overturn "parking while sleeping" tickets in 50th, 49th, and 46th Ward kicks off—ultimately successful by end of 2011

SPRING 2011

- » New Rate Sheet includes Drivers' Safety notice proposed by UTCC
- » UTCC installs bulletin board at O'Hare Staging Area for drivers' to use—negotiated with Airport authorities
- » UTCC installs bulletin boards at 9 restaurants and 2 garages

MAY 2011

- » UTCC organized the International Cultural Day for drivers on September 4, 2011 in Warren Park

GET INVOLVED IN THE STRUGGLE!

Join the fight for rights, respect and human dignity!

Call UTCC Today!
773-342-8822

UTCC Income Campaign

Continued from Page 1

the professional way that UTCC always conducts itself, and they expressed their appreciation. In a one-hour discussion, they took many notes, and seemed very interested and supportive. The Taxi Industry in Chicago was in chaos and disarray. Everybody knows it. Drivers were leaving for rideshare companies, medallion prices were falling, everybody was suing everyone else, and the industry needed some help. And UTCC has the answers. We wanted to start with improving taxi drivers' income to bring them back into the taxi industry.

In the meantime, Commissioner Lapacek had been meeting with drivers in a Town Hall meeting, and had visited the airports to talk to drivers in the field to hear their concerns. UTCC organizers ran into her at Midway on Sept. 16, and she told us "you're going to like what we've come up with". Things were looking up, and we were beginning to feel hopeful.

After one month, the Commissioners office was ready for a follow-up meeting to discuss the city's decisions. There were 15 of us in our meeting with her on Sept. 25.

Although nothing is set in stone yet, we got positive responses to four of our points, two points are still being researched, and the Commissioner decided that the four points that increased costs to our passengers would not be approved "at this time" So we didn't get everything we wanted. But we will still be working with the Aldermen to introduce legislation for those final points.

The main point we won was a decrease in the

UTCC's 10 Point Plan

1. Create, legislate and implement a "Chicago City App to outcompete with rideshares, provide better service (Centralized Dispatch)
2. Remove straight meter rates to collar suburbs of Chicago (all suburbs would be meter-and-a-half)
3. Charge \$4 only on departure from Airports
4. Increase short trips to one hour
5. Increase "extra passenger" charge to \$1 per extra passenger (excluding 12 and under, and over 65 years of age)
6. Decrease lease cap 20% for cars after first year in use
7. Reduce maximum fines at 400 W. Superior
8. Implement mandatory Registered Mail postal delivery for Complaints
9. Increase mileage rate to \$0.20 per 1/12 mile
10. Increase wait time to \$0.20 per 24 seconds

lease cap after the first model year of use as a taxicab. In addition, we have been promised to be included on two Task Forces that are working on reforming the taxi industry. We finally got our "seat at the table" we have been working on for seven years now!

If you are a taxi driver, PLEASE support YOUR Union, today! PAY YOUR DUES, JOIN YOUR TAXI UNION! DRIVER POWER IS UNION POWER! ■

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR COMMISSIONER'S LETTER TO UTCC

Global Anti Uber Struggle

Continued from Page 1

to Philadelphia. "The messaging has to be clear and direct. Not only is it forcing a race to the bottom among hard working drivers by undercutting the taxi meter, UberX and similar services constantly endanger their passengers. How many people must die, how many must get hurt, how many should be harassed before legislators realize that taxis must necessarily be a regulated service to ensure that both drivers and passengers are protected?" he asked.

In Philadelphia, Blount and his comrades in TWAPA have successfully blocked UberX from entering the city. Along with New York, New Orleans and Portland, Philly is among the handful of US cities to have held UberX at bay this far. The NTWA is in touch with driver unions from across the US to share and build on the strategies developed in the Brussels meeting. "US taxi driver organizations must work towards better coordination of their campaigns against Uber" Blount said. "NTWA is well positioned to build this US wide strategy and cities such as Chicago and Atlanta that are seeing intense UberX activity must be part of the national taxi drivers movement," he added.



Left to right: Mick Hildreth—Brighton UK, Ron Blount—Philadelphia, Jon Smith—Liverpool UK, Harry Ghadban—Ottawa CA, Mac Urata—ITF host.

In Europe a new demand to examine Uber's tax evasion strategies also gained momentum. Its registered in Amsterdam and like many other mega corporations does so only to evade taxes in all the countries that should be paid. While the battle heats up across three continents, the news is not all good on the homefront. In Chicago (and Illinois) the Governor vetoed a bill that would have constrained UberX and Lyft. In San Francisco, the Airport has announced its intent to let

in TNCs on a pilot program. In Austin the same threat hangs in the air.

"Chicago drivers must unite behind UTCC and NTWA if they want to win the fight against Uber. We cannot be isolated from other driver organizations across the US and hope to win," said veteran Nigerian driver Alexander Ecko. "And win we must, its our livelihood" he concluded. Unite, driver brothers and sisters! Lets build our union and lets build a national taxi movement!! ■

UTCC TIMELINE (cont'd)

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2011

- » National Taxi Workers (NTWA) signs charter with AFL-CIO to unionize taxi drivers throughout the US.
- » UTCC hosted a 'Health Fair' at O'Hare on January 14, 2012.

MAY 2012

- » UTCC led driver rally and held a press conference at City Hall to call for a moratorium on lease cap increases.
- » UTCC leads "Decrease The Lease" demonstrations at numerous garages
- » UTCC hosted more 'Health Fairs' at O'Hare on May 12, 2012 and June 16, 2012.

JUNE 2012

- » UTCC picketed City Hall on June 27, 2012 to demand a hearing on a fare increase.

JULY 2012

- » In response to lease cap increases, UTCC organized a strike from 6:00AM to 11:00am on Monday, July 2, 2012 and Monday, July 9, 2012
- » On July 2, 2012, Chairman Faye Khazindar was arrested at O'Hare for trespassing. Khazindar was securing the airport to ensure a successful strike that resulted in a fare increase hearing with the transportation committee.
- » UTCC's standardized lease proposal is implemented. Also Driver's Bill of Rights.



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
CITY OF CHICAGO

September 24, 2014

Peter Ali Enger
UTCC United Taxi Drivers Community Council
2040 N. Milwaukee, Chicago IL 60647

Dear Peter,

Thank you for meeting with us regarding your 10 point comprehensive Income Improvement Plan. We found your recommendations extremely thoughtful and thorough and our conversations have been informative and constructive. During our last meeting, we outlined the items from your 10-point plan that we are prepared to make changes on. We also discussed those items that we did not feel warranted immediate changes.

