



September 22, 2004

Wheel deal plan may be latest Hub taxi ad-dition

By Casey Ross

Did I just get cut off by a chalupa on wheels?

Boston motorists could soon be asking that question if a Los Angeles-based company wins approval to post advertisements on taxicab hubcaps.

AdFleet, whose clients include Taco Bell, Jiffy Lube, and Virgin Cola, has approached city officials with a proposal to loosen Boston's conservative policy on taxi advertising.

``In the outdoor advertising world, we're always looking for something new, something imaginative, something that will be memorable," AdFleet president Ian Klassen said yesterday. ``We don't think this is too intrusive."

So far, the proposal has made little headway with police officials who control where advertising can be placed on cabs. Unlike Los Angeles, New York and other major cities, Boston allows advertising only on cab roofs and interiors.

``We have a responsibility to keep an eye out for the public interest," said Mark Cohen, director of licensing for Boston police. ``Cabs were beginning to look like NASCAR, and they were not as easily identifiable to the public or police."

The hubcap ads, which work as non-rotating wheel covers, cost between \$150 to \$275 per car for a four-week cycle, with \$50 a month going to the cab driver.

Cohen said he has received a flurry of requests for advertisements in recent years, including wrap-around posters that would essentially turn taxis into moving billboards. He said the city recently allowed a pilot program to post small television advertisements in cabs, but the hubcap proposal has met with more resistance.

Klassen said his company respects the city's stance on the issue, but the advertising world does not thrive on taking no for an answer. ``We would very much welcome an opportunity to make a proposal to the city," he said.