

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

May 22, 2024

[Clerk's note: Except where noted, public, staff and Committee 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 1:02 p.m. A roll call sheet listing Taxicab Advisory Committee member attendance is attached.

**2. Public Comments**

There were no Public Comments.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

Committee Member Akbar Majid moved to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2024, MTS Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting. Committee Member David Tasem seconded the motion, and the vote was 12 to 0 in favor with Committee Member Zewdu Girma, Committee Member Antonio Hueso, Committee Member Mikail Hussein and Committee Member Michael Trimble absent.

**4. 2024 Regulatory Fee Payment Update (Leonardo Fewell)**

Leonardo Fewell, MTS For-Hire Vehicle Administration Manager, presented on the 2024 Regulatory Fee Payment. He presented on: a general update on the methods by which the 2024 Regulatory Fee Payments were billed and collected, the data on permits renewed or voided, the process by which permit holders who had voided permits may reapply for a new permit, and the deadline for applying for a Taxicab Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) fee waiver.

**Public Comment**

There were no Public Comments.

**Committee Comment**

There were no Committee Member Comments.

**Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

**5. Flat Rate Study for Airport Originated Trips (Leonardo Fewell)**

Mr. Fewell presented a Flat Rate Study for Airport Originated Trips. He provided details on: the research done by the For-Hire Vehicle Administration to possibly implement a "Flat Rate" for trips taken from the airport. The research included the results of a survey sent out to various domestic and international airports on their flat rate policies, as well as data on taxicab trips taken from the San Diego International Airport. The presentation concluded on the next steps that will be taken including another online survey in conjunction with other groups, which will be presented at a future Committee meeting.

### **Public Comment**

Andai Ogbagebriel – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Andai expressed opposition to splitting taxicab airport permits between alternating weekdays, a system known to drivers as “A/B” days.

Yohannes Hagos – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Yohannes expressed opposition to the San Diego International Airport implementing alternating days for operating taxicab permits.

### **Committee Comments**

Committee Member Banks clarified that MTS does not have any influence over the airport splitting permits to alternating days, and that he does not believe the airport has any intention of doing so.

Committee Member Tasem asked Committee Member Anderson why the airport transitioned from split or alternating days for taxicab permits to open access. Committee Member Anderson responded that this was a direction from the Regional Airport Authority Board. Committee Member Tasem requested further clarification. Committee Member Anderson responded that when the airport had a closed permit system, there was always a known number of vehicles which made the A/B split possible. Committee Member Tasem was unsatisfied with the answer and believed that the open permit system created dysfunctionality.

Chair Elo-Rivera asked Committee members to speak on the current agenda topic. Committee Member Tasem believed that if the A/B alternating system had not been removed, airport permits cap would not been lifted, and there would be enough business to not require a flat rate so drivers can collect sufficient revenue. Committee Member Anderson reiterated that when the legacy A/B airport permit system was in place, there was a known set of operators, and when the San Diego Regional Airport Authority Board (Airport Authority) opened the airport permit system there was no longer a known number of operators assigned to different days.

Committee Member Banks clarified that United Taxi Workers (UTW), not MTS, requested that the airport open the permit system.

Committee Member Seifu asked Committee Member Anderson if the airport intends to maintain the current open permit system or if there are plans to return to a split permit system, and how that decision will be made. Committee Member Anderson clarified that at this time, the airport has no intention of changing the open permit system. Committee Member Seifu continued to ask if this could change in the future, and what that process would look like. Committee Member Anderson assured Committee Member Seifu that it would be a lengthy and involved process, which would involve the Airport Authority, and that returning to a split permit system would be contrary to their current direction.

Committee Member Tanguay pointed out that taxicab airport permits have gone through many changes since she began driving in the 1970's, and that current issues with an open airport permitting system may be addressed by introducing a flat rate. Committee Member Tanguay did acknowledge the need for discussions regarding how drivers may or may not operate within the flat rate system, especially when offering discounted fares.

Committee Member Banks expressed that having a flat rate would create logistic problems with programming taxicab meters, and that it would also negatively affect drivers by removing their ability to offer discounted fares to passengers.

Committee Member Majid pointed out that taxicabs have priced themselves out of the airport, and that by implementing a flat rate that is higher than the maximum rates of fare, it would only further hurt the taxicab industry. Committee Member Majid also noted that many of the airports referenced in the presentation were more sophisticated than the San Diego International Airport and were now looking for alternatives which would help them better compete with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs). Committee Member Majid also agreed with Committee Member Banks that there will be an increase in complaints, as well as a need to create the infrastructure to inform customers of the new flat rate system.

Committee Member Abraham expressed that these discussions were irrelevant as long as TNCs continued to outpace taxicabs. Committee Member Abraham believed that true change would come about with limiting the number of medallions and airport permits again.

