

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM

TAXICAB ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

February 26, 2025

[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 1:04 p.m. A roll call sheet listing Taxicab Advisory Committee member attendance is attached as Attachment A.

2. **Public Comments**

Kamran Hamidi – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Hamidi requested MTS elaborate on how the budget accrues interest, where the interest originates from, and where it is reflected in the financial documents. Hamidi suggested establishing a standing finance sub-committee to ensure full transparency.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

Committee Member Tasem moved to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2024, MTS Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting. Committee Member Hueso seconded the motion, and the vote was 11 to 0 in favor with Committee Member Hodoyan, Committee Member Gonzalez, Committee Member Mayekawa, Committee Member Nichols, Committee Member Trimble, Committee Member Garcia, and Committee Member Marty absent.

PUBLIC HEARING

4. **2025 Maximum Rates of Fare (Leonardo Fewell)**

Leonardo Fewell, MTS For-Hire Vehicle Administration (FHVA) Manager, presented on the 2025 Maximum Rates of Fare. He presented on: the new 2025 Maximum Rates of Fare. Based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), there was a slight increase in the per-mile rate and per-hour waiting rate, but the flag drop will remain the same. Taxicabs, equipped with point-of-sale (POS) devices connected to meters, may charge 6% more. Mr. Fewell stressed that the adoption of the 2025 Maximum Rates of Fare is optional, and permit holders may adopt them if they choose, or they can continue to utilize the lower rates from 2024. He stated all permit holders will be obligated to adopt the new maximum rates of fare, only if rates decrease. Mr. Fewell pointed out that permit holders wanting to adopt the increased 2025 Maximum Rates of Fare must have the changes performed by an authorized taximeter service agent, then complete the annual process to have the taximeter registered and certified with the San Diego Department of Weights and Measures.

Public Comment

Kamran Hamidi – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Hamidi expressed frustration with rates fluctuating, with no mention about having a flat rate as discussed in a May 2024 ad hoc meeting. Hamidi asked Chair Elo-Rivera to watch for a petition proposal that would allow dispatch to adjust rates. The proposal suggests slightly increasing the flag drop fee while lowering the per-mile rate, so longer trips cost slightly less and shorter trips cost slightly more.

Horacio Sanchez – Representing Flywheel Technologies, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Sanchez stated that developing flat rates from the airport or upfront negotiated pricing that the passenger could accept would help drivers.

William Alozie – A cab driver, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Alozie disapproved of a rate increase and said there should be a vote on having flat rates.

Henry Agoh – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Agoh stated increasing the meter rates would put all taxis out of business, and suggested a flat rate should be in place for rides originating from the airport.

Tariq Mosamem – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Mosamem requested having a flat rate from the airport and not raising the fare rates.

Will – Representing United Taxi Workers, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Will asked when the effective date of the new rate would be.

Chair Elo-Rivera responded that the question Will asked would be more appropriate for one of the members to ask during the Committee Comment period.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Zschiesche stated that using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to set rates should be reconsidered. He acknowledged that the system is straightforward but argued that its underlying logic is flawed and could eventually lead drivers to price themselves out of the market. Committee Member Zschiesche stated flat rates have a range that everyone can understand. He suggested allowing the drivers to respond to the marketplace and not be tied to the CPI, which he felt was not a good system.

Committee Member Abraham felt that discussing fare increases annually, was not productive.

Committee Member Hueso pointed out that the mechanism is intended to be a guideline of the maximum amount drivers can charge, it was not meant to be abided by, drivers can charge anything, including a flat rate, if it is below that maximum rate. He stated the same guideline is used every year because there have not been more productive solutions. Committee Member Hueso mentioned that unless there is a system change that the industry can agree upon, the Committee will likely revisit the topic next year.

Committee Member Majid mentioned that drivers assume they are obligated to raise their rates to the maximum amount. He stated every company can create their own flat rate, so long as the maximum limit is not exceeded.

Chair Elo-Rivera asked Mr. Fewell if he had a response to the question asked by Will during the public comment. Mr. Fewell responded to Will's question by stating the maximum rates are effective today. He also mentioned the rates are published every year at the first TAC meeting. Mr. Fewell added context to Committee Members Hueso's and Majid's comments, pointing out that counterparts from other cities have their own CPI methods of calculating maximum rates but the CPI index the agency uses is tailored to the transportation industry - Southern California and the San Diego region. Mr. Fewell emphasized adoption of these fares are optional.

