

# MINUTES

## MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM

### TAXICAB ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

May 24, 2023

[Clerk's note: Except where noted, public, staff and board member comments are paraphrased. The full comment can be heard by reviewing the recording at the [MTS website](#).]

1. Roll Call

Chair Elo-Rivera called the Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. A roll call sheet listing Taxicab Advisory Committee member attendance is attached.

2. Approval of Minutes

Chair Elo-Rivera moved to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2023, MTS Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting. Margo Tanguay seconded the motion, and the vote was 13 to 0 in favor, with Akbar Majid, Karen Higareda, and Michael Trimble absent.

3. Public Comments

There were no Public Comments.

#### DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. For-Hire Vehicle Industry Emerging Topic: Partnerships Between Taxicabs and Transportation Network Companies

Leonardo Fewell, For Hire Vehicle Administration Manager, continued the presentation he had began at the previous TAC meeting regarding the potential partnership between Yellow Cab and Uber. Mr. Fewell apologized for the perceived lack of clarity during the previous TAC and informed the committee that he would answer the questions that had been received by the FHVA regarding this topic since then.

Mr. Fewell presented that the partnership was based on a pilot program conducted by the San Francisco Metropolitan Transit Authority (SFMTA), where a customer could book trips with upfront fares through Taxi E-Hail apps or a third-party entity (Uber, Lyft, etc.). All trips would be considered taxi trips, as they were conducted in a SFMTA permitted vehicle.

MTS will be basing their approach on the SFMTA pilot program, and will begin to develop guidelines and revisions as more information and feedback becomes available.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Izzy Aala (Flywheel Technologies) detailed how as an e-hail app, they managed to begin a partnership with Uber in San Francisco. Mr. Aala also detailed the benefits that drivers will see as a result of the partnership, including more clarity regarding how much they will earn from trips.

#### MEMBER COMMENTS

Antonio Hueso asked Mr. Fewell if the taximeter would need to run during trips arranged through a third-party provider. Mr. Fewell answered that it would not, as the app would have already provided an upfront fare to the customer. Mr. Hueso went on to comment that Mr. Aala had previously worked with USA Radio Dispatch, and that he had been instrumental in a push toward integrating new technology with the taxi industry. Mr. Hueso also mentioned that he did

have some concerns about what hardware would be required of drivers to participate in this partnership.

Alfred Banks asked if taxi drivers would be required to have a tablet to partner with Uber. Mr. Fewell answered that they would need to have some electronic display, whether that was a phone or tablet, in order to interface with the Customer. Mr. Banks asked who would pay for the device and Mr. Fewell answered that they did not currently have that information. Mr. Banks also asked if drivers would be able to decline unfavorable trips, such as to LAX, and Mr. Fewell confirmed that they would be able to “opt-out”.

Able Seifu asked if in the future other companies wanted to partner with taxi drivers, what guidelines from MTS would they need to follow. Mr. Fewell answered that MTS is currently in the process of creating those guidelines, which would include feedback from the committee.

Peter Zschiesche asked if taxis were no longer running their meters to prevent “meter anxiety”, how would the customer know that they were not being overcharged for their trip. Mr. Fewell answered that in this scenario if the trip was booked through a third-party app then the meter fare would not apply.

David Tasem asked if customers would be obliged to pay for a more expensive fare booked through a third-party app if the meter showed a lower price at the end of a trip. Mr. Fewell answered that for a trip booked through a third-party app, the meter does not run. Mr. Tasem went on to ask how regulators would be able to distinguish between rides booked through a third-party app and those which required the meter be run. Mr. Fewell answered that inspectors would be able to go into the vehicle and see if the trip was brokered through a third-party app.

George Abraham commented that the technology was already here, but he urged drivers to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Mr. Seifu asked if there was a timeline on having the airport consider the question of taxi/TNC partnerships. Marc Nichols answered that the San Diego International Airport was ready to comply with an MTS regulated programs and just requested that they be notified in a timely manner so that they could comply. Mr. Seifu further asked for clarity on how drivers will be directed at the terminals with this partnership and Mr. Nichols said that depending on the kind of trip they would be directed accordingly.

