

# The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

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The four newly designed taxicabs now being built for the City Taxi exhibition opening at The Museum of Modern Art on June 17 are even roomier than the famous London cab, and very "clean" from the viewpoint of air pollution, Emilio Ambasz, Curator of Design at the Museum and director of the exhibition, revealed today. This exhibition is made possible by grants from Mobil Oil Corporation and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration of the United States Department of Transportation.

At the Museum's invitation, two American and two European car manufacturers are now producing four new working prototypes of taxicabs, based on specifications developed by the Museum. The American manufacturers, American Machine and Foundry and Steam Power Systems, both of California, are working under a contract from the United States Department of Transportation. The European companies are Volvo and Volkswagen. After the exhibition, the prototypes will be tested by the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission.

The International Taxicab Association is co-sponsoring this exhibition together with the New York City Taxi Drivers' Union, and all taxi drivers and their families will be admitted free to the show as a courtesy.

The Museum, with the aid of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, engineering consultants, representatives of New York City taxi fleet owners and private taxi owners, has drafted a Manual of Design Specifications for an urban vehicle which might serve as a taxi. As the goal of the Museum was not to engage in an academic exercise but rather to obtain the cooperation of the automobile industry in producing real working prototypes which can be tested by professional taxi drivers in some of America's cities, independent designers and schools of design were omitted. The goal was arriving at a realistic vehicle which can be produced

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at a reasonable price, and which would better serve the needs of the taxi industry, the drivers, and the passengers.

More than 10 American vehicle manufacturers were formally approached, among them Ford, General Motors, Chrysler and American Motors. Each of them declined to participate. The Department of Transportation consequently made funds available for two American companies who would be willing to submit a vehicle answering to the Manual's specifications. Responding to this invitation for bids, American Machine and Foundry, Inc. and Steam Power System each got a contract. In addition, the Museum decided to invite European manufacturers who would commit themselves to mass produce such a taxi in the United States. Volvo, which is presently building a 100,000-car-capacity factory in Chesapeake, Virginia, accepted the Museum's invitation. In addition, Volkswagen was invited on the understanding that they would, before 1980, have a factory in America.

Included will be the following working prototypes:

American Machine and Foundry and Steam Power Systems will present two different 3-to-4 passenger prototypes operating on a steam propulsion plant.

Volvo will present a city taxi prototype for 3-to-4 passengers, a completely new body design and a new propulsion plant.

Volkswagen will present a 4-to-5 passenger prototype equipped with a new hybrid-electrical system of propulsion.

Among the factors the companies have been asked to consider in designing these new working prototypes are the safety and comfort of the driver, ease of communication with passenger, ease of loading and unloading baggage. From the point of view of fleet owners, the new designs are to be more efficient and economical to operate and maintain. From the point of view of the passenger, they are to be more comfortable and efficient, roomy enough to allow a mother

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with a baby carriage or a handicapped person in a wheelchair to enter. From the point of view of the city, the prototypes will be designed with the serious intention of reducing pollution and traffic congestion.

Regarding the far-reaching potential of the project, Mr. Ambasz says, "An urban vehicle specially conceived as a taxi and designed for meeting urban traffic conditions could considerably improve the quality of life in the urban environment as it would use less energy, reduce air pollution, cut traffic congestion, as well as provide safe and comfortable accommodations for passengers and luggage." He adds that in the United States the standard six-passenger sedan typically chosen for taxi service is unsatisfactory for congested urban environments. For over half its service time the cab is occupied by the driver alone, while typical revenue occupancy in New York City, for example, is only about 1.5 persons. "Since the manufacturers have the firm intention of producing these taxis, it is hoped that this program will promote the manufacture and introduction of a more suitable taxicab vehicle before the end of this decade," Mr. Ambasz says.

The exhibition will also include photo enlargements of taxis of the past from the United States and abroad.

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Additional press information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019.  
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FOR RELEASE: JUNE 18, 1976

The four newly designed taxicabs now being built for The Taxi Project: Realistic Solutions for Today exhibition opening at The Museum of Modern Art on June 18 are even roomier than the famous London cab, and very "clean" from the viewpoint of air pollution, explained Emilio Ambasz, Curator of Design at the Museum and director of the exhibition. This exhibition is made possible by grants from Mobil Oil Corporation and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration of the United States Department of Transportation.

At the Museum's invitation, two American and two European car manufacturers are now producing four new working prototypes of taxicabs, based on specifications developed by the Museum. The American manufacturers, American Machine and Foundry and Steam Power Systems, both of California, are working under a contract from the United States Department of Transportation. The European companies are Volvo and Volkswagen.

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