Committee Member Seifu stated the drivers want to implement a flat rate for trips within a certain radius of the airport, similar to Uber's pricing models. He noted a past study on this

issue and asked what the result of the study was. Committee Member Seifu said the drivers are hoping for a positive response or outcome on the issue.

Chair Elo-Rivera added that despite efforts to maintain lower rates, any increase may have the unintended consequence of shaping public perception that taxi fares have risen and are becoming less affordable. He asked Mr. Fewell when information is disseminated, is there any additional context that can be provided to remind people that the maximum rate is rarely charged. Mr. Fewell responded that there was not. He mentioned the agency publishes the maximum rates of fare as is but will review having context alongside that information.

Committee Member Zschiesche referred to a recent article from the Los Angeles Times with a headline about Lyft and Uber raising their rates 16% to 17% and its potential impacts on sales; comparably, mentioning MTS raising taxi rates by \$0.10 and its impact on sales in San Diego. Committee Member Zschiesche stated that the taxi industry is requesting the flat rate system to be opened again and looked at since the marketplace within the industry have changed over the last 20 years.

Committee Member Tasem stated there used to be multiple fares that came out of the airport before the system changed to the medallion system. He suggested reevaluating the medallion system when the new terminal opens at the airport, and reissue medallions based on an A/B system, to limit the taxicabs at the airport, which would create more business for the taxicab industry.

[Clerk's Note: For additional context/clarification; an A/B system splits the current daily open system into two sets of permits]

Committee Member Hueso suggested adding a caveat in the application process that provided guidance to drivers, asking them which type of charging system they are willing to operate understanding that there is a set upper limit. He stated industry leaders are limiting themselves to the airport, there needs to be more analysis by people getting into the marketplace. Committee Member Hueso raised several questions that could help make an informed decision, which include feasibility, attractiveness, ability to make money, and if they are unable to make money, understanding the reasons why and determining the best way to address the issue.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5. Taxicab Advisory Committee (TAC) Membership (Leonardo Fewell)

Mr. Fewell, presented on TAC membership. He started by introducing the three new alternate committee members appointed for the remainder of the TAC term per TAC Committee guidelines: Committee Member Gonzalo Ayala, permit holder of Heritage Cab, Committee Member Fabiano Sarmiento, taxicab lease driver for Jazzy Cab, and Committee Member Boris Masarskiy, taxicab lease driver for USA Cab. Mr. Fewell explained that these new members filled the vacant seats of elected representatives who no longer meet the eligibility requirements of being on the TAC Committee. Mr. Fewell stated the TAC is comprised of 16 voting members who serve a three-year term. He pointed out that elections for the 2025-2028 TAC term will be held in July 2025, with more information given at the May 28, 2025, TAC meeting. Mr. Fewell noted that voting for the elections will be held on-line via

AssociationVoting.com, and lease drivers wishing to nominate themselves to be a part of the TAC Committee or participate in the election, are requested to contact FHVA to provide their email address so they can be contacted via email around the month of June.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Committee Comment

No committee comment.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

6. For-Hire Vehicle Administration (FHVA) Required Driver Training (Leonardo Fewell)

Mr. Fewell, presented on FHVA required driving training. He stated that every driver of an MTS permitted for-hire vehicle must complete an MTS-approved driver safety course at least once, per MTS Ordinance No. 11, before the Sherriff's Office will issue the driver an identification card (ID). Mr. Fewell noted that a driver may be required to retake the driver training course under certain circumstances. FHVA provides the driver training course at least twice a month via Zoom, with a \$30 administrative fee that covers the time and prepping for the meeting. Mr. Fewell requested feedback from the Committee and any interested stakeholder, on possible improvements to the driver training program which would enhance the overall driver/passenger experience and safety. He commented that FHVA has received positive feedback from drivers about the program but still welcomes feedback for ways to improve both the content and the method. Mr. Fewell stated that he can be reached in-person (by appointment), or anytime by sending an email or making a phone call and he will send an email link to participate in an upcoming driver training session.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Committee Comment

No committee comment.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

7. Autonomous For-Hire Vehicles Operations (Leonardo Fewell)

Mr. Fewell, presented on autonomous for-hire vehicles operations. He started by saying autonomous vehicles are self-driving vehicles that transport passengers for-hire without a human driver. Mr. Fewell mentioned there are over 24 autonomous vehicle companies worldwide, with Waymo, Nuro Inc, and Mercedes-Benz currently being authorized by the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to conduct for-hire vehicle trips in certain areas of California. He stated Waymo is currently testing in San Diego, including at the San Diego Airport, but does not have authorization yet to begin for-hire operations as they do in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Mr. Fewell requested feedback from TAC on questions or concerns they may have relating to

this emerging transportation technology and whether additional research or next steps would be appropriate to address this.