Committee Member Tanguay provided background about the flat rate, stating that the concept dates back to the taxi industry's driver leasing programs, where lease drivers sought to provide their own flat rates, and requested that there be a discussion on having a flat rate be defined as an amount that is always less than what appears on the taximeter.

#### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

#### **6. Recommendations on Taximeter Regulations for MTS Legislative Agenda (Leonardo Fewell)**

Mr. Fewell presented recommendations on Taximeter Regulations for the MTS Legislative Agenda. He provided details on: California State Codes which could be reviewed in order to lessen the disparity between standards for taximeter regulations between TNCs and taxicabs, the relationship between the identified county and state codes, and the discussions with County of San Diego Agricultural Weights and Measures (AWM) on revisions for possible inclusion to the MTS Legislative Agenda.

#### **Public Comment**

No Public Comment.

#### **Committee Comment**

Committee Member Seifu asked if it is necessary to be a certified agent or if there is any special training needed to update a soft meter. Mr. Fewell answered that anyone who manipulates a meter device needs to be a certified service agent but directed the question to Committee Member Garcia for a more in-depth answer. Committee Member Garcia answered that any software changes that affect metrological measurements needs to be done by an authorized service agent and inspected by AWM. Committee Member Seifu asked for clarification; and if there was an issue with their Flywheel tablets global positioning system (GPS), would a driver need to contact Flywheel to fix the problem. Committee Member Garcia answered that in this case there would be a software change which correlates to a meteorological device and would need to be reinspected for accuracy.

#### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

## **7. For-Hire Vehicle Administration Operations Update (Leonardo Fewell)**

Mr. Fewell presented on For-Hire Vehicle Administration Operations Update. He gave updates on: staff contact information, how to communicate with For-Hire Vehicle Administration staff, a summary on the recent meeting with San Diego District Attorney along with other law enforcement agencies on combatting “wildcatting”, data on active and surrendered permits, data on Field Contacts, data on Customer Feedback, and data on airport originated trips.

### **Public Comment**

Laura Herrera – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Laura expressed frustration with the continued presence of “raiteros” (also called wildcatting) and suggested that signs be posted to discourage them.

Adan Carrillo – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Adan expressed frustration with the lack of enforcement against “raiteros” who present a danger to taxicab drivers at the border.

Kamran Hamidi – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Kamran thanked Chair Elo-Rivera and Mr. Fewell for setting up the meeting with the various agencies but expressed frustration that there has yet to be any substantive changes regarding the “raiteros”.

### **Committee Comments**

Chair Elo-Rivera thanked Mr. Fewell for setting up the multi-agency meeting on how to combat the wildcatting issue in a way that can be sustainable.

Committee Member Alcantar commented that wildcatting has been an ongoing issue at the Cross Border Xpress (CBX) and expressed that they were willing to take steps to collaborate on any solutions.

Committee Member Banks asked if it would be possible to have MTS For-Hire Vehicle Administration Regulatory Inspectors to go to the border and call the police on the non-licensed operators. He cited a previous situation at the rental car center where San Diego International Airport Traffic Officer's (ATO) conducted something similar. Mr. Fewell asked what rental center Committee Member Banks was referring to. Committee Member Banks confirmed it was the location on Admiral Bolan Way. Mr. Fewell asked if there were current issues with wildcatting at that location, and Committee Member Banks replied that the wildcatting at the rental car center had been stopped when citations began to be issued. Committee Member Banks again recommended that MTS enforcement use their presence as a deterrent and to call the police to issue citations. Mr. Fewell thanked Committee Member Banks and said that he would reach out to the airport to combat any issues with wildcatting in their jurisdiction. Committee Member Banks attempted to clarify that he was referencing the issue at the border. Chair Elo-Rivera added that because the wildcatters are not taxis, other agencies will need to be pulled in to regulate or discipline those drivers. Mr. Fewell further commented that there is a criminal element to wildcatting which necessitates the presence of law enforcement to ensure safety. Additionally, Mr. Fewell outlined how MTS For-Hire Vehicle Administration does conduct site visits and is currently reaching out to other agencies in order to collaborate. Committee Member Banks reiterated how wildcatters were driving taxis out of business. Chair Elo-Rivera assured that there were steps being taken to ensure this was not another attack on the taxicab industry.

Committee Member Hodoyan proposed that it may be possible to have cameras placed in problem areas or to create a tip line for drivers to use, and to use this evidence to issue tickets by mail.