As I mentioned, in addition to meeting with your group, we have met with another group representing taxi drivers as well as talking and listening to individual taxi drivers. Based on these conversations, we have created a set of reforms that we believe will help increase the incomes of our City's taxi drivers without adding any additional costs to the customers, thereby keeping the taxi industry competitive.

We wanted to follow-up in writing to detail these reforms. We are preparing to introduce an ordinance, the Taxi Driver Fairness Reforms of 2014, to City Council at the next meeting, October 8th. We ask that you work with us to obtain City Council approval for this important legislation.

1) Provide relief for drivers on lease rates and ad revenue sharing

The ordinance will bring down the lease rate cap for vehicles after the 1st model year. We firmly stand behind our decision in the 2012 reforms that required a greener, more accessible taxi fleet. Roughly 5,000 gas guzzlers have been replaced with alternative fuel vehicles since the reforms, bringing the percentage of alternative fuel taxi vehicles in Chicago to 80% up from 11% in 2011. However, with much of the up-front capital investment required to comply with the reforms behind the industry, the City has an opportunity to revisit lease rates to give cab drivers some relief.

Further, the recent study we commissioned allowed us to see that the lease rates were an overwhelming part of a cab drivers expenses, at 40%. The goal is to drop the lease caps by 10-

LETTER CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

The UTCC Legal Benefits Plan

THE UTCC HAS LONG KNOWN THAT THE “kangaroo court” at 400 W. Superior is one of the worst pains and greatest injustices about driving a cab in Chicago. We have too many regulations, too many eager officers writing unfair and unjust tickets, too many passengers who are willing to use the complaint system to retaliate against drivers, and a lack of adequate hearings, or constitutionally guaranteed due process for the accused, which is us. And besides, the fines are too high.

The UTCC will be working on a Task Force being created by the Commissioner and the Dept. of BACP to address these issues. But meanwhile, we in the UTCC have a legal benefits plan which is available to our members, and we want to explain it to everyone once again, to eliminate confusion.

Our membership dues are \$120 per year. Out of this payment, drivers are entitled to have a lawyer assist them with tickets at 400 W. Superior. The lawyer normally charges \$25-40 per ticket to try to get the best deal. For a hearing, which requires research, testimony, interviews, a defense strategy, and preparing an oral argument, a lawyer will normally charge \$150 to \$250, depending on the case.

A UTCC member only has to pay a \$10 co-pay for up to three (3) tickets per year for a lawyer to negotiate the best deal. For a hearing, a member gets a \$60 discount on the case.

Many drivers can negotiate a deal on their own, and choose not to use our legal plan. That is their choice. For most drivers with the blue-border tickets, a \$10 per ticket co-pay will save them the headache and stress of going to 400 W. Superior, paying for parking, and their wasted time. In order to qualify for the UTCC Legal Plan, a driver must be a fully paid member, and the ticket and the \$10 co-pay needs to be brought to our office at least one week before the court date. For hearings, you bring your case to our office, give us your testimony and any evidence you may have, and we'll let you know how much the lawyer will charge you. Your membership dues will cover \$60 of the lawyer's fees for a hearing. ■

JOIN UTCC TO REACH 1,000 DUES-PAYING MEMBERS

And make Chicago the next affiliate of the National Taxi Workers Alliance (AFL-CIO): 17,000 members in New York alone! The taxi companies have a national association. The regulators like BACP have a national association. Taxi Drivers have the National Taxi Workers Alliance with UTCC's as Chicago's voice!!!

SEPTEMBER 2012

- » UTCC partnered with DePaul students to survey drivers
- » Yellow Cab Company was ordered to return its illegally collected bond money to its drivers.

MARCH 2013

- » Driver Sandra V. received \$5390 in lease overcharge settlement
- » UTCC votes to support “Callahan v. City of Chicago” lawsuit
- » UTCC helped driver Muhammad Abdi bring his attacker to justice and organized other drivers to support Abdi during his court hearing

MAY 2013

- » Driver Eric P. Martin received \$1275 in lease overcharge settlement

MARCH 2014

- » Driver Domingo Carino received \$3788 judgement in lease overcharge settlement. As part of the same case, Dispatch Cab Company was fined \$16,000.
- » UTCC continues to work on ‘Parking Tickets While Sleeping’ issue. After successful campaign, drivers are allowed to park taxicabs on select business streets in 40th ward from 2:00AM to 7:00AM without being ticketed.
- » UTCC files FOIA which reveals over \$27,000 to date recovered for drivers from companies from Lease Overcharge campaign

SAN FRANCISCO TO BE THE NEWEST NATIONAL TAXI WORKERS ALLIANCE (AFLCIO) AFFILIATE ON NOV. 3RD



San Francisco cabdrivers protesting at Uber headquarters on October 7, 2014

BY BIJU MATHEW, NTWA

ON NOVEMBER 3RD 2014, THE SAN Francisco Taxi Workers Alliance (SFTWA) will become the first west coast affiliate of the National Taxi Workers Alliance, joining the growing national movement of taxi drivers from across the USA. The affiliation ceremony in front of City Hall is scheduled for 11 AM. San Francisco will join Austin, TX, Montgomery in the DC metro area, Philadelphia and New York as the fifth affiliate. NTWA affiliation plans include Chicago, Houston and Oakland CA for the first quarter of 2015.

SFTWA has also the unique record of being the fastest new organizing effort to reach the affiliation requirements of NTWA. SFTWA was formed on August 13th of 2014, at a packed Verdi Club hall close to downtown San Francisco. A gathering of over 300 drivers in a thunderous voice vote approved the creation of SFTWA and its dues structure of \$100/year for all lease drivers and \$200/year for all individual medallion owner-drivers.

“We knew this time we would succeed” said Aswani Aer, SFTWA co-founder who had worked tirelessly for over 2 weeks mobilizing drivers for the meeting. “In early August we had met with NTWA officers several times and decided to start SFTWA. But taking it to the drivers was important and getting such a clean endorsement from

our brothers and sisters was necessary.” he added.

In early August a group of San Francisco drivers had met with Biju Mathew, Secretary of NTWA and discussed plans to form SFTWA. Together Mathew and a new group of driver organizers then approached officers of the United Taxi Workers (UTW) and the San Francisco Taxicab Drivers Association (SFTDA)- both pre existing advocacy organizations - with a call to unite. “Initially there were doubts and questions, but the more we talked with Mark and Barry, the easier it became to unite”, Aeri reflected. Mark Gruberg and Barry Korengold were the respective co-founders of UTW and SFTDA.

