



San Francisco's taxis may look yellow, but they're really green



Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom eyes a hybrid cab (Credit: Getty Images)

It's often next to impossible to get a San Francisco taxi cab to stop for you when you need it, but take heart: at least that flash of yellow carrying some other lucky soul is doing less damage to the earth than it used to.

City officials traipsed out to the Yellow Cab headquarters on the southern edge of Potrero Hill today to announce the city's taxi fleet has exceeded the 2008 goal of by this year reducing per-vehicle greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent below 1990 levels. The fleet has actually reduced its emissions, on a per-car basis, by 49 percent. And, despite what it seems like when you're trying to flag one, there are actually 1,432 cabs on the streets today compared to the 821 that motored around in 1990 - meaning overall emissions from the fleet have been reduced by 10 percent. (This math comes courtesy of the mayor's office, by the way. We at City Insider try to avoid math at all costs.)

Phasing in hybrid electric and compressed natural gas cabs into the fleet has resulted in 35,139 fewer metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions being spewed into our skies, the same as taking 6,890 cars off the road each year. Also, it has saved cab drivers \$11 million in gas costs each year.

Mayor Ed Lee, who was so perky about the news we suspect he had an extra shot of espresso on the way to the event, called these statistics "very nice numbers."

"I think it's fun when you can achieve environmental goals," Lee said. "This is what makes it fun to be mayor."

Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom, who as mayor set the original taxi goal, was also on hand. His move from City Hall to Sacramento has not, it seems, resulted in any fewer life coach-style mantras. "Once a mind is stretched, it never goes back to its original form," Newsom assured the crowd.

David Chiu, president of the Board of Supervisors, and the proud owner of no car, was a little late to the event. He said he had to borrow his girlfriend's car to get there because - you guessed it - he couldn't hail a cab.