Public Comment

Alem Zebib – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Zebib expressed opposition to having autonomous vehicles in the city and airport. Zebib stated the drivers have to pay fees, renew their sheriff's licenses, take drug tests and have vehicle inspections every year and asked about the safety of an unmanned vehicle.

Horacio Sanchez – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Sanchez stated San Francisco has had driverless vehicles for quite some time. Sanchez's company, Flywheel Technologies, conducted an analysis over the past year and a half, and noticed Waymo takes the majority of business away from Uber and other ride-charge services, but the taxi business is not as affected by driverless vehicles.

Committee Comment

Chair Elo-Rivera stated he has concerns about Waymo operating in the San Diego region. He pointed out that even as a city councilmember he has no say as to whether autonomous vehicles can operate on San Diego city streets. Chair Elo-Rivera expressed frustration with seeing these vehicles on San Diego streets, collecting data to produce what will eventually become profit, and the city is seeing no return on that. Chair Elo-Rivera stated he wanted to open up the conversation to engage in questions and provide an opportunity for feedback.

Committee Member Tasem stated having Waymo would not be conducive within the county because San Diego does not have the population to handle it like they do in Los Angeles. He pointed out that there is no regulatory agency that will regulate Waymo vehicles if a vehicle gets into an accident, which is different than how taxi drivers are regulated.

Committee Member Seifu stated Waymo has been in San Francisco since June 2024, and his expectation is that Waymo will be operating in San Diego as well. He expressed concern about how operations at the airport would be managed if customer demand for Waymo increases, particularly given the limited availability of parking spaces. Chair Elo-Rivera asked Mr. Fewell if access to the airport is decided by the CPUC or is this something the airport would have authority over. Mr. Fewell responded to Chair Elo-Rivera's question, stating that autonomous vehicle regulations are pre-empted by the state, and overall regulated by DMV's autonomous vehicles branch. He noted that this branch has a public community outreach resource on their website which allows public comment in the development of those regulations. Mr. Fewell mentioned the CPUC is involved in the regulation of autonomous vehicles when it comes to the operational phase in terms of being for-hire to the public. He explained it is at the airport's sole discretion as to how they accommodate those vehicles, assuming they become operational. Mr. Fewell stated any questions about how autonomous vehicles will operate at the airport should be referred to the Airport's Ground Transportation Department.

Chair Elo-Rivera suggested submitting a letter from the TAC to the MTS Board, showing some level of consensus that the TAC is expressing a shared opinion on this issue. Chair Elo-Rivera pointed out that if the airport has the type of authority Mr. Fewell mentioned, then the industry may want to lobby the airport to not allow or limit the ability of Waymo to operate on airport property.

Committee Member Hueso stated that it is important to have safeguards in place, because innovation is going to come in, and everyone should think about how the city benefits, how the industry benefits, and how we can influence our regulators to develop language, so drivers are competing on a level playing field. Committee Member Hueso mentioned the unfairness of being placed in another position like they were with Uber and Lyft and expressed gratitude toward Chair Elo-Rivera for bringing this issue to the forefront and giving them the opportunity to make recommendations and move forward.

Committee Member Zschiesche discussed beginning by consulting former TAC Chair Chris Ward for his input on best ways to engage with the DMV and CPUC. He stated he does not believe all innovation in tech is good and agreed with Committee Member Hueso's stance of identifying problems early on and having conversations to determine areas where they can be effective. Committee Member Zschiesche suggested that the City of San Diego should look for avenues to deal with the impacts and figure out how to mitigate them. He also mentioned it would be a good idea to have an ad hoc group to get people together and create a statement from the Committee.

Action Taken

Chair Elo-Rivera mentioned that his office could work with Mr. Fewell and interested members of the Committee to bring forward some ideas, comments and concerns to the next TAC meeting, to avoid similar obstacles with Uber and Lyft.

8. For-Hire Vehicle Administration (FHVA) Operations Update (Leonardo Fewell)

Mr. Fewell presented on FHVA Operations Update. He reiterated that email is the primary method for communication for all purposes. He stated that permit holders are responsible for checking their spam and junk email folders and encourages them to adjust their filters to accept FHVA emails to stay informed. Mr. Fewell reminded permit holders that per MTS Ordinance No. 11, they must notify FHVA of any changes to their address, phone numbers and email address. He emphasized appointments are required for business efficiency.