By the last week of August UTW and SFTDA decided to dissolve themselves and merge into SFTWA. “What was wonderful about the process was the openness with which UTW and SFCDA approached the merger process. They made only one evaluation: what is the best thing for SF drivers? And as the answer became clearer by the minute that San Francisco drivers had to be part of our growing national movement, they just decided that the SFTWA would be their organization too. There were no egos, no insecurities, just the best interest of all drivers. I am proud to be working with the Founders Committee... they are all deeply committed people.” said Mathew in a recent phone call with a Voice editor.

With such momentum SFTWA was off to a flying start. A second mass meeting was called on September 9th, this time at the Plumbers union hall. Over 500 drivers packed the hall as the new SFTWA’s Founding Board of Directors walked to the front of the hall. “It was an unbelievable moment. I have driven taxi in SF for over 20 years, and am proud to be part of this effort.” said Tokumbo Solarin another co-founder of the new union. By October 1st, fully paid up membership had crossed the 500 mark. “I anticipate we will be over a 1000 before year end.” Solatis added.

In the eight short weeks since its inception SFTWA has already organized a successful protest outside Uber’s headquarters in SF where over 300 taxis circled the Uber HQ as part of an International Day of Action against Uber. Other cities that saw anti Uber protests on Oct 7th included Manila (Philippines), Chennai (India), London, Brussels and Washington DC.

When SFTWA members pack the hall on November 4, one day after the affiliation, at the California Public Utilities Commission hearing on TNCs, they will all proudly wear the SFTWA (NTWA/AFLCIO) badge on their shirts. “We want drivers from all across the US to join the national movement” said Chakib Aydris. “Together we can’t lose.” he added, grit written evenly across his face. ■

UTCC TIMELINE (cont’d)

JUNE 2014

- » On April 12, 2014 UTCC and the National Taxi Workers Alliance signed a memorandum to expedite UTCC’s affiliation with AFL-CIO’s national taxi union.
- » Drivers file lawsuit against Yellow, Carriage, Dispatch, and Flash Affiliation owners. The lawsuit will challenge the classification of drivers as ‘independent contractors’ and will demand payment of back wages for drivers.
- » UTCC collected over 1000 signatures in support of increasing Chicago drivers’ pay. The petition was submitted to the mayor’s office on April 21, 2014.
- » Globe Taxi supports UTCC’s membership drive

JULY 2014

- » UTCC Steering Committee proposes 10-Point plan to improve driver income in meeting with Commissioner Maria Guerra Lapacek
- » UTCC reaches 500-plus mark in dues-paying membership

SEPT 2014

- » City agrees to adopt three of 10 points, advocate adoption of 2 more, and create Task Force to reform Rule for cabdrivers (UTCC members will be on Task Force)



October 7, 2014

Ms. Bhairavi Desai, President
 New York Taxi Alliance
 31-10 37th Avenue
 Suite 300
 Long Island City, NY 11101

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

The United Steelworkers Boston Taxi Drivers Union stands in support of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance and its affiliates in Philadelphia, Austin, and Montgomery County, MD to unite drivers all over the country to join the National Taxi Workers Alliance.

No other workforce is as exploited or repressed as taxi drivers. In all the major cities, fleet owners and credit card companies have for years made millions off the backs of cab drivers. Now, billion-dollar Wall Street corporations like Uber, Lyft and Sidecar are pirating our jobs. Boston cab drivers, like drivers in cities across the country, have been standing together and fighting back against the greed, corruption, exploitation and repression. If we unite and stand together, we can beat these corrupt moguls who run the taxi industry like a fiefdom.

Since 2007 Boston drivers have been organizing for social and economic justice. We have taken our fight for taxi industry reform from the streets of Boston to City Hall. For years, the pushback from millionaire fleet owners and the regulators they were cozy with was hard - but we never gave up and we now have what we have been fighting for. Last month, Boston's new Mayor Martin Walsh appointed a commission, with two union seats on the board, to put an end to the abuses and exploitation of fleet owners and regulators in the industry. Our 1400 union cab driver members are proud of their hard work in forcing the historic changes under way here in Boston.

But your fight is also our fight. The National Taxi Workers Alliance has a proven track record in fighting against those who pick the pockets of cab drivers. This is a union of cab drivers for cab drivers. Joining with the NTWA will give Chicago's cab drivers the voice you need to win the justice and respect you and your families deserve. Cab drivers rights are worker's rights!

In solidarity,

 Donna Blythe-Shaw
 USW/BTDA Staff Representative

BOSTON TAXI DRIVERS ASSOCIATION

520 Dorchester Avenue, South Boston, MA 02127 • 617-268-1171 • 617-268-1177 (fax) • www.usw.org/BTDA

A Brief History of Taxi Deregulation in the 80s

[As UTCC works with Aldermen, the DBACP Commissioner Guerra Lapacek, and other city officials to reform the Chicago cab industry, we want to share some information about the effects of deregulation in the 1980s so we can keep these in mind while considering ways the industry is being restructured.]

THERE WERE HIGH HOPES FOR TAXI deregulation in the 1980s. Economists expected deregulation to lead to larger fleets, lower rates, improved response times, increased productivity, and the development of shared ride services. One of the main features of deregulation was the change in status of the cabdriver. We went from being employees of the companies, to being classified as "independent contractors", with the freedom to move from company to company as we wished, and to pay a lease rate ahead for the access to the taxi vehicle we used in our work.

In reality, deregulation did nothing to lower prices, marginally improved service, and failed to spark the shared ride innovations that were thought to develop. Deregulation brought about an increase in the number of taxi companies in the industry, but this did little to curb large, long-standing companies' domination of the market. The size of the industry increased by at least 18% in cities that embraced deregulation, proving that even the smallest amount of regulation can significantly deter new entry.

