

ALL HAIL THE YELLOW TAXI



The Kia Rondo cab (above); prototype cab stand has a built-in GPS.

Exhibit celebrates 100 years with a look ahead **BY GREG GATTUSO**

The yellow taxi is getting a makeover. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the gas-powered taxi in New York City, a coalition of designers, urban planners, fleet owners, cab drivers and other taxi experts have joined forces on a massive project that reimagines a new generation of taxi that's roomier, cleaner and easier to use.

The results will be unveiled at Taxi 07, a new exhibit opening today at the 2007 New York International Auto Show. Curated by the Design Trust for Public Space, the exhibit includes an array of concept cars, displays and full-scale "street treatments" that offer a glimpse into the future of the New York taxi experience.

The free exhibit, which runs through April 15, is located in the inner roadway of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center. Deborah Marton, executive director of the Design Trust for Public Space, said taxi cabs serve a completely different purpose than family sedans. Yet, over 90% of New York City taxis are essentially a repurposed family sedan — the Ford Crown Victoria.

"The Checker cab was made to be a taxi," Marton said. "But 25 years ago it was replaced by the Crown Vic. The Crown Vic is a tough car, and it served us well for 25 years. But after all the incremental improvements, you can't push the envelope any farther."

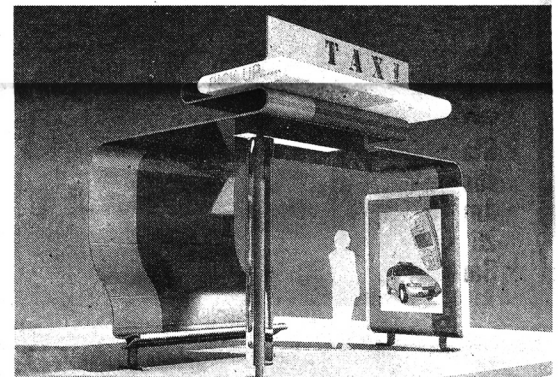
Illinois-based Standard Taxi will display its purpose-built taxi, which features a low floor, a high ceiling and an integrated ramp to accommodate passengers who use wheelchairs, walkers or motorized scooters. The Standard also offers a choice of three fuel systems: gasoline, ethanol or compressed natural gas.

Kia Motors America has contributed a 2007 Rondo that has been transformed or — "hacked up" — to become a New York City cab. The Rondo cab features an easy-to-read LED-based roof light from Antenna Design (the firm that designed the MTA's Metro-Card machines); a flip-down child seat from Birsell + Seck and new partition proposals from Smart Design.

The exhibit also includes a handful of other prototype cabs powered by alternative fuels, as well as proposed hailing areas, taxi stands and interactive screens that could help passengers estimate their fares, pay online and obtain tourist information.

"This technology already exists," Marton said. "It's not a matter of inventing it, it's a matter of integrating it into the system."

Taxi 07 also examines the taxi's past and present, with a collection of historic taxis and a film portrait of New York City taxi drivers. After the exhibit closes, the Design Trust for Public Space will release a strategic plan, Taxi 07: Roads Forward, in conjunction with the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission, that outlines long-term

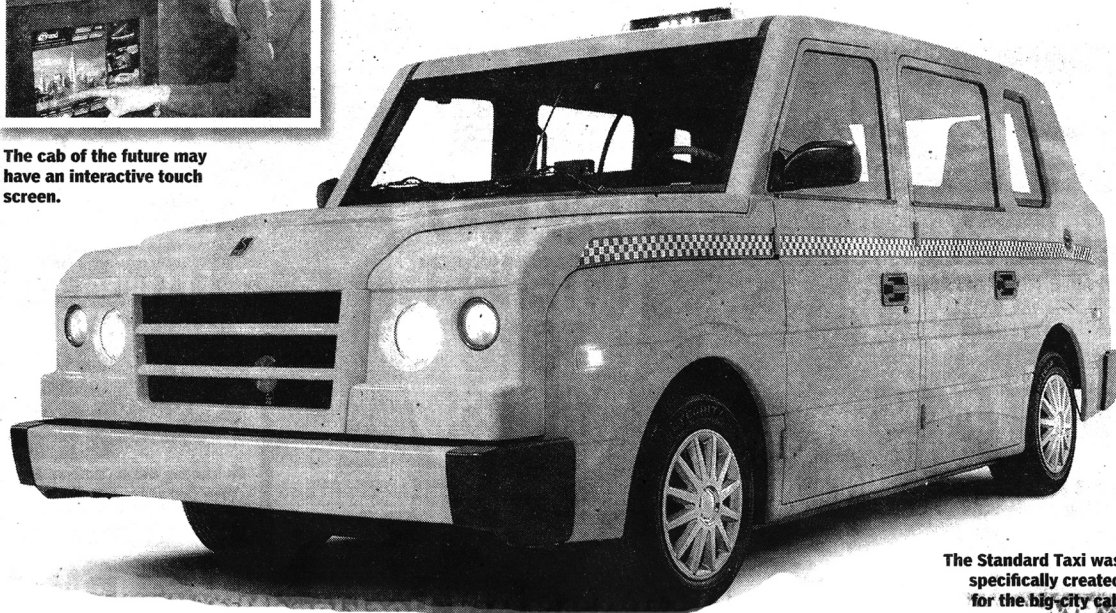


recommendations for improvements to the taxi system. The group also will launch a public awareness campaign to generate more interest in the taxi's future, Marton said.

"New York is the capital of the world, and it's the capital of design," she said. "Why shouldn't the taxi reflect our city's commitment to sustainable mobility, access for all and great design?"



The cab of the future may have an interactive touch screen.



The Standard Taxi was specifically created for the big-city cab market.

QUEUE UP FOR TAXI WEEK

Wondering why the Empire State Building was lit up in yellow this week? Mayor Bloomberg has declared April 6-15 "Taxi Week" in New York City to commemorate 100 years of the modern gas-powered taxi. To take part, check out Taxi 07 at the 2007 New York International Auto Show.

Where: Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, outdoors in the inner roadway. (Enter via stairs at 11th Ave. and 35th St., or through the lower level of Javits Center.)

When: Friday, April 6, through Sunday, April 15.

Hours: Mondays through Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.; Sundays, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Admission: Free

And if you still can't get enough taxi lore, the IFC Center presents "Fares to Remember," a series of great taxi movies, weekends through April 27, including Harold Lloyd's "Speedy," Martin Scorsese's "Taxi Driver," Mitchell Leisen's "Midnight," Neil Jordan's "Mona Lisa," James Cagney in "Taxi!" Phil Karlson's "99 River Street" and Jim Jarmusch's "Night on Earth." Check www.ifccenter.com for details.