

**Chicago Carriage Cab owner Simon Garber (left) talks to driver George Adibu (in red cap) after giving out \$50 gas gift cards to his employees. "Having been a cabdriver myself, I understand the financial pain my drivers are going through now," Garber said, referring to the high cost of gasoline. "I can't think of a segment of our society harder hit than cabdrivers."**

[ MILBERT O. BROWN/  
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# Cabbies feel gas crunch

**Taxi company owner gives out fuel cards, asks riders to tip more**

**By Kathryn Masterson**  
REDEYE

The owner of a local taxi company is spending more than \$30,000 to give his drivers a little relief from rising gas prices that cut into their take-home pay.

Simon Garber, owner of Chicago Carriage Cab, surprised drivers Wednesday morning by giving out \$50 gas cards at the company's South Side office Wednesday morning. He gave away cards to about 90 drivers and plans to give cards to the rest of the company's more than 600 drivers in the next several days.

Garber, who had been a cabbie at one

time, hopes his giveaway has the broader effect of raising rider awareness of the price pressure drivers are experiencing.

"Having been a cabdriver myself, I understand the financial pain my drivers are going through now," Garber said at a news conference at Chicago Carriage's cab barn, 2716 S. Wabash Ave.

"I hope that this small gesture helps call attention to the fact that while meter rates remain steady, gas prices keep rising, and that squeezes them in the middle," Garber said. "I can't think of a segment of our society harder hit than cabdrivers."

Drivers said they lease their cabs for about \$300 per 12-hour shift and are responsible for covering their own fuel costs. With gas prices hovering around \$3 a gallon, many have had to cut corners severely to make ends meet.

Driver Magdy Elasaawy is spending about \$90 more a week on fuel than he was at the beginning of the year, so the \$50 gas card was a nice boost, he said.

"I'm suffering," said Elasaawy, who lives in Bridgeview and drives from 4 a.m. to 3 p.m. six days a week. "I used to fill up the tank for \$27. Now, it is \$40, sometimes \$42 or \$43, which is a big difference."

In Chicago, the average cost of a gallon of regular gas was \$2.967 Wednesday, up from \$2.187 a year ago, according to AAA data.

Garber hopes riders show support for the drivers by tipping them more.

"Drivers need tips," Garber said. "They cannot change how much they charge. We would like for people to help. ... [The drivers] are doing a hell of a job." [ TRIBUNE CONTRIBUTED. ] [KMASTERTON@TRIBUNE.COM](mailto:KMASTERTON@TRIBUNE.COM)