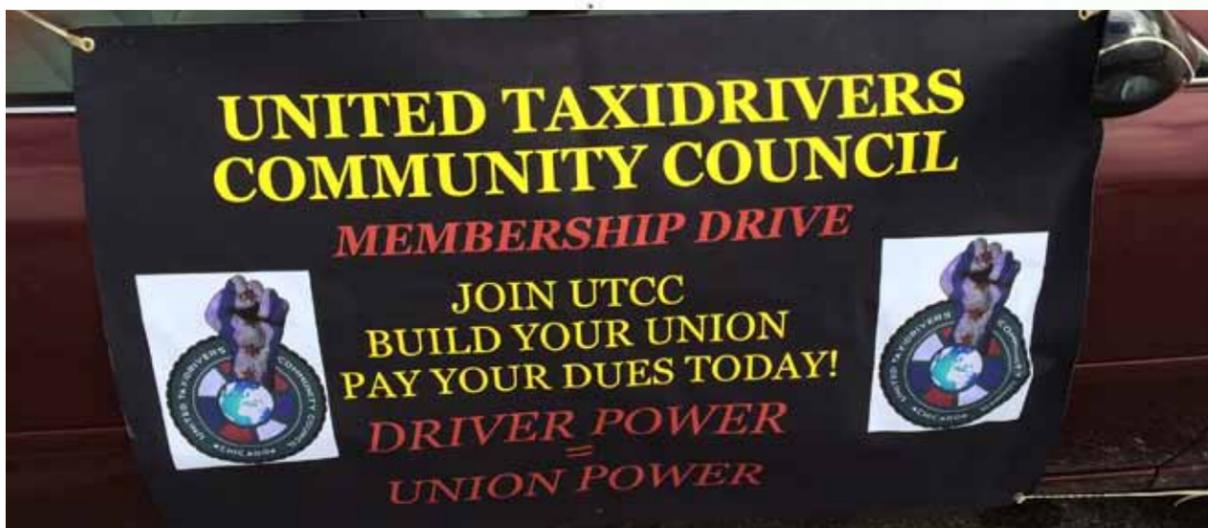
Taxi rates increased substantially in cities that implemented deregulation, partly because a rate increase was long overdue in the regulated system. Though price competition was expected to keep prices low, deregulation sparked higher rates that, in some cities, brought forth rate ceilings and price controls to stifle the rate increases.

Additionally, productivity, as measured by the number of daily trips per cab and trips per shift, decreased by approximately 33% in cities with deregulated industries.

Despite high expectations, deregulation did not foster the creation of new taxi services; exclusive ride services continue to be the only services offered by taxis. Even in cities with deregulated industries, shared ride services were challenged in the 1980s because city officials did not think there would be enough consumer demand for the services.

Overall, industry deregulation did not produce the outcomes its supporters had hoped.

The taxi industry is once again in a time of uncertainty. Moving forward, drivers could be fully employed, semi-employed, or not at all employed by the companies. As industry and regulatory reforms are made, UTCC will be on the frontlines working with the City to ensure that new ordinances and reforms have the drivers' best interest in mind. ■



UTCC Membership Drive Banner—if you see this sign, time to SIGN UP!

Oct. 2014

» UTCC meets with Aldermen to discuss draft legislation for a fare increase

GET INVOLVED IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST UNJUST FEES & TAXES!

Join the fight for rights, respect & human dignity!

CALL UTCC: 773-342-8822

Sun-Times Editorial

THE TAXICAB INDUSTRY IN CHICAGO IS struggling to compete with new ride-sharing services, such as Uber, that connect with customers using a smart phone app. A little free market ingenuity in an industry that for decades stifled healthy competition is giving the old-school cab companies fits.

Now City Hall has proposed a sensible set of regulation reforms that would encourage even greater competition — with government getting out of the way more — while actually making it easier for cabbies to earn a living wage.

For the sake of the riding public, we urge the City Council to sign on to the reforms when they are introduced on Oct. 8.

Ride-sharing services are here to stay in Chicago, largely because they put more wheels on the streets when rider demand is high. Nobody likes standing on a corner, half-begging for a cab to stop, on a bitter cold Chicago night. Ride-share customers enjoy being able to order a ride, track the vehicle coming to pick them up and know in advance exactly how much the ride will cost.

But the heavily regulated traditional cab industry — you need a permit for this, you get a fine for that — deserves a break during this sudden and difficult industry transition. Uber and similar services essentially came out of nowhere.

The reforms, announced by Mayor Emanuel's office on Tuesday, seek to avoid raising fares while lowering cabbies' costs. Most important among the reforms would be the creation of a centralized dispatching service for cabs. Now, someone seeking a ride can telephone a cab company, but must wait until a cab from that particular company is available. An available cab from a competing company might be right around the corner, but neither the cabby nor the customer would know that. In today's world, that model is obsolete.

Instead, the centralized system will link all 7,000 cabs in the city. People without smart phones

or credit cards — which are required by ride-sharing services — could connect to the centralized cab dispatch system with a simple phone call.

The centralized dispatch also would make the entire system more efficient, if the city does a competent job of overseeing its design. People will be more likely to wait at the curb for a cab, instead of inside looking out the window, when they know the precise minute the cab will show up.

To reduce costs to cabbies, the city also is proposing reducing lease rates that eat nearly 40 percent of cabbies' revenue; increasing the time "window" for cabdrivers at O'Hare to return after short trips and go back to the head of the line, and waiving on short trips a \$4 tax for McCormick Place and convention activities.

The proposals would reduce the maximum fine that can be levied against cabdrivers for a host of petty violations from \$1,000 to \$400. With \$400 still on the line, the average cabbie is still not about to throw safety and customer courtesy out the window.

Cabdrivers want more — they want a fare increase. And who can blame them? Cab fares in Chicago, which haven't been increased in 10 years, rank 32nd among big cities. Once these latest proposed reforms shake out, it's an issue City Hall can't ignore.

Each of these reforms poses a risk and must be monitored. The City Hall proposal, to cite one particularly obvious example, also would cap credit card transaction fees at 3 percent, instead of 5 percent, which is sure to cost the cab companies serious money.

The cab business in Chicago is in a state of painful transition, going the way of the free market like never before. We foresee a day when City Hall will continue to regulate the business for safety and health concerns, but the market will determine almost completely how many cars are on the road and how much riders pay.

New technology has a way of setting its own rules. ■

The following is a Letter To the Editor we sent to the Sun-Times, who came out in favor of the Central Dispatch system that the UTCC proposed to the city, without attribution to the UTCC. We thought we would correct their assumption that the Mayor is sitting around thinking up ideas for improving the lives of cabdrivers, or improving access to cabs for the citizens of Chicago.

Dear Editor;

I was happy to see that everyone is all of a sudden getting on board with the "central dispatch system" idea for the Chicago taxi industry that I and the UTCC (United Taxidriviers Community Council) came up with six years ago. Although most news articles credit the Mayor with this plan, I can refer you to an article we published in our UTCC Voice Newsletter, dated Sept. 2008 about this very idea. Even the arguments you use in your editorial use the same language that we have been using for so long in trying to get someone to listen. If the city had listened to us six years ago, Uber, Hailo and the other rideshare companies might not have had such an easy time of it making such inroads into the taxi dispatching system or transportation for hire in Chicago the last few years.

I was also pleased to see that you believe the central dispatch system idea was the "most important" of the reform measures. I believe so too. We in the UTCC were the ones to bring this idea (among many others) to the Commissioner several months ago in a meeting we held with her on July 21st. She and her staff were very receptive to our idea. Using the newly developed "App" dispatching system, we could revolutionize the taxi industry in Chicago, and provide improved and reliable service to all the neighborhoods and even the disabled community!