Mr. Fewell mentioned that the 2025 regulatory fee collection period is between January 6, 2025, and March 3, 2025. He pointed out that to avoid permit suspension for missing the March 3, 2025, deadline, late payment renewals are accepted until March 31, 2025, at the close of business, and includes a late payment fee as detailed in the Administrative Fee Schedule. Mr. Fewell reiterated that as a part of streamlining the renewal process, permit holders must submit their required mechanical inspections and annual statements at the time of payment to avoid delays in the renewal process.

Mr. Fewell spoke about the invitation only ad hoc meeting held on January 23, 2025, and mentioned who was invited and explained why they were chosen. He shared a presentation about FHVA's budget and the contingency reserves during the meeting and the representatives from other regulatory agencies shared their budgeting and contingency reserves program. Mr. Fewell requested feedback from those in attendance as to what factors FHVA should consider when developing FHVA's annual budget and regulatory fees. He proposed a second meeting to review staff recommendations on guidelines for a contingency reserve target and will provide a full report on those findings at a future TAC meeting.

Mr. Fewell presented slides showing and explaining current active and surrendered permits, field enforcement, customer feedback cases, and airport trips. He encouraged permit holders to display their Sheriff's ID and wear their name tags because not doing so is an MTS Ordinance No. 11 violation.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Tasem referenced the airport trips slide and stated the numbers used to be higher per trip for taxis. He emphasized that unless the way business is conducted at the airport changes, the taxi trip numbers will continue to go down.

Action Taken

Informational item only. No action taken.

OTHER ITEMS

9. Topics for Next Taxicab Advisory Committee Meeting (Leonardo Fewell)

Mr. Fewell stated the next TAC meeting will be on May 28, 2025, where the staff recommends the topics of discussion should include TAC elections and an FHVA update. He also mentioned that feedback is requested on what topics should be addressed and considered to be included in the agenda at the next TAC meeting.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Committee Comment

Committee Member Majid proposed to have the airport revisit the current open system of allowing all vehicles to operate at the airport on a daily basis.

Committee Member Zschiesche mentioned a meeting outside of the TAC meeting would be held by a group of drivers at the airport on February 27, 2025, to discuss reinstituting the A/B system and expanding work. He suggested scheduling something just to hear the latest update on these efforts.

Committee Member Hueso mentioned that he and Committee Member Akbar met with airport officials the previous week to address the issues of being double and triple charged on airport fees which stemmed from problems with their newly implemented software and their acknowledgment of being understaffed. Committee Member Hueso suggested revisiting this issue.

10. Committee Member Communications and Other Business

There was no Committee Member Communications and Other Business discussion.

11. Next Meeting Date

The next Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for May 28, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

12. Adjournment

Chair Elo-Rivera adjourned the meeting at 2:35 p.m.

/S/ Sean Elo-Rivera

Chairperson
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

/S/ Brenda Jackson

Committee Clerk
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

Attachment: A. Roll Call Sheet

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

ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): February 26, 2025

CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:04 PM

ADJOURN: 2:35 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	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
Able Seifu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Odyssey Cab	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
Agustin Hodoyan	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Soul Cab	ABSENT	ABSENT
Akbar Majid	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / SDYC Holdings	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
Gonzalo Ayala	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Heritage Cab	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
George Abraham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Fesshaye	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Eritrean Cab	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
Antonio Hueso	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / USA Cab, LTD	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
Letty Canizalez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Tourism Authority	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
Eduardo Gonzalez	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jose Raul Alcantar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cross Border X-Press	ABSENT	ABSENT
Mikail Hussein	<input type="checkbox"/>	Peter Zschiesche	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	United Taxi Workers SD	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
Daryl Mayekawa	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thanh Nguyen	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Convention Center	ABSENT	ABSENT
Marc Nichols	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael Anderson	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Regional Airport Authority	ABSENT	ABSENT
Michael Trimble	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Gaslamp Quarter Association	ABSENT	ABSENT
Fabiano Sarmento	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
Boris Masarskiy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	1:04 PM	1:46 PM
David Tasem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	1:04 PM	2:35 PM
Non – Voting Committee Members						
Jonathan Garcia	<input type="checkbox"/>	Austin Shepard	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures	ABSENT	ABSENT
Jessica Marty	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD County Sheriff's Department Licensing Division	ABSENT	ABSENT

/S/Dalia
Gonzalez

COMMITTEE CLERK: /S/ Brenda Jackson