

TAXI FACTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

THEY DO THINGS BIG IN TEXAS:

Houston's Yellow Cab Service Corporation's facilities occupy five city blocks at 1406 Hays, about two miles north of downtown Houston.

THEY DO THINGS COMPLICATED IN D.C.:

(Danny, a dispatcher, explains as follows:)

I should explain our system here as we are still kind of in the dark ages as far as the taxi industry goes. We do not have meters! The city is divided into about 50 different zones. A large river runs thru the center of the city and is used as a dividing point. There are many different formulas used to figure out fares depending on if you are on the north or southside of the river. Each zone has a price to travel to or within that zone. The farther you get from the center of the city, the more it will cost you to go there. If you are crossing from the north side of the river to the south side, the two prices are added together and \$2.50 subtracted off of the total and that determines your fare. Example, $\$5.50 + \$4.75 - \$ 2.50 = \7.75 fare. The fare is then relayed to the driver so that he/she knows what to charge the customer.

Dispatching is not an easy task here. A dispatcher must know the map extremely well. You must also learn the prices for each zone very well. Although you have a zoned map to look at, you don't have time to look at it each time you have to give a price. At the company in which I work, there is one phone answerer and one dispatcher per shift. We run 30 cars. Drivers are paid on commission so you have to be very fair to keep the drivers as happy as possible.

THEY DO THINGS IN BIG NUMBERS IN NYC:

1. There are 40,000 licensed taxi drivers and 11,787 licensed taxicabs in New York City.
2. 226 million people rode in NY taxicabs in 1993.
3. Passengers paid \$1.0 billion in fares and tips in 1993.
4. On an average day, drivers serve 30 fares, travel 141 miles and gross \$190 in fares and tips.
5. Driver take-home pay averages \$6.26 to \$8.24 per hour.
6. 69% of all trips carry one passenger, compared with 24% that carry 2 passengers, 4% carry 3 passengers and 3% carry 4 passengers.

7. About 400 new drivers are licensed each month.
8. 30% of driver applicants failed the English test between July 1993 and March 1994.
9. New drivers come from 85 countries and speak 60 languages.
10. 1.1% of all licensed drivers are women.
11. 3,670 taxicabs are driven by the medallion owner. 20% of these are leased to a second driver for a second shift. Most other cabs leased to two drivers on a double-shift basis.
12. 4 years is the average age of a taxi.
13. 13,595 taxicab licenses were outstanding when the number was capped in 1937. The number of taxicabs declined to the current 11,787 by the late 1940s as some owners let their licenses expire.
14. The current form of medallion number (e.g., 1A23) was adopted in 1965. Before 1965, taxicabs were assigned a new sequential number each year.
15. Yellow became the uniform color for all cabs in 1969 to distinguish them from "gypsy" cabs. Before 1969, cabs were painted in a variety of color schemes.
16. 8 Checker cabs are still on the road, all between 13 and 19 years old.

THE EFFECT OF THE LEASE SYSTEM:

in the early 80's, most taxicab companies converted from commission-paid drivers to the lease system, this makes the driver an "independent contractor", paying the company or cab owner a set lease, paying for his own fuel, and keeping the rest, when there is something left to keep. the following, from a study by NY taxi regulators, shows the results:

FLEET DRIVER AND OWNER INCOME, 1981 AND 1986.

	1981	1986	
Fare revenue per shift.....	\$99.91...	\$114.49	
Evening surcharge.....	5.32.....	5.38	
Tips.....	15.78.....	17.98	
Total revenue.....	121.01.....	137.85.....	(+14%)
Owner gross income.....	45.27.....	60.00	
Owner gross for comparable operating expenses & profit	33.12.....	56.95.....	(+72%)
Driver cash take-home from fares...	39.49.....	46.37	
Tips.....	15.78.....	17.98	

Subtotal (cash compensation).....	55.27	64.35....	(+16%)
Value of fringe benefits	14.19.....		3.05	
Total driver compensation.....	75.74.....		67.39.....	(-11%)

the fringe benefits to which they refer are such luxuries as the employers' portion of social security and medical insurance, which most employees expect, but which independent contractors do not get. we do not even get workman's compensation in Arizona.

it should also be noted that owner-operators of taxis get to keep little of the increased owner profit. if they contract with a taxi company, they pay a fee to the company as well, and their vehicle purchase and maintenance costs are much higher as individuals than those of fleet-owners.

SPREAD IN L. A.

United Taxi and Valley Cab, the two licensed companies in San Fernando Valley, have about 180 cabs between them to serve 1.279 million people, or one cab for every 7,000 residents. by comparison, eight companies, running nearly 2,000 cabs, are licensed to serve the basin, for a ratio of one cab for every 1,250 people.

some there feel they need more cabs in the San Fernando Valley, since the cities there are less strictly suburban than they used to be, but the manager of one company says there isn't enough business for the cabs they do have.

in the L. A. area, a cab company has to be licensed by each city to pick up within its borders. since Los Angeles is surrounded by contiguous jigsaw puzzle of suburban cities and unincorporated areas, drivers often have to deadhead past potential fares to return to their legal area.

wonder if anyone has thought of letting the COUNTY do the licensing?

MAXI-MEXI-CABS

According to official data, 80,000 taxicabs, generating 780,000 rides daily, circulate in Mexico City, and fewer than 10 assaults are committed per day in cabs.

nevertheless, Mexican officials suggest that tourists always check their taxi's license plate and the driver's license to make sure both are real before getting in. and, they say, check to see that no one is FOLLOWING your cab.

NEW YORK -- When Johnnie Footman turns 80 on Sunday, he won't be celebrating at home with his friends and

family. He'll be right where he has been most of his life:
behind the wheel of a yellow cab somewhere in New York City.

Footman has swerved in and out of the unruly traffic for 53 years,
delivering beleaguered tourists to the airport, rushing harried
commuters to work, honking at careless drivers and all the while
surviving countless near collisions.

"There's nothing else for me to do," said Footman,
"The driving -- it's like some people go dancing.
It's part of me now."

Footman may be the city's oldest taxi driver, although
that is difficult to prove because records are not kept by
a driver's age, according to the New York City
Taxi and Limousine Commission.

Footman has a nearly spotless driving record. He got his first
speeding ticket in May for driving 43 miles per hour
in a 30 mph zone on First Avenue. "I was just following
the traffic," he said.

London taxi drivers can refuse journeys over 6 miles.

--captain rat, your rodent reporter