We believe that features we in the UTCC are planning to present to the city to be included in this plan will out-perform and out-compete any of the Apps that are currently being used by taxis or rideshare companies anywhere in the world. We believe the features we will propose for this system will put Chicago in the forefront of progressive, technology-friendly, and also public-serving, cities anywhere in the world. Not only that, they will solve the problem of providing reliable service to the disabled community that the city has had such difficulties trying to solve in the last few years. But only, as your editorial states, "if the city does a competent job of overseeing its design". That's where we cabdrivers come in. We know what it needs. We work in this industry, and we know best. The city's new Commissioner, Maria Guerra Lapacek, seems to realize this, and has been consulting with cabdrivers and driver unions on a regular basis since she was appointed. We applaud her and her efforts in trying to get to know and understand the ins and outs of a very complicated industry, and for consulting the true experts in our field, the drivers themselves.

—PETER ALI ENGER, SECRETARY, UTCC

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a registered 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization

UTCC WINS ANOTHER "TICKET WHILE SLEEPING" CAMPAIGN!

THE UTCC FIRST HEARD ABOUT THIS "parking while sleeping" ticket, which we consider a huge injustice for taxicab drivers, four years ago. We went into action, organizing driver groups in four northside wards to remove these parking restrictions, which we called a "tax on sleep" for cabdrivers. We visited the 50th Ward Alderman (at the time Bernie Stone) (west Rogers Park), the 49th Ward (Joe Moore—Rogers Park), and the 46th ward (Edgewater). Over the course of many months of meetings and discussions, we were finally able to have these parking restrictions removed by the city council.

Last year in 2013, drivers started coming to us reporting they were being given these tickets in the 40th ward, along California and Lincoln Aves., and Foster Ave. and Peterson Aves. crossing Lincoln Ave. Our Steering Committee member Mounir Essat

spearheaded the campaign, visiting Ald. O'Connor's office and requesting the removal of this parking restriction. After several visits and emails, the Alderman's office staff informed us that the Alderman would introduce legislation at City Council last December. The revised ordinance written below went into effect in January of 2014.

Any cabdrivers who receive tickets in any of the wards and streets listed below can bring in this document to court and to the Police Department in order to contest the ticket, and they will be dismissed. We in the UTCC are proud of our work in achieving these changes. Whenever we pass by these streets--Western Avenue, Peterson, Devon, Ridge, Broadway, Lincoln, Foster, California—we can be sure that the hundreds (or even thousands!) of cabdrivers getting their sleep at night can sleep easy without worry of getting a ticket because of the work we do.

Let us be clear however: we could not have done it without YOU, the drivers living in those wards, coming to us to work together. TOGETHER, WE CAN DO IT! DRIVER POWER IS UNION POWER—ARE YOU A MEMBER YET? ■

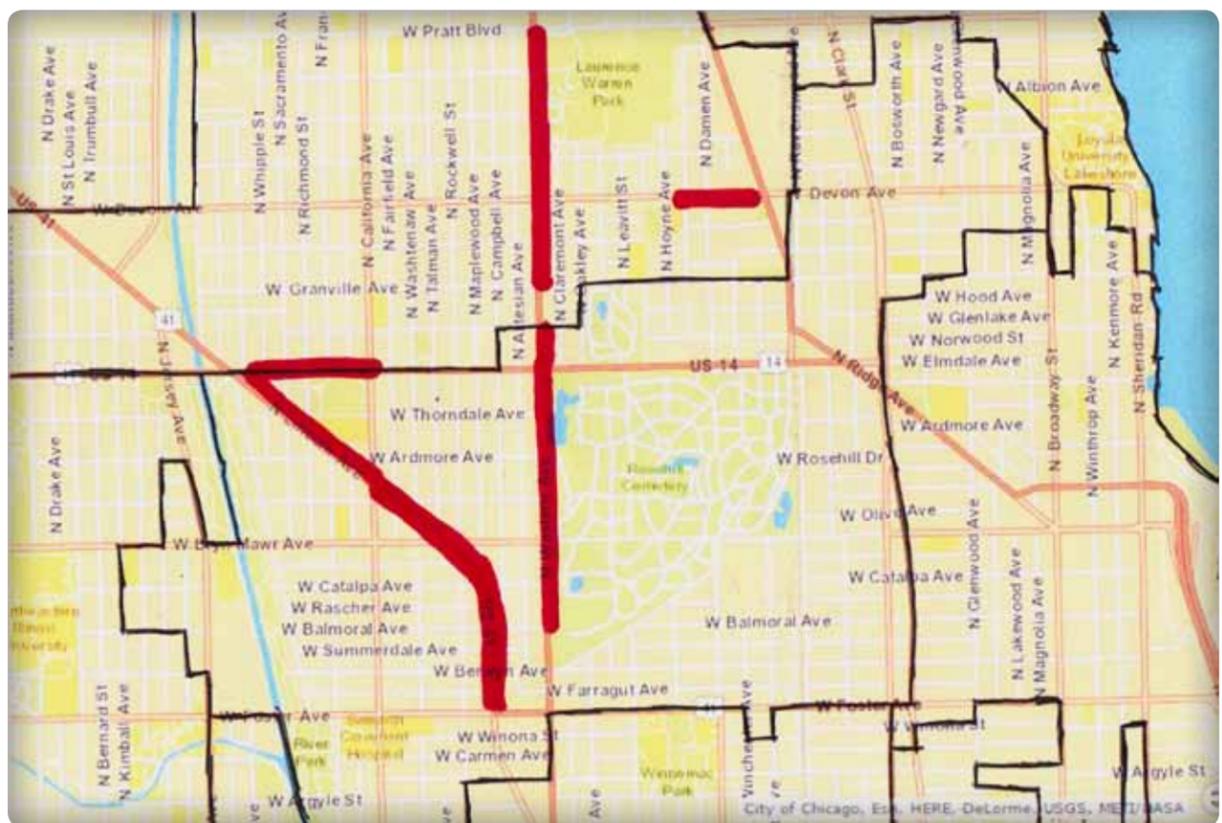


9-64-170 PARKING RESTRICTIONS-SPECIAL TYPES OF VEHICLES.

b)(5) Business streets - Taxicabs. It shall be unlawful for any person to park any taxicab on any business street in the city for a period longer than two hours between the hours of 2:00 A.M. and 7:00 A.M.; provided, however, that this prohibition shall not apply to taxicabs parked on business streets in the 23rd ward; 40th ward only on the (north side) of North Lincoln Avenue, from North California Avenue to West Peterson Avenue, (south side) of North Lincoln Avenue, from North California Avenue to West Foster Avenue, (both sides) of North Western Avenue, from West Glenlake Avenue to West Peterson Avenue, (east side) of North Western Avenue, from West Balmoral Avenue to West Peterson Avenue and (south side) of West Peterson Avenue, from North Lincoln Avenue to North California Avenue; 46th ward; 49th ward; and in the 50th ward on Devon Avenue between Ridge Boulevard and Hoyne Avenue, and on Western Avenue from Granville Avenue to Pratt Boulevard.

