



Hail a cab with text messages?

Proposal would allow potential passengers to dial '*T' for a taxi

GREENWICH VILLAGE Hailing a taxi could be as simple as checking your voicemail or sending a text message.

If the ideas presented at yesterday's "Designing the Taxi" workshop, organized by the Design Trust for Public Space, hit the streets, all you'll need to do is dial "*T," for taxi, and send a text message for a pickup.

"The taxi is ubiquitous and iconic," said Paul Goldberger, the dean of the Parsons School of Design and architecture critic for the New Yorker, in his introductory remarks yesterday at

Your turn
How could city taxis be improved?

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New School University. "In New York, at least, it is neither beautiful,

nor lovable, nor practical."

To change this, the program brought everyone on board — cab drivers, fleet owners, urban planners, graphic designers and the Taxi and Limousine Commission.

Harris Silver, of pedestrian rights group CityStreets, wants to integrate existing technology — like cell phone text messaging — with the cars.

"You have 308 million miles driven by taxis just strolling for people," and, he said, those could be cut down by dialing "*T" for a cab. Silver also suggested a system where riders could



KURT ANDERSON moderates a presentation on taxi design yesterday at the New School University in Greenwich Village.

opt into a ride share if they're going in the same direction.

Silver's dream taxi is a "cabsule," a tall, narrow vehicle with doors that slide open to prevent "dooring" bicycle riders and is wheelchair accessible. The cabsule also would be a cashless operation. Passengers would use a "personal easy pass" to pay for rides (the TLC is already considering something similar).

Erhan Tuncel, a cab driver, made a presentation that focused on "relief stops" for cabbies — places where they can park their cars for an hour and take breaks. He said drivers need more than the roughly 20 such places around the city.

Matthew Daus, the TLC chairman, called the presentations "refreshing" and "forward thinking."

"Here we have the people in the industry, who know

about the functionality, and the riding public knows the aesthetics," Daus said. But he pointed to his yellow tie, saying the cabs must remain that color.

Not everyone liked the plans.

Ray Kottner, a cab driver of 59 years, said, "What they're talking about is irrelevant." His plan: "Basically, taxi cabs in New York City should be driven by trained police officers, each one

armed, they can patrol the streets and issue tickets and each one owns his own cab and keeps the money from the fares. It solves the problem of getting more cops and paying for them."



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