

## THE EGG SUCKING WEASEL OF YORE

The last big effort to flip Prop.K Medallions occurred a bit over a dozen years ago when a bunch of us were in our 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> years on the waiting list. At that point in life everyone had put all their eggs in one basket. Then, all of a sudden we learned of an egg sucking weasel on the loose in San Francisco (they called it Prop.J). Who knew, maybe it had busted out of the zoo, a notoriously wild and porous enclosure appropriately positioned next to the sewer plant by the Pacific Ocean. Anyway, we got over the shock that *something* was out to take all we had and we fought back.

Looking back today, had we lost I would have had bitterness for the rest of my life towards the weasel, the zoo whence it came and those who fed the varmint. Just for that extra reason alone victory had a lasting sweetness because I'm hating no one these days.

I would love to have the option to sell my K Medallion as some of you wish to do, but I'm either blind or Mother Theresa because I cannot see how I could sell without having twisted a crooked stick in almost every heart of every real cab driver on the upper part of the S.F. Taxi waiting list.

Michael Williams  
Medallion #506  
5 November 2009

RECEIVED

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SFMTA Division of Taxicab &  
Accessibility Services

Thanksgiving 2009  
San Francisco

## THE REDEYE TO SHANGRI-LA

It's hard to sell a taxi driver retirement plan to a group of lifers (K-Holders) who know in the back of their minds they are becoming nothing more than cash cows to an agency and city that really has 'got them this time.' It may be equally accurate to call this disillusioned group mad cows. There are places in the world with happy cows. India and especially Shangri-La come to mind. Cattle in those places watch "Tahitian like" sunsets while soaking in the headwaters of the Ganges, some getting their hooves done, some getting a brisket rub; a rump scratch. There isn't a Burger King in sight. In America, cattle have but one fate: to be eaten.

I don't know a K-Holder I respect who is not down in the dumps after falling in with the MTA. It is not the taxi director's fault; it is the enormity of the load being laid across the hoods of our cabs like a redwood.

Waiting list/retirement suggestions made earlier were in context of the economy. They're slatter proposals aimed at costing the city nothing; support our industry independently yet allow for contributions to the city in these trouhled times. However, the bad economy will end someday; it will pass but I've no faith or expectation the hooks the MTA has in our bodies that are hanging us upside down like sides of beef in a cooler will ever come out, even long after the economy thaws.

### *"IT JUST AIN'T RIGHT"*

We are not whining about the 20-35% revenue hit drivers have taken in this economy. Too many people in the country have lost everything. This is about lost faith and lost horizons at MTA. We've had professionalism and pride in the 40,000 daily cab rides we are a part of in San Francisco. We've had independence; the single most significant reason we drive cab besides money. We've been mostly upbeat and future-oriented, until now. Being handed over to the fiscally exacting, demoralizing MTA feels like we're thought of only as cattle, to be crammed down a chute that reeks with the blood, drool, excrement and cry of the bludgeoned.

Reality has set in. The MTA will never let us alone. The thumb we're under is so financially onerous anything given won't be enough. You will not be allowed a voice by any new administration that finds itself in a pinch. Taxi reforms are meaningless; financial servitude to the MTA will trump everything. The industry and you are shackled forever.

Is this the time for those who have gotten their way in life to get more? In Brad's words, "only if we roll over." We are damaged goods but so are those who have damaged us.

There are people who while at the center of their lives won't sacrifice a truth for a selfish wrong. They are the ones we admire in life; the ones we can turn to. Some are judges and many are conscientious voters. They have fairness in mind and live to achieve a balance within their world. It's karma and the way to their own Shangri-La and that's why I think they will help us find ours.

Michael Williams  
Medallion #506

## **PROP A, PARAGRAPH (b) - 2007 REVIEW**

Many people in the cab business or with the City of San Francisco in taxi-related activities have assumed Prop A 2007 presents an opportunity to change Prop K (1978) without voter approval. That is not apparent.

Prop A abolishes the Taxi Commission and transfers its powers and duties to the Municipal Transportation Agency ("Agency"). The power to alter Prop K is not transferred; the Commission never had it.

Paragraph (b) states the Agency will have "exclusive authority" over "taxi-related functions" and fares, fees, charges, budgets and personnel – the same that it has over MUNI. Paragraph (b) further states the reason for giving "exclusive authority" to the Agency is "in order to fully integrate taxi-related functions into the Agency" should transfer occur. It is implied that regulations produced by the Agency are to bear on the transfer or on the present and future of "taxi-related functions."

When Prop K was enacted by voters in 1978, it was a sea change in the San Francisco taxi industry. I would liken it, significance wise, to an act of deregulating an entire transportation industry or to the privatization of the MUNI itself. Prop K was a complete structural change and new system. That system cannot be fairly categorized as a mere taxi-related function. Taxi drivers pick up people, charge fares, learn City streets and laws; all are examples of tax-related functions. Functions related to taxis are job descriptions; the actual physical activity of doing the work; the duties. Taxi meters and equipment are also functions.

The form and framework of taxi business in San Francisco is Prop K and it is not a mere taxi-related function. It is a voter approved, City regulated form of a system in which taxis function. The system is not the function. Taxi-related functions flow from the Prop K system. The Agency is not empowered to write regulations changing the system itself by Prop A. The Agency, by Prop A, is given the right to regulate taxi-functions and no more.

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Medallion #506

5 November 2009  
San Francisco

To Whom It May Concern:

This proposal amends Medallion Holder Retirement dated 28 October 2009.

Any new ballot measure to sell Prop.K Medallions will be seen as weasel progeny (son of weasel?) and puts at risk worthy taxi reform that it is associated with. It will be divisive and destructive. To me, selling K Medallions is really just a system of fee charging for line jumping.

**REVISED**  
**MEDALLION HOLDER/LEASE DRIVER RETIREMENT**

1. Medallion holders can choose to retire after age 65 at 75% of a standard \$2,000 a month check (\$1500 a month). \$500 a month is paid to a lease driver retirement fund. The \$500 is irreversible but a Medallion holder keeps the Medallion for life (neutral affect on list) and can return to work anytime. 10 years of retirement equals \$210,000.
2. The lease driver retirement fund will receive co-support from the sale of new unbridled City Issued Medallions. The only restriction is that they are sold only to wait listees, lessees or Medallion holders. They can be called Capital Medallions.
3. The sale of approximately 3 Medallions (at \$300K/Med.) a year will help support 100-200 lease retirees. 10 Medallions a year will help support 500-1,000. Money from these sales will also support the Taxi Director's office and activities and the driver benevolent fund available to any class of driver. In 30 years there will be about 3,000 cabs on the street. 90 to 300 of those will be Capital Medallions under the examples cited above. It will remain a healthy K system and a fair system supporting retirement.

This plan is possible and was only conceived after seeing the Taxi Director's vision of some hybrid system as being the framework for a workable way into the future.

**REPAIRING THE WAITING LIST**

1. Stop adding to the list.
2. Triage the list; active drivers only. (Check every listee annually at "A" card renewal time. Taxi Company employees already listed drive 1 shift per mo.)
3. Reduce list below 1500; then for every 100 positions advanced, 100 positions are opened to auction bidding by qualified drivers. (If a stringent audit doesn't trim list to 1500, those over that limit are going to be stickler. People with just a few years on the waiting list can go into the auction process. Ideas are welcome to achieve a fair solution if there are any remaining listees.)

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