

## MINUTES

### MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM

#### TAXICAB ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

May 28, 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 (TAC) meeting to order at 1:08 p.m. A roll call sheet listing Taxicab Advisory Committee member attendance is attached as Attachment A.

#### 2. **Public Comments**

There were no Public Comments.

#### 3. **Approval of Minutes**

Committee Member Majid moved to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2025, MTS Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting. Committee Member Hueso seconded the motion, and the vote was 11 to 0 in favor with Committee Member Canizalez, Committee Member Trimble, Committee Member Sarmiento, Committee Member Masarskiy, Committee Member Tasem, Committee (Non-Voting) Member Shepard, and Committee (Non-Voting) Member Marty absent.

#### PUBLIC HEARING

#### 4. **Proposed Revisions to Taxicab Advisory Committee Guidelines (Leonardo Fewell)**

Leonardo Fewell, MTS For-Hire Vehicle Administration (FHVA) Manager, presented on proposed revisions to TAC guidelines. He discussed: how the TAC is currently comprised of sixteen members (subject to