[NOTICE: FOR DRIVERS WHO LIVE IN OTHER WARDS BESIDES THOSE NAMED ABOVE:

IF YOU RECEIVE \$25 TICKETS FOR PARKING ON BUSINESS STREETS IN YOUR WARDS BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 2 AM TO 7 AM, PLEASE COME TO THE UTCC OFFICE WITH YOUR TICKETS. LETS MAKE A PLAN TO HAVE THIS PARKING RESTRICTION REMOVED IN YOUR WARD TOO!]



City Income Plan

Continued from Page 3

Consumer Protection Commissioner Maria Guerra Lapacek.

- Reducing lease rates that gobble up nearly 40 percent of driver revenue by 10 to 20 percent — or \$2,400 to \$5,600 a year — and requiring a "lease credit" for all cabs bearing advertising.
- Applying straight fares for residents of suburbs bordering Chicago, only when the trip originates at O'Hare and Midway Airports.
- Increasing from 40 minutes to one hour the window for cabdrivers waiting at O'Hare to return to the airport and go to the head of the line.
- Waiving — on short trips only — the \$4 tax that bankrolls McCormick Place and other convention activities.
- Capping credit card transaction fees at 3 percent, instead of 5 percent.
- Reducing by 60 percent — from \$1,000 to \$400 — the maximum fine that can be levied against cabdrivers for a host of violations.

UTCC Secretary-Treasurer Peter Ali Enger applauded Emanuel for "finally delivering much-needed reform after ignoring the plight of drivers for so long."

But Enger also argued that the lease rate reduction after the first model year will provide not a penny of relief for 2,000 drivers who own their own medallions and cabs.

"We are disappointed that the fare increase was not included in the reform package. The mayor's office is not in favor of it at this moment. But, that doesn't mean we won't pursue other avenues," Enger said.

Ald. Bob Fioretti (2nd), the highest-profile mayoral challenger to declare his candidacy, agreed that cabdrivers deserve a fare hike.

"The playing field [between taxicabs and ride-sharing] was not leveled. We can't penalize groups, such as cabdrivers, that are highly regulated," Fioretti said.

Tired of waiting nearly 10 years for a fare increase, Chicago cabdrivers have produced a series of studies to highlight their financial plight and build momentum for their drive to unionize.

One claimed that Emanuel's 2012 overhaul of the taxicab industry has snatched \$7,531 out of the average cabdriver's pocket, dropping annual income to \$20,234 or just \$5.40 an hour.

Another claimed that half of Chicago cabdrivers are earning less than the state's \$8.25-an-hour minimum wage — and more than 10 percent are losing money — in a taxi industry that's generating \$30 million in annual city revenue.

The city countered with a study that painted a somewhat rosier picture of driver income.

It claimed the average Chicago cabdriver earns \$12.14 an hour and \$33,857 a year, even after expenses.

But Lapacek nevertheless acknowledged the need to do something to bolster driver income.

Enger noted that the "next big battle" between the city and cabdrivers could come if and when City Hall gives ride-sharing companies access to the lucrative airport market. Uber-X, Lyft and others are currently prohibited from serving O'Hare and Midway. But, the ride-sharing ordinance approved by the City Council allows the city to authorize such a change. ■

**FOLLOW US ON TWITTER:
@UTCCCHICAGO**

CHICAGO CABDRIVERS! Be alert and aware where and how you are driving! Here are the locations of: **Speeding Camera Locations throughout Chicago**

- Abbott Park, 49 E. 95th St.
- Bogan Tech High School, 3939 W. 79th St.
- Burr Elementary School, 1621 W. Wabansia Ave.
- Challenger Park, 1100 W. Irving Park Rd.
- Chicago Agricultural High School, 3807 W. 111th St.
- Christopher Elementary School, 5042 S. Artesian Ave.
- Columbus Park, 500 S. Central Ave.
- Curie High School, 4959 S. Archer Ave.
- Douglas Park, 1401 S. Sacramento Ave.
- Frances Xavier Warde School, 751 N. State St.
- Gage Park, 2415 W. 55th St.
- Garfield Park, 100 N. Central Park Dr.
- Gompers Park, 4222 W. Foster Ave.
- Hancock Elementary School, 4034 W. 56th St.
- Harvard Elementary School, 7525 S. Harvard Ave.
- Horan Park, 3035 W. Van Buren St.
- Horner Park, 2741 W. Montrose Ave.
- Humboldt Park, 1400 N. Humboldt Dr.
- Icci Academy, 6435 W. Belmont Ave.
- Jefferson Park, 4822 N. Long Ave.
- Jones High School, 606 S. State St.
- Lane Tech High School, 2501 W. Addison St.
- Legion Park, 3100 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.
- Lorca Elementary School, 3231 N. Springfield Ave.
- Major Taylor Park, 970 W. 115th St.
- Marquette Park, 6734 S. Kedzie Ave.
- McGuane Park, 2901 S. Poplar Ave.
- McKinley Park, 2210 W. Pershing Rd.
- Merrimac Park, 6343 W. Irving Park Rd.
- Morgan Park High School, 1744 W. Pryor Ave.
- Ogden Park, 429 N. Columbus Dr.
- Orr High School, 730 N. Pulaski Rd.
- Park 499, 3925 E. 104th St.
- Parsons Park, 4701 W. Belmont Ave.
- Pickard Elementary School, 2301 W. 21st Pl.
- Portage Park, 4100 N. Long Ave.
- Prosser Vocational High School, 2148 N. Long Ave.
- Riis Park, 6100 W. Fullerton Ave.
- Roberto Clemente High School, 1147 N. Western Ave.
- Rosenblum Park, 2000 E. 75th St.
- Sauganash Elementary School, 6040 N. Kilpatrick Ave.
- Schaefer Park, 2415 N. Marshfield Ave.
- Senn Park, 5887 N. Ridge Ave.
- Sherman Park, 1307 W. 52nd St.
- St. Genevieve School, 4854 W. Montana St.
- St. Rita High School, 7740 S. Western Ave.
- Union Park, 1501 W. Randolph St.
- Warren Elementary School, 9239 S. Jeffery Ave.
- Washington Park, 5531 S. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.
- Welles Park, 2333 W. Sunnyside Ave
- Broadway and Sunnyside (Target)

LETTER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
CITY OF CHICAGO

20% after the first year the vehicle is in service. We believe this gives the cab owners enough time to finance the cost of the vehicle, while at the same time, allows the cab drivers to take home more money at the end of the day. We anticipate that this will put between \$2,400 - \$5,600 more into the pockets of cab drivers.

