Taxi! Five Firms Redesign the Yellow Cab

A group of experts has come together to redesign the transportation system formed by the yellow cab. Here's a look at their ideas:

The year 2007 will mark the 100th anniversary of the New York City taxi, and in honor of the occasion, a group of designers, urban planners, and city officials decided it's time to rethink the cab for the next century.

More than just an emblematic symbol of Manhattan, the taxi serves as a crucial form of transportation. Some 12,487 of these yellow medallion vehicles make an estimated 240 billion trips a year -- constituting a $1.4 billion industry, according to Schaller.

"NOT JUST A VEHICLE." But for years, the taxi has consisted of little more than a reconfigured Ford Crown Victoria passenger sedan. And improvements, like the addition of legroom and passenger-side air-conditioning, have been incremental and slow in coming.

The Design Trust for Public Space, a group dedicated to improving private and public space in New York City, has decided to change that. The organization, in cooperation with the Parsons School of Design, initiated a series of public workshops to address modern taxi problems and

"Good decision
He's too conservative.
Senate Democrats should oppose this nomination
Too bad the President didn't choose another woman jurist for the vacancy
Not sure

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reinvent the cab.

"The taxi is not just a vehicle but a system," says Deborah Marton, the Design Trust’s executive director. "A system is a public-space issue. It profoundly influences the way the city moves."

DIFFERENT NEEDS. A year in the making, the project, called Designing the Taxi, brought together some 60 participants -- from architects to fleet owners -- to offer their input on every aspect of the taxi experience. The only variable that was off-limits: the color yellow. The Design Trust plans to publish the findings of the workshops and present an exhibition in November, 2005.

"The taxi that we have now is just a car painted yellow and given a meter," says Paul Goldberger, dean of Parsons and former architecture critic of The New York Times. "The taxi is not a car. It has a different set of needs and functions in a very different way."

Here is a slide show of items which demonstrate some of the concepts and ideas associated with the anniversary celebration:

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Perman is a reporter for BusinessWeek Online in New York

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