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Kids to fuel cabs with flower power

BY MELANIE LEFKOWITZ
STAFF WRITER

First came the painted cow statues. Then the orange-draped "The Gates" in Central Park. And now, for three months in 2007, planners hope that more than 10,000 yellow cabs will be decorated with flower decals painted by children.

With "Garden in Transit," New York will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the metered taxi with, among other events, a massive public art project that could temporarily transform the city's landscape. Mayor Michael Bloomberg said yesterday it could be among the city's largest volunteer efforts ever.

Bernie Massey, an artist who, with his brother Ed Massey suggested the project to the city, said they hope as many as 12,000 of the city's 13,000 yellow taxis will participate.

"Think of this as a great opportunity to give thousands of kids, many of them sick and disabled, the thrill and pride of creating something that will travel the city streets and be seen by millions," Bloomberg said at a news conference in City Hall Park. "I have no doubt that the 'Garden in Transit' will do the same for yellow that 'The Gates' did for saffron."

The project won't cost the city anything. Massey said that if 12,000 cabs participate, the price tag for the decals will run "in the high seven figures," which the brothers' nonprofit organization will raise through private donations.