Further, we are going to require a lease-credit for all cab drivers that drive vehicles that contain advertising. We believe it is fair to allow cab drivers to share in the ad revenue, thereby allowing the drivers to be credited for the ads.

2) Authorize universal app(s) to provide drivers better access to customers

The ordinance will authorize the Department to issue a competitive bid for the establishment of a centralized dispatch app(s). The taxi industry has struggled to compete with transportation services that are using smart phones and other technologies. The City can help level the playing field by establishing a centralized dispatch through the use of apps, and require that all taxis participate in at least one dispatch app. This will ensure better access to customers for taxi drivers, which translates into better customer service.

3) Reducing maximum fines for driver offenses and creating a Task Force to make further recommendations

The ordinance will also seek to reduce the maximum fine for driver violations by 60% from \$1,000 to \$400. This is to help reduce the burden on drivers.

Further, we are creating a Task Force to review and make recommendations to the Department regarding the fine process for cab drivers. We will review the language of the violations, the fine ranges, as well as the process. We intend to formally invite taxi drivers from your group to be part of this task force.

4) Relief for drivers in credit card processing

We intend to change the Rules and Regulations regarding credit card fees to limit the credit card transaction fee cap to 3%. Currently, the credit card transaction fees are capped at 5% and the driver is responsible for absorbing this fee. The rule change will limit the drivers liability for this transaction fee at 3%. Further, we intend to send a letter to the cab companies to remind them of their obligation to pay the drivers on a daily basis so that the driver does not have to unduly wait for the payments they are entitled to.



UTTC meets Commissioner

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LETTER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10



DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
CITY OF CHICAGO

5) Relief for "Short trips"

We will request that the MPEA lengthen the time allowed for return from short trips from the current 40 minutes to a full hour. Additionally, we will request that the MPEA waive the MPEA tax stamp for short trips. This is of course, subject to the financial impact of this request.

We heard from many drivers that they are often rushing to get back to the airport on a short trip, and that the 40 minute limit has caused them lots of undue stress because of the increased traffic around the airports. Further, the drivers pay the \$4 tax stamp, only to obtain a \$12 fare, then turn around again to pay another \$4 tax stamp. We believe this issue is worth raising with the MPEA, and will request these changes.

In addition to these ordinance and rules changes, we will also work with the Chicago Police Department to provide training on the fair enforcement of taxi cab violations as well as violations by the Transportation Network Providers. We are also working on further enforcement of lease rate violations by the taxi cab companies, and will seek assistance from other government agencies that can be of assistance in this effort.

With respect to the Transportation Network Providers, as we mentioned in the meeting, we are actively working on getting them licensed and collecting data for enforcement purposes. We plan to fairly and equally enforce the ordinances and rules with this new transportation option, such as the insurance requirement, ground transportation tax, etc.

Again, thank you for your feedback and recommendations. They have been valuable to our greater efforts to modernize the taxi industry by meeting customer demands using innovating transportation options, as well as protecting the consumer and public safety. We believe these reforms will generate thousands of dollars per year for cab drivers, and at the same time, will allow the taxi cabs to remain competitive in this marketplace. Additionally, these reforms will help bring some peace of mind to cab drivers, who otherwise deal with a tremendous amount of stress.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Maria Guerra Lapacek
Maria Guerra Lapacek, Commissioner

House of Cards: A house divided against itself cannot stand

[The UTCC Voice occasionally publishes letters to our paper]

OPINION, BY: PHILIP EISENBEIS

A CHICAGO CAB DRIVER (#72850) STEADY since 1998, I've usually earned more every year as I got better at it. Recently, not so much. One increasing cost I have is the 5% transaction fee for receiving payment with credit card/debit cards. Lately, card fees cost me \$200 monthly. It was \$1800 in 2013, \$1200 in 2012. They now cost me more than the city gets annually in fees and taxes per medallion. 5% is one in twenty dollars. This was money I earned by driving down the street. I could have gotten it if people had paid cash, but instead it accrued to the banks (the cab company handles compliance and also takes a cut).

In accordance with city policy, I'm rewarded for this extra service (cards also take more time than cash) with less than the money I earned. The incentive is exactly the reverse of common sense and economic theory. They assume a person giving more or better service (which the public is demanding) deserves a higher not lower reward. Since cabdrivers don't enjoy being nickel and dimed, we have often inadvertently driven cardholders in to the arms of Uber and Lyft.

The passenger, by choosing to pay with plastic, is hiring middlemen to handle our transaction. Passengers are free to choose card and drivers are stuck with the cost. Many people know

it costs us. They often apologize reflexively then go ahead and swipe the card. I'd rather not blow against the wind. Let them use card and pay the real cost. I'm recommending an automatic 5% surcharge on card payments in cabs. The screen of the card processing unit in the back seat could reflect meter (cash) total plus 5%. Then the public would get a choice between cash or card that reflects the real value of each.

The city has resisted calls to increase the taxi meter rate which was set long before card use in cabs became widespread. That rate's value has been eroded by inflation. Worse still, as card use increases, so does the proportion of drivers' pay subject to a 5% loss to fees. Drivers are netting out progressively less \$ (for the same work) than we did when the rate was set. The automatic 5% surcharge for card payments would bring us up to the current cash value of our taxi meter rate.

If the city refused us a rate-hike to keep cab service affordable, ok. But why require cab drivers to give usually better off card holders a discount (by having us pay their fees) while charging often older, poorer cash-paying people full price? We pay the fees because the banks want it that way. The city's policy of making drivers accept cards at cash value and eat the 5% protects the dirty little secret of the cashless economy: Paying with cards costs real money! Banks get their fees from the payee. They'd like cardholders to be oblivious to the cost of card use. It's easier to take peoples money if they don't know they are paying. Businesses that control the price they charge raise them on the general public to make up for the cost of card fees. Did you ever wonder who pays for the irresistible incentives (up to 3% cash back!) that banks offer to get you to use their card? Look in the mirror! Everyone who participates in the economy is chipping in for that. If the card fee induced price increases occur in imperceptibly small increments, the public may not notice, but a wealth transfer (99% to 1%) is in progress. The public's \$, cumulatively big %, is frittered away into easy bank profits. This arrangement literally socializes cost and privatizes profit, something the elected guardians of the public interest would never allow if the public interest were to rank higher for them than the banks' interest.

