

## Clean Air Taxi Background History

The American taxi industry in the period following WWII has been enormously loyal to just a couple different vehicles. The Checker Marathon, built in Kalamazoo, Michigan, was a sturdy and familiar presence in American cities for forty years. Since the 1970's, the Ford Crown Victoria has been the predominant vehicle in police forces and taxi fleets. Recent actions in cities like San Francisco and New York have made it clear that the time has come for a new generation of cleaner, lower emission taxis to emerge.

- [Taxi Task Force of 1997-1998](#)
- [Compressed Natural Gas \(CNG\) Experience](#)
- [Hybrid Experience](#)
- [Greenhouse Gas \(GHG\) Reduction Focus](#)

### **Taxi Task Force of 1997-1998**

In 1997, Mayor Willie Brown convened the Taxi Task Force to comprehensively look at all taxi issues in San Francisco. There were twenty-eight members of this group, which was chaired by then Supervisor, now Mayor, Gavin Newsom. The group recommended, among other things, 500 more cabs, gate control, in-cab security cameras, and the creation of the Taxi Commission, all of which have been implemented. The group also considered whether or not there was a cleaner alternative to the Crown Victoria.

### **Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Experience**

The only alternative in the late 1990's was the CNG Crown Victoria, which Ford began to offer in 1999. Yellow Cab introduced the first two vehicles in 1999 and eventually this fleet grew to the 100 or so that are currently in use. The Airport grants CNG taxis head of the line privilege once per shift, which has both encouraged the purchase of the vehicles and saved drivers money. This incentive however obviously cannot be extended to the fleet as a whole. CNG has many advantages and some significant disadvantages. It is a domestically produced fuel that is much cleaner burning than gasoline, and it produces less greenhouse gas emissions when measured on a well-to-wheels basis. However, there are few vehicles available and the fueling infrastructure in San Francisco and the Bay Area is inadequate.

It is also unclear how much longer the Ford Crown Victoria, which has not been available as Original Manufacturers Equipment since 2004 and must be retrofitted with a CNG fueling system, will be available.

### **Hybrid Experience**

Gas/electric hybrid vehicles first appeared in America early in this decade. San Francisco's first hybrid taxi was a Toyota Prius used by Metro Cab #64 in 2003. The first fleet of hybrid taxis anywhere in America hit the streets of San Francisco in November 2004, with fifteen Ford Escape hybrids operated by Yellow and Luxor cabs. In 2005, New York City introduced its first hybrid taxis. Hybrids have been strongly embraced by

drivers due to the tremendous savings in fuel cost. Cab company managers for the most part, have been open minded, waiting to see how the vehicles hold up to the grueling conditions of a San Francisco taxi. As vehicles like the Prius and Escape have successfully logged more than three years as taxis, companies are becoming more amenable to the idea of hybrids. Green Cab, for instance has made a commitment to using hybrids only since its founding in 2007. Currently, there are 182 hybrids operating in San Francisco, some with more than 250,000 miles on them.

### **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Focus**

The Taxi Commission policy as reflected in this document of reducing GHG in the taxi fleet by 20% from 1990 levels by 2012 has its roots in several state and local and even international policy goals. The idea of using 1990 as a baseline year and reducing emissions by 10% from 1990 levels is contained in the Kyoto Protocol, an International agreement which the United State signed but which the Senate did not ratify. In 1995, hundreds of San Franciscans came together to draft the Sustainability Plan, which led to the creation of the Department of the Environment and focused attention on reducing pollution from the electricity and transportation sectors. In 2002, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed resolution 158-02, which committed the city as a whole to reduce its GHG emissions by 20% from 1990 levels by 2012, doubling the Kyoto Protocol target. In 2004, Mayor Newsom issued the Climate Action Plan, which describes how the City will meet GHG reduction goal in great detail. Finally in June 2007, the Taxi Commission passed resolution 2007-21, which called for the SF taxi industry to reduce GHG emissions by 20% from 1990 levels and 50% from current levels by 2012, as well as to work to offset remaining emissions with investments in renewable energy or energy efficiency by 2015, and to move to a Zero Emissions taxi by 2020.