

TAXICAB TIMES

ADVERTISING

Newspaper & Web

SUBSCRIBE ONLINE

Register for Taxicab Times email updates

register now >>>

INDUSTRY RESOURCES



Classified Ads
Medallions,
Vehicles, Meters,
Dispatch Systems
& more



AAA Fuel Gauge Report
Yellow Pages

EDITORIAL

Taxi Industry Notice
Taxi Industry Press Releases
Front Page
Headlines
Editorial



Historical Taxi News Archive



Professor Matthew Daus Hosts & Moderates NYC Mayoral Candidates' Forum on Transportation

Matthew W. Daus, President, International Association of Transportation
• Wed, Aug 07, 2013

This year's race for Mayor of New York City (NYC) may represent a historic and significant departure from the policies, practices and personnel of the past 20 years. New Yorkers, with an extraordinary number of registered Democrats, in a dynamic and changing city, have become accustomed to the independent Mayoralties of Rudy Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg, who have forever changed the expectations of the Big Apple's Chief Executive Officer. Whether one likes or dislikes their personalities, policies or accomplishments, nobody can argue that both have left an indelible mark on NYC. Come January 1, 2014, major change is on the way – like it or not – due to the term limits law.

This year's race for NYC Mayor involves many candidates from several major political parties, including: the former Bronx Borough President **Adolfo Carrión, Jr.** as the Independence Party nominee; Republican Party primary candidates **Joe Lhota** (former Metropolitan Transportation Authority – MTA Chairman, CEO), **John Catsimatidis** (Red Apple Group CEO), and **George McDonald** (Doe Fund President); and the Democratic Party candidates **Bill Thompson** (former NYC Comptroller), **Christine Quinn** (NYC Council Speaker), **Bill de Blasio** (NYC Public Advocate), **John Liu** (current NYC Comptroller), **Anthony Weiner** (former U.S. Congressman) and **Sal Albanese** (former NYC Council Member). It is a crowded field indeed, with endless candidate appearances and forums.

Unfortunately, until recently, there has been very little conversation about transportation policy. NYC is a global destination and a world class city, which is on the top 5 list of most major city surveys including parks[1], visitor spending and tourism[2], public transportation[3] and private for-hire ground transportation. NYC is also becoming a technology magnate to rival San Francisco and Silicon Valley. On the other hand, NYC is also ranked among the top 5 worst cities for traffic congestion.[4] As New Yorkers, we take for granted that our transportation system will always function and be top notch. It is not politically popular to raise the topic of funding to repair aging transportation infrastructure, but unless our transportation policies and systems are prioritized by our next Mayor, we may see our status as a global destination suffer when people experience increased difficulty travelling, less transportation options or increased transit expenses. I decided not to sit back and watch as a spectator, but rather do something about it by holding the first and only comprehensive, objective and independent mayoral candidate forum on transportation policy issues, in an academic setting at the City University of New York (CUNY).

The mayoral forums held by other groups mostly followed a simple format allowing each candidate to talk about whatever they wished, with tremendous flexibility. The goal of this unique forum was to not only educate voters on important transportation issues, but to educate the candidates on the issues that matter to New Yorkers. In order to accomplish this task, I appointed a panel of transportation policy experts comprised of former high-level transportation officials, academics and organizational stakeholders experienced in all modes of transportation and governmental agencies, and who have worked closely with me in the past and/or with CUNY's Transportation Research Center (UTRC) at City College.[5] This panel was charged with the task of assisting me in collecting data and information on numerous transportation topics and compiling the candidates' positions and facts to prepare for the forum. They all helped in vetting not just the topics, but also the specific questions. As part of our unique format, each expert asked certain candidates prepared questions unbeknownst to the candidates, as well as their own spontaneous and tough follow-up questions.

ATLAS
FINANCIAL HOLDINGS, INC.

Industry Leading Insurance for
Taxi, Limousine, Paratransit,
and Airport Transit

THE ATLAS GROUP OF COMPANIES
(In California Gateway's DBA is Alano Insurance Company.)



Your Health

Dear Cabbie

CLASSIFIEDS

View Classifieds

SERVICES

Subscribe Today!

CONTACT US



Contact Us

About us

I chaired the Transportation Forum Committee, which included: **Elliot G. (Lee) Sander** (Board Chairman of Regional Plan Association, former MTA CEO, former NYC Department of Transportation - DOT Commissioner, and NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission - TLC Board Member); **Ira J. Goldstein** (Executive Director of the Black Car/Limo Fund and former TLC Chief of Staff); **Tim Gilchrist** (former Senior Transportation Adviser to the Governor, and former President of the Moynihan Station Development Corp.); **Dr. Robert "Buzz" Paaswell** (former Chicago MTA CEO and UTRC Founder); **Paul Steely White** (Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives); **Chris Boylan** (former MTA Deputy Executive Director and Executive at the General Contractors' Association); **Gene Russianoff** (Senior Attorney of NYPIRG's Straphangers' Campaign); **Rohit Aggarwala** (former NYC Chief Sustainability Officer and Special Advisor to the Chair of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group); **Dr. Camille Kamga** (UTRC Director); **Dr. Steven Koonin** (Director of New York University's Center for Urban Science and Progress -CUSP); **Christopher Ward** (former Executive Director of the Port Authority of NY & NJ); **Sam Schwartz** (former NYC Traffic Commissioner). Special thanks go out to **Ira Goldstein** for chairing a sub-committee of for-hire ground transportation industry stakeholders (representing both owners and drivers) to address the taxicab, livery, black car, commuter van, paratransit and limousine industry issues. Also, many thanks go to **Mitch Wallerstein**, the *President of CUNY's Baruch College*, who welcomed the guests to the event at his facilities, as well as to *CUNY Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice Chancellor Allan Dobrin*, who delivered opening remarks.