Mr. Hueso recommended that TAC members do research on the various technologies, apps, and devices currently being used by taxi drivers.

Agustin Hodoyan asked how inspectors will police flat fares offered by drivers on soft meter technologies. Mr. Fewell answered that flat fares offered by drivers are not allowed unless the meter is running concurrently.

#### Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

#### 5. Taxicab Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) Policy Recommendations

Mr. Fewell presented on the developing FHVA policy regarding Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) and how it will incentivize the entry of Taxicab WAVs to the San Diego For-Hire Transportation market. The presentation included data collected from various dispatch services, MTS fixed route services, Sand Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), North County Transit District (NCTD), Facilitating Access to Coordinated Transportation (FACT), TAC

members, and peer agency reviews. Ultimately, the presentation concluded that waiving regulatory, application, and transfer fees would be the most effective method of increasing the number of WAVs in the San Diego taxicab industry. The presentation also recommended actions that other agencies could take that would incentivize the owning and operating of a WAV.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Izzy Aala commented that he first began his company to help process paratransit vouchers in Chicago, and he went on to do the same work in other cities. Mr. Aala recommended that the biggest incentive would be to guarantee a certain amount of work for drivers, which could be run through a centralized dispatch like Flywheel.

#### MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Hueso commented that as a member of the industry that had been providing service with WAVs, he felt that this was not an easy responsibility to lay on the taxi industry. He asked how many Non-Emergency Medical Transportation WAVs were operating in the city of San Diego. Mr. Fewell answered that there were 503. Mr. Hueso said that this information should be made more available to the general public, as they are better equipped to service that more specific market, and that any serious push for more taxicab WAVs must be joint venture among several agencies.

Mr. Banks asked when waiving the fees for WAVs would take effect. Mr. Fewell clarified that this was a draft policy and any waivers would not be implemented until the document was approved. Mr. Fewell assured Mr. Banks that any changes would be communicated to all permit holders once they went into effect.

Mr. Abraham commented that dispatch services had previously tried to maintain WAVs, but found that they were unprofitable and unsustainable.

Mr. Nichols pointed out that airport needs to work out the nuances of when passengers that do not require a ramp to board, use a taxicab WAV, in terms of if they can still get front of the line access at the airport taxicab stand. He also mentioned that the airport understood the difficulty of maintain WAVs and was willing to explore the recommendations made during the presentation.

Margo Tanguay stressed that more WAVs are required on the road at this time and going forward. Ms. Tanguay commented that the financial aspect was crucial, and that she supported the draft policy.

#### Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

#### 6. Review of Dispatch Service Technology and Requirements

Mr. Fewell presented on the current definition of “dispatch service”, the requirements that they must follow, and the regulations which govern them. The presentation outlined how recent trends in the taxicab industry have prompted a reevaluation of dispatch service regulations, which includes FHVA reaching out to dispatch service organizations to determine compliance. Going forward the FHVA will conduct research and determine if Ordinance No. 11 revisions may be appropriate.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

Marissa Fischer and Jennifer Yong commented that they own an NEMT business based in New Jersey, which utilizes a cloud-based dispatch called iCabbie. Ms. Yong expressed that she wanted to introduce the software to the market in San Diego for use by taxicabs.

Kamran Hamidi asked that MTS waive the \$50 dispatch service change fee, in order to promote accurate record keeping. Mr. Hamidi expressed his support for a review of the dispatch service requirements and encouraged cooperation amongst the garages.

Mr. Aala commented that current mobile phone technology means that dispatch services should strive for self-service by customers. Mr. Aala also commented that e-hailing creates more demand.

## MEMBER COMMENTS

Chair Elo-Rivera noted the time was 2:35 pm and asked committee members to keep conversations relatively brief and keep their comments as concise as possible. Chair Elo-Rivera asked Mr. Fewell what would be most helpful to hear from the committee in terms of feedback. Mr. Fewell noted that it would be most helpful to form a working group to receive feedback from the TAC

Mr. Banks asked if it was possible to have MTS regulate and inspect the information on driver's "Square App", as many are missing information. Mr. Fewell answered that we verify their electronic receipts, but unfortunately some drivers edit the information. Mr. Fewell expressed that hopefully this review of dispatch service requirements might ameliorate this issue.