One effect on the economy of increasing card use is a corresponding decline in the public's purchasing power...the kind you get when there's a sales tax increase. Money spent on fees and or taxes can't buy goods and services. Sales taxes are said to be regressive (hit poor people harder), card fees appear to be even more so.

Last year I heard news that banks had their way with the convenience store owners in Federal Court. It ruled that banks get a 21 percent minimum per swipe. So more than 10% of a \$2 card purchase accrues to the banks, a rate wildly disproportionate to the value the card brings compared to the wholesale cost of the item(s) bought, the cost of running a store, etc. Meanwhile, ATM fees have risen far more than the cost of operating ATMs since 2008. Rather than pay outrageous ATM fees people use plastic where the cost is out of sight and out of mind. Banks go from getting an ATM fee once in a while (paid by their customer), to getting a piece in every transaction (paid by the businesses their customer paid with the cost passed onto the random, innocent public). Like a clever parasite, banks transfer the cost from their host (the cardholder), onto the entire ecosystem (the economy) by getting people to switch from cash to card. Too bad our government (owned by banks?) won't protect the public from excessive ATM fees! Cash is still king (a superior payment technology in terms of value). We can exchange it back and forth at face value while neither sapping the public's purchasing power nor worrying about identity theft. ■

ILLINOIS VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION

FOR ILLINOIS RESIDENTS ONLY

Suggested January 2014
SBE R-19

TO VOTE YOU MUST:

- Be a United States citizen
- Be at least 18 years old (some 17 year olds may vote in the General Primary)
- Live in your election precinct at least 30 days
- Not be convicted and in jail
- Not claim the right to vote anywhere else

TO VOTE IN THE NEXT ELECTION:

- Mail or deliver this application to your County Clerk or Board of Election Commissioners no later than 28 days before the next election. [Click here for County Clerk/Election Board listings](#) or go to <http://www.elections.il.gov>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

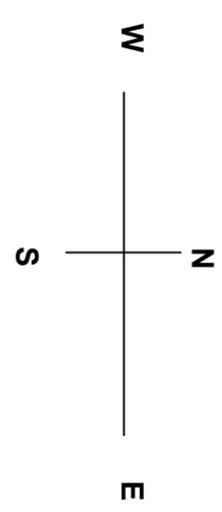
- If you do not have a driver's license, State Identification Card or social security number, and this form is submitted by mail, and you have never registered to vote in the jurisdiction you are now registering in, then you must send, with this application, either (i) a copy of a current and valid photo identification, or (ii) a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows the name and address of the voter. If you do not provide the information required above, then you will be required to provide election officials with either (i) or (ii) described above the first time you vote at a voting place or by absentee ballot.
- If you change your name you must re-register.
- If you register at a public service agency, any information regarding the agency that assisted you will remain confidential as will any decision not to register.
- If you do not receive a Notice within 2 weeks of mailing or delivering this application, call your County Clerk or Board of Election Commissioners.

TO COMPLETE THIS FORM:

- Box 1-If you do not have a middle name, leave blank.
- Box 3-If mailing address is same as Box 2, write "same".
- Box 4-If you have never registered before, leave blank. If you do not remember your former address, provide as much information as possible.
- Box 5-If you have not changed your name, leave blank.
- Box 9-If you have an Illinois Driver's License or Secretary of State ID, check the first box and fill in the number. If you do not have a Driver's License or SOS ID, check the second box and fill in the last four digits of your Social Security Number. If you do not have a SSN, check the third box and send a copy of the appropriate document (as described in the "Important Information" section) along with this form.
- 10-Read, date and personally sign your name or make your mark in the box.

IF YOU HAVE NO STREET ADDRESS,

below describe your home: list the name of subdivision; cross streets; roads; landmarks; mileage and/or neighbors' names.



If you have questions about completing this form, please call the State Board of Elections at (217)782-4141 or (312)814-6440 (or webmaster@elections.il.gov).

TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY IN BLACK OR BLUE INK

Are you a citizen of the United States of America? (check one) yes no **Office Use**
 Will you be 18 years of age on or before the next election day OR are you currently 17 and will be 18 by the day of the next General Election? (check one) yes no
 If you checked "no" in response to either of these questions, then do not complete this form.
 You can use this form to: (Check One) apply to register to vote in Illinois change your address change your name

1. Last Name	First Name	Middle Name or Initial	Suffix (Circle One) Jr. Sr. II III IV		
2. Address where you live (House No., Street Name, Apt. No.)	City/Village/Town	Zip Code	County	Township	
3. Mailing address (P.O. Box)	City/Village/Town, State	Zip Code	Email (optional)		
4. Former Registration Address: (Include City and State and Zip Code)	Former County	5. Former Name: (if changed)			
6. Date of Birth: MM/DD/YY	8. Home telephone number including area code (optional)	9. ID number - check the applicable box and provide the appropriate number IL Driver's License or, if none, Sec. of State ID or Last 4 digits of Social Security Number I have none of the above-listed identification numbers.			
7. Sex (circle one) M F					

10. Voter Affidavit - Read all statements and sign within the box to the right.

This is my signature or mark in the space below.

- I swear or affirm that**
- I am a citizen of the United States;
 - I will be at least 18 years old on or before the next election **(or the next General Election)**;
 - I will have lived in the State of Illinois and in my election precinct at least 30 days as of the date of the next election;

• The information I have provided is true to the best of my knowledge under penalty of perjury. If I have provided false information, then I may be fined, imprisoned, or if I am not a U.S. citizen, deported from or refused entry into the United States.

11. If you cannot sign your name, ask the person who helped you fill in this form to print their name, address and telephone number.
 Name of person assisting: _____ Full Address _____ Today's Date: _____ Telephone No. _____

Instructions for membership:

- Fill out form below
- Bring to our office at 2040 N. Milwaukee to make a payment and get your picture taken for your Membership card
- Payment is \$120 per year (partial payment plans available)
- Office hours: Mon-Tues-Wed 1-7 pm
- Or call for appointment: 773-342-8822

Current Benefits of UTCC

- Bond Card with first \$20 payment
- Legal Assistance at 400 W. Superior
 - \$10 co-pay for getting the best deal
 - \$60 discount on representation at Hearings
- Consultation on lease fraud and other driver issues

JOIN NOW!

NAME: (print) _____ GENDER: MALE/FEMALE _____

CHAUFFEUR LIC. #: _____ Lease Driver: Yes No Shift: Day Night Mix/Swing _____

Street Address: _____ Apt. # _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Cell Ph.: _____ Home: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Yearly Membership: \$120 (partial OK)

Payment type: cash/credit/money order/check _____ Amount received: _____ Due: _____ (within 6 weeks)