MA Clean Cities Coalition facilitates partnership for cleaner taxis.

John Moore, a local architect and environmentalist, approached the Massachusetts Clean Cities Coalition with an idea to study energy inefficiencies of Boston taxis. The organization was the best place to meet key players in alternative fuels, people with experience in policy, grants, and emerging technologies. At a Clean Cities meeting Moore met Paul Shoemaker from the Boston Public Health Commission. The two set out to put together a demonstration study. The Clean Cities Coalition helped them find Ford Fleet Services, who lent a Ford Escape Hybrid for a week's study, allowing John to shadow a typical Boston cab, driving exactly when and how the cab was driving. The result: the Crown Victoria cab used 10.25 gallons in 9 hours, driving 100 miles; the Escape Hybrid used 3.77 gallons.

John Moore with a Boston CleanAir Cab

During the test, one-third of his driving time was spent at a stop, either in traffic or waiting for a fare. That's why a hybrid does so well as a taxi. In stop-and-go traffic, it switches off the gas engine an utilizes the battery-driven electric motor, which produces no emissions. Moore went back to the Public Health Commission with the data. They met with Boston's environmental department, and the city's Hackney division, the head of which was receptive from the start. He approved two hybrid models, the Ford Escape and the Toyota Camry. Ford's Crown Victoria makes a good taxi because of its ample legroom and luggage space, even with a partition between the front and back seats. To keep the Crown Victoria style in the mix, Hackney inspectors also approved a retrofit of the sedan powered by compressed natural gas (CNG). Natural gas is promoted by several active Clean Cities experts like Mike Manning of Keyspan Energy, Garnet Glover of Clean Energy Fuels Corp., and Nick Burns of AVSG.

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino jumping in a CleanAir Cab

In order to get cleaner, more efficient cabs on the road, Moore approached the Boston Cab Association, an organization that was hard to convince to spend a much higher initial price on a hybrid or CNG conversion. However, like the head of the Hackney Division, the owner of the Boston Cab Association had a spouse talking about cleaner/more efficient vehicles. After taking an excursion to New York City with Moore, there seeing firsthand a taxi company using hybrids, the owner was convinced and ordered ten new Toyota Camry hybrids. In the fall of 2006, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino announced the City's incentive program and unveiled the city's first "CleanAir Cab," with its signature green stripe. Drivers reported happy customers and bigger tips. A 28-day study indicated fuel-use averaging 33.6 mpg in the city, a 70% savings over a traditional, used Crown Victoria.

When traveling to San Francisco, Moore witnessed front-of-line privileges for alternative-fuel taxis at the airport, a successful incentive; so, back at MA Clean Cities, he met with Jacki Wilkins from the Massachusetts Port Authority, which oversees Logan Airport. By early 2007, Massport adopted a policy that CleanAir Cabs can move to the front of the taxi line twice per shift.

Moore credits the success of the study and introduction to the current positive attitudes towards fuel-savings and the partnership of the Clean Cities Coalition, led by Dave Rand of the MA Department of Energy Resources.

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For more information on the Massachusetts Clean Cities Coalition:
http://www.mass.gov/doer/cleancities/