The Mayoral Transportation Forum was sold out many weeks in advance and was at capacity with between 400-500 attendees, including most major news and media outlets. Media coverage and video of the event can be accessed at the following link: http://www.windelsmarx.com/news_detail.cfm?id=288

There was such unexpected interest in this event that we could have easily had over 1000 attendees. All of the candidates had confirmed their attendance, and every single candidate from all major parties attended except Speaker Quinn and Public Advocate de Blasio - who cancelled at the last minute due to scheduling conflicts.

The goal of the forum was to ensure the candidates avoided general statements and in deferring policymaking statements until after the election - although a lot of that is unavoidable and happened anyway. We gave the candidates notice of the topics to study, but not the questions, limiting the time to respond and narrowly tailoring questions for specific responses and positions to hold them accountable if elected. The audience attendees participated in advance by sending recommended questions and voting on the topics that were most important to them, and only those topics were addressed and raised in order of audience interest. The responses and ideas of the candidates were varied and included unexpected suggestions such as:

Until the forum, the most talked about issues were bicycle lanes, the bike share program and the taxi of tomorrow, including wheelchair accessibility. Well, even at the forum, those were the most vigorously debated topics. However, we managed to shift the discussion of the candidates to focus on many other important topics, including **select bus service, outer-borough transportation equity, transportation technology, funding sources and research, school bus service, commuter vans, toll equity, traffic safety, congestion mitigation and sustainability.**

- the creation of an "above-way" for monorail service; the widespread expansion of select bus service instead of increasing the size and funding for the subway system;
- the use of more light rail in Staten Island and throughout the city;
- off-peak freight delivery times;
- the addition of more park & rides in the outer-boroughs to increase mass transit usage while easing Central Business District traffic;
- making government data easily available to the public and to universities to conduct research and create innovative smartphone applications for public transportation;
- the addition of more speed and red light cameras;
- reducing some bridge and tunnel tolls while adding some bridge tolls to create toll equity;
- the creation of a coalition of Mayors for Mass Transit like Mayor Bloomberg organized for gun control; and
- creating cost efficiencies and new routes to save money in the implementation of city school bus contracts.

Also, many of the candidates discussed the city and the Mayor controlling its own destiny by taking control of the MTA and in creating more transparency at the TLC. Overall there was no shortage of new ideas, making this event a true success.

In terms of next steps, the valuable ideas and positions of all candidates will be recorded and set forth in detail in a final report I am preparing along with the UTRC Forum Committee members, and we will be releasing this

final report before the primary elections in early September 2013. It is our goal to have this document updated throughout the campaign to reflect new and changing policy statements by all the candidates made even after the forum and up until Election Day. Even good ideas proffered by other candidates who will ultimately lose the election, should hopefully be considered objectively by our next Mayor. We also hope that our policy briefings and this comprehensive report will become the Transportation Policy Primer and Transition Report for whoever becomes the next Mayor. This exercise has and continues to be a true exercise in participatory and representative democracy, and shows that when you bring together the right people and organize others effectively, you can make a difference by changing the debate, and generating useful and pragmatic ideas. Don't forget the most important thing, to put transportation policies near the top of your personal voter's wish list, and of course, ***don't forget to vote***

[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/05/nyregion/new-york-citys-park-system-ranked-no-2-in-survey-of-50-cities.html?_r=0

[2] <http://www.tourism-review.com/global-destination-cities-index-2013-asian-city-on-top-of-the-list-news3718#eYBiYrHOOp1xSK36u.99>

[3] <http://www.usnews.com/news/slideshows/the-10-best-cities-for-public-transportation/10>

<http://www.travelandleisure.com/americas-favorite-cities/2012/category/quality-of-life-and-visitor-experience/public-transportation-and-pedestrian-friendliness>

[4] http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-05/local/36751062_1_traffic-congestion-tim-lomax-new-index

[5] The UTRC is one of ten original University Transportation Centers established in 1987 by the U.S. Congress, representing the U.S. Department of Transportation's Region II, which includes New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Functioning as a consortium of twelve major universities throughout the region, the Center is located at the CUNY Institute for Transportation Systems at The City College of New York, the lead institution of the consortium. These universities include: CUNY; Columbia University Cornell University; New Jersey Institute of Technology; New York University; Polytechnic Institute of NYU; Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Rowan University; Rutgers University; State University of New York; Stevens Institute of Technology; University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez.

Share

Like 0

© Copyright Taxicab Times. All rights reserved.

{ Online Newspaper by bulletlink.com }