Committee Member Tasem asked why MTS Security is unable to issue citations to wildcatters located on MTS property such as the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa trolley/bus stops. Mr. Fewell responded that MTS Security employees are not law enforcement officers, and do not have jurisdiction on city property where the majority of wildcatting activity happens; this is unlike the For-Hire Vehicle Administration Regulatory Inspectors who have authority to issue citations within contracted cities. Committee Member Tasem insisted that he had seen wildcatters on MTS property, at bus stations located at San Ysidro and Otay Mesa, and that MTS Security could call San Diego Police to issue citations. Mr. Fewell referenced the presentation to point out that most wildcatting happens on city property where MTS Security has no authority. Chair Elo-Rivera clarified that this discussion required research and involved complicated jurisdictional issues, which are being addressed in collaborative talks with other agencies.

Committee Member Abraham asked who is responsible for regulating unlicensed drivers. Chair Elo-Rivera responded that in order to secure a long-term solution, the responsibility must be shared among several different agencies. Committee Member Abraham noted that the city must take the lead on addressing this issue.

Committee Member Tanguay commented that they had personally seen San Diego Police enforcement relating to taxicab issues, and that concern should be placed on the safety of the officers.

Committee Member Banks asked that the MTS For-Hire Vehicle Administration help in keeping Uber out of taxicab stands at locations such as the Manchester Grand Hyatt. Mr. Fewell acknowledged Committee Member Banks' concerns and asked that he call him with any further updates on this issue. Mr. Fewell also emphasized that drivers should take advantage of the taxicab stands available to them.

#### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

#### **OTHER ITEMS**

#### **8. Topics for Next Taxicab Advisory Committee Meeting (Leonardo Fewell)**

Mr. Fewell presented topics for the next Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting and requested feedback on what topics the Committee would like to address at the next meeting. Mr. Fewell proposed presentations on the FY2025 budget, possible flat rate recommendations for Airport originated trips and FHVA Operations update.

#### **Public Comment**

No public comment.

#### **Committee Comment**

No Committee comment.

#### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

**9. Committee Member Communications**

Committee Member Tasem asked if MTS sent out an email to permit holders informing them of the reduction in the Maximum Rates of Fare. Mr. Fewell answered that the information was communicated during the February 21, 2024, Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting. Committee Member Tasem asked again if there was an email sent out to that effect and Mr. Fewell confirmed there was. Committee Member Tasem elaborated that he had heard from several permit holders that they did not receive that information and that he had not received many requests to change the rates on meters. Committee Member Tasem emphasized that there should be an email communication sent directly to drivers informing them of the new rates of fare and the deadline by which meters need to be changed. Chair Elo-Rivera asked that Committee Member Tasem follow up with Mr. Fewell on this topic after the meeting.

Committee Member Banks commented that if a meter is below the new maximum rate of fare, then there is no need to make alternations to it.

**10. Next Meeting Date**

The next Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for July 31, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.

\*Clerk's note: This meeting was subsequently cancelled. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.

**11. Adjournment**

Chair Elo-Rivera adjourned the meeting at 2:52 pm.

/S/ Sean Elo-Rivera

Chairperson  
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

/S/ Brenda Jackson

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 22, 2024 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:02 pm  
ADJOURN: 2:52 pm

COMMITTEE MEMBER		(Alternate)		ORGANIZATION	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Voting Committee Members						
Sean Elo-Rivera (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	MTS Board of Directors/ SD City Council	1:01 pm	2:52 pm
Able Seifu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Odyssey Cab	12:44 pm	2:50 pm
Agustin Hodoyan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Soul Cab	12:54 pm	2:52 pm
Akbar Majid	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / SDYC Holdings	12:54 pm	2:52 pm
Zewdu Girma	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Beezee Taxi	ABSENT	ABSENT
George Abraham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Fesshaye	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Eritrean Cab	12:53 pm	2:52 pm
Antonio Hueso	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / USA Cab, LTD	ABSENT	ABSENT
Letty Canizalez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Tourism Authority	12:40 pm	2:52 pm
Eduardo Gonzalez	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jose Raul Alcantar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cross Border X-Press	1:01 pm	2:52 pm
Mikaili Hussein	<input type="checkbox"/>	Peter Zschiesche	<input type="checkbox"/>	United Taxi Workers SD	ABSENT	ABSENT
Daryl Mayekawa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Thanh Nguyen	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Convention Center	12:40 pm	2:52 pm
Marc Nichols	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael Anderson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SD Regional Airport Authority	12:57 pm	2:52 pm
Michael Trimble	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Gaslamp Quarter Association	ABSENT	ABSENT
Alfred Banks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	12:57 pm	2:52 pm
Margo Tanguay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	12:57 pm	2:52 pm
David Tasem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	1:03 pm	2:52 pm
Non – Voting Committee Members						
Jonathan Garcia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Austin Shepard	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures	1:01 pm	2:52 pm
Jessica Marty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD County Sheriff's Department Licensing Division	12:49 pm	2:52 pm

FOR COMMITTEE CLERK: /S/ Brenda Jackson