

The Museum of Modern Art

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NO. 51
FOR RELEASE
JULY 9, 1975

FOUR NEWLY DESIGNED CITY TAXICABS TO BE EXHIBITED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The Museum of Modern Art, in June 1976, will exhibit four totally new working prototypes of city taxicabs designed to "improve the quality of urban life." Two European manufacturers, Volvo of Sweden (currently building a plant in the U.S.) and Volkswagen of Germany, have accepted the invitation of the Museum to design and build two of the new taxis; two American companies, AMF, Inc., Advanced Systems Laboratory of Santa Barbara and Steam Power Systems (SPS) of San Diego, are building new taxis under a contract from the U. S. Department of Transportation. The City Taxi Program, one of the most potentially far reaching ever launched by the Museum, has been conceived and is directed by Emilio Ambasz, the Museum's Curator of Design. It has been made possible by grants from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration of the U. S. Department of Transportation and Mobil Oil Corporation.

"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," Mr. Ambasz says. "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."

The City Taxi Program is intended to provide an appropriate "matching" of transport capability to payload by providing comfortably for three passengers, and acceptable levels of comfort for four. Appropriate levels of safety will

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be maintained for all occupants.

The prototypes, which will be actual working cars, will meet design standards developed by the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission at the specific request of the Museum. The Commission has agreed to test the cars on the streets after the exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in the late spring of 1976, and will use those vehicles to set standards to which all taxis must adhere in order to be approved for use in New York City after 1976.

The four manufacturers not only have accepted the design standards relating to passenger accommodations, luggage, space, comfort, driver security, vision requirements, and safety features, but also have the firm intent of mass producing the prototypes they submit. "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 Museum of Modern Art has often worked with industry and government agencies to improve the quality of industrial and architectural design, and to increase public awareness of the problems of the environment. Many classics of contemporary design, such as the chairs designed by Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, were the result of competitions and exhibitions organized by the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design. The Museum has presented three exhibitions of automobiles as well as many shows devoted to urban planning and housing.

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