

Ron Wolter

Christlaine Hayashi  
Director of Taxis, MTA  
1 South Van Ness Ave, 7th floor  
San Francisco, CA 94103

RECEIVED

21 December 2009

DEC 29 2009

SFMTA Division of Taxis &

Re: DRAFT - TAXI INDUSTRY REFORM - STAFF RECOMMENDATION (14 December 2009)

Dear Ms. Hayashi:

This draft proposal identifies a problem, "The legacy of Proposition K is a population of medallion holders who are too elderly to drive but who cannot afford to give up their medallions."

The proposal does address this, but suggests a complex fixed price sale proposal. Allowing the permits to be sold may be an irreversible action and grants the permittee additional property rights outside of The City's control. Paying interest on the loan is an additional cost that will probably drive up meter rates.

I really can't object strongly to "Post K" medallions being sold. It would be a benefit to me.

The proposal suggests "All 'Post K' Medallion holders who are age 60 or over with at least 20 years of A-card seniority would be eligible to sell their medallion." Along with permanently disabled Post K permittees, the group is correctly identified.

I think it might just be simpler to exempt these older drivers from the full time driver requirement.

On page two, the proposal goes far afield from the problem of elderly Post K medallion holders. Allowing Pre K medallion holders to sell has nothing to do with this problem. The voters were clear in 1978 that these permits could not be sold and should be issued to active drivers. In fact these permits are coming back to The City at an increasing pace. I urge you remove this from your proposal.

Medallions should continue to be issued to drivers on the applicant list.

I can't find Corporate permit holders in the written proposal. These permits should be revoked and issued to active drivers.

It may be helpful to spell out what the goals of this reform are. In Town Hall meetings, you explained that one goal of this Taxi Reform is for The City to receive income from the Taxi permits. If you must do this, it might be less problematic for The City to lease out a portion of the permits (rather than sell them). I understand this is being done on a small scale right now.

As I explained in my previous letter, Prop K has worked well when properly implemented. Any reform should narrowly address some problems while allowing working drivers to operate taxi permits. The sale of permits is not necessary. The sale of Pre K permits is just plain wrong, does nothing to improve taxi service, and would burden new permittees with additional costs.

Thank you,

Ron Wolter

Ron Wolter

Christiane Hayashi  
Director of Taxes  
1 South Van Ness Ave, 7th floor  
San Francisco, CA 94103

27 March 2009

**COPY**

Dear Ms. Hayashi:

I'm writing in regard to proposed changes to Proposition K. Let me start with a quote from Quentin Kopp (the author of Prop K): "The primary purpose of Proposition K was to place permits in the hands of working drivers."

I believe that when properly implemented, Prop K is working very well and shouldn't be dramatically changed. Prop K provides opportunity to working drivers.

I'm a full time driver and hold taxi medallion #1252. Prop K has given me the opportunity to operate a taxicab business. The cab I drive is a safe, well maintained vehicle because I personally drive it. It gets good gas mileage because I buy gas for it. I'm with a properly run company because I work there. I use a good dispatch service because that's how I get business.

This works well for taxi passengers, it also works well for the other drivers on the vehicle.

The opposite situation is absentee ownership of medallions. An investor in taxicab permits only has incentive to get a high lease income and resale value.

Over time, some problems with Prop K have emerged:

1) Permits were issued to non-drivers. For many years The City did not require the applicant to have any taxi driving experience. In fact, medallions were issued to people who did not hold a license to drive a taxi. The Taxi Commission has changed rules to correct this, but this is an ongoing problem. Any action you take may reward people who have never been in compliance with the full time driver requirement.

I urge the MTA to revoke medallions that are held by unqualified people.

2) Corporate permits.

I urge the MTA to revoke corporate permits and issue those medallions to qualified drivers.

3) Medallion holders eventually have ill health or grow old. The Taxi Commission has changed some rules to allow reasonable accommodation under the ADA. There are drivers who have been in compliance with the full time driver requirement, but rightly would like to retire with some income. Under current rules your duties include taking permits from elderly and handicapped people.

The MTA should look seriously at proposals that allow long time drivers to auction their permits to current full time drivers. This would require a change in Prop K. Beware of proposals that allow non-complying permittees to sell the medallion. (I hope to provide more specific comment on this in the future.)

I am aware of a couple proposals that the MTA should reject. This idea that the City can raise money by leasing out medallions should be rejected. The draining of money out of the industry will degrade taxi service and working conditions. This goes against the basic principle of Prop K. The proposal from UTW would burden the medallion with excessive costs, and should also be rejected.

In summary, please allow me to continue with my taxi business. The problem with ill or old permittees will need to be addressed. Do not make changes that deny full time drivers the opportunity to operate their own medallion.

Sincerely,



Ron Wolter

Source of quote: Declaration of Quentin Kopp to Board of Appeals, March 18, 1998.

**COPY**