

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Gregory Stock  
**Date Submitted:** 11/15/2019 03:54 PM  
**Council File No:** 19-0104-S1  
**Comments for Public Posting:** OpEd by Leon Slomovic, a taxi driver in Los Angeles for 18 years in City News.

# Don't Kill the Taxi Industry

LEON SLOMOVIC / 14 NOVEMBER 2019



**GUEST WORDS**-It is not easy driving a taxi in Los Angeles. The city is expensive to live in, our gas prices continue to increase, and we all know how difficult it is to get around. But what makes it even harder for taxi drivers is that the city government is acting like they want our industry to die.

Just last week, LAX ended the last advantage that taxis had – curbside pick-up. By removing curbside pick-up, the City has severely handicapped our ability to succeed. According to the Taxi Workers Association of Los Angeles, we have already lost about 35% of our tip income since Uber and Lyft began operating at the airport.

Now, our ability to be the first transportation option when a traveler exits baggage claim is gone. Instead, to ride a taxi, you have to take a shuttle and wait at the same lot where Ubers and Lyfts are given multiple lanes to operate.

Our situation was already bleak before this change. Many drivers work as much as 70 hours a week and are making less than minimum wage. There are days when I go for hours unpaid while waiting for passengers to pick-up.

It has only been getting worse since the City opened the doors for Uber and Lyft to operate. Their operations are similar to ours, but taxis have different pick-up rules and restrictions on how and where we can operate. Uber and Lyft can operate as they please while taxis must rely on changes to outdated rules.

But the changes to those rules seem to be going in the wrong direction. Closing off our advantage at the airport is just the latest attack on our livelihood. Months ago, the City Council decided that we could no longer earn supplemental income from rooftop advertising. This makes no sense as Los Angeles previously allowed these advertisements earlier this decade and every major U.S. city allows for taxi drivers to earn money from advertising.

What is worse is that Uber and Lyft are allowed to make money through rooftop advertising while we are prohibited. Their drivers can earn as much as \$300 a month. This amounts to an increase of nearly 20% of their salary. And they earn this money without having to drive more than they are already on the road. This income makes a difference. It helps pay for rising gas and insurance expenses and allows these drivers to support their families.

It makes no sense that taxi drivers cannot earn this additional income. Especially after the City decided to make our ability to earn money at the airport more difficult.

The taxi industry is literally dying and all we want is a chance to earn a living. We want to be able to be competitive at the airport and earn supplemental income through advertising.

These are not difficult requests when you look at what other cities have done. But our survival is dependent on politicians in City Hall deciding whether they want to do the right thing or continue to do nothing.

*(Leon Slomovic has been a taxi driver in Los Angeles for 18 years.)*

-CW

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## Communication from Public

**Name:** Gregory Stock  
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**Comments for Public Posting:** A Letter from the LA Police Foundation in support of the proposal.



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November 12, 2019

Los Angeles City Council  
Los Angeles City Hall  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUBJECT: Letter in support of the Martinez-O'Farrell Motion

Dear Los Angeles City Councilmembers:

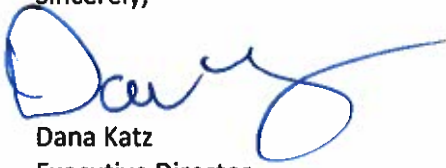
On behalf of the Los Angeles Police Foundation, I am writing in support of the proposed motion to create a pilot for taxis to display digital rooftop advertising. We applaud the Council on finding a solution for ensuring that our City takes advantage of innovative technologies while focusing the benefits on one of our most struggling industries. Our city's taxi drivers are falling further behind and this opportunity helps these drivers, businesses and the community.

Digital rooftop advertising is an innovative technology that is driving the future of communications. Through the technology, businesses are able to reach a diverse population at a high frequency. This technology provides a greater opportunity for minority-owned businesses in Los Angeles to advertise throughout the region and generate brand awareness through targeted geo-fenced advertisements. It also provides a minimum of 10 percent of its advertising space for nonprofits and community groups to share information. This has included public safety messages for Amber Alerts, as well as general public service announcements on important topics like the Census.

In addition to the business and community benefits of digital rooftop advertising, the proposed pilot will help our struggling taxi industry avoid extinction. Since the arrival of transportation network companies in 2012, it's been reported that taxi trips have declined by more than 30%. The only remaining competitive advantage for the taxi industry of curbside terminal lines at LAX has recently been taken away with the formation of LAX-IT. By enabling taxi drivers to earn supplemental income by as much as \$300 a month through partnerships with companies like Firefly, this motion will help the taxi industry remain competitive by helping drivers earn needed additional revenue.

For these reasons, we urge you to support the Martinez-O'Farrell motion; we appreciate your consideration. Please contact me with any question at [dana@supportlapd.org](mailto:dana@supportlapd.org) or (213) 489-4636.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dana', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Dana Katz  
Executive Director