Mr. Tasem commented that this review was overdue and that he hoped MTS would investigate what dispatch services were offering their subscribers.

Mr. Seifu commented that many drivers wanted to see the dispatch service requirement removed entirely. He also asked that Mr. Fewell set up the ad hoc meeting to discuss this topic.

Zewdu Girma expressed his support that the dispatch service requirement be removed.

Mr. Banks disagreed with Mr. Girma and Mr. Seifu, and argued that dispatch services are an important resource for drivers.

Ms. Tanguay agreed that dispatch services are an important for the safety of drivers and passengers.

Chair Elo-Rivera asked Mr. Fewell how he would like to assemble the working group. Mr. Fewell asked that interested committee members reach out to him and the FHVA office.

Mr. Fewell requested members who were interested in participating in the working group to contact him via telephone or e-mail.

## Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

7. For-Hire Vehicle Administration Operations Update

Mr. Fewell updated the committee on the general positive trends for permit renewals and new permit applications. He did point out that there has also been an increase in complaints received. Mr. Fewell waived the remainder of the presentation and invited committee members to reference the meeting packet for any further information.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments.

MEMBER COMMENTS

No member comments.

8. Topics for Next Taxicab Advisory Committee Meeting

Mr. Fewell stated that discussions will continue regarding taxi/TNC partnerships and on dispatch service requirements. The next meeting will also include discussions on advertisement opportunities at the San Diego International Airport and an updated FHVA Quarterly Report.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Seifu commented that he looked forward to the discussion regarding the advertisement opportunities.

Ms. Tanguay agreed that the discussion needed to continue regarding the dispatch service requirements.

Mr. Seifu asked Mr. Fewell to set up a meeting with Mr. Nichols and the airport.

Mr. Banks commented that dispatch services are instrumental in providing Lost and Found service.

Ms. Tanguay stated that there were no taxi advertisements in the most recent Yellow Page and that the industry needed to make a push to be more visible.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

9. Committee Member Communications and Other Business

There were no committee member communications or other business.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

10. Next Meeting Date

The next Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for July 12, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.

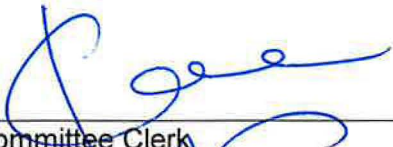
11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:53 p.m.



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Chairperson  
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System



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Committee Clerk  
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

Attachment: Roll Call Sheet



SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM  
TAXICAB ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) MEETING

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): May 24, 2023 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:03 PM

ADJOURN: 2:53 PM

COMMITTEE MEMBER	(Alternate)	ORGANIZATION	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
<b>Voting Committee Members</b>				
Sean Elo-Rivera (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Board of Directors/ SD City Council	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
Able Seifu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Odyssey Cab	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
Agustin Hodoyan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Soul Cab	1:03 PM	2:42 PM
Alfred Banks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
Akbar Majid	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / SDYC Holdings		
Antonio Hueso	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / USA Cab, LTD	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
David Tasem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	1:13 PM	2:42 PM
George Abraham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Daniel Fesshaye <input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Eritrean Cab	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
Karen Higareda	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Cross Border X-Press		
Louis Vasquez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Claudia Rubio <input type="checkbox"/>	SD Convention Center	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
Marc Nichols	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Anderson <input type="checkbox"/>	SD Regional Airport Authority	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
Margo Tanguay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
Michael Trimble	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	SD Gaslamp Quarter Association		
Michaelene Sullivan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	SD Tourism Authority	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
Mikail Hussein	<input type="checkbox"/> Peter Zschiesche <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	United Taxi Workers SD	1:03 PM	2:53 PM
Zewdu Girma	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Beezee Taxi	1:08 PM	2:53 PM
<b>Non – Voting Committee Members</b>				
Austin Shepherd	<input type="checkbox"/> John Kinkaid <input type="checkbox"/>	SD Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures		
Edna Rains	<input type="checkbox"/> Jessica Marty <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SD County Sheriff's Department Licensing Division	1:08 PM	2:53 PM

FOR COMMITTEE CLERK: \_\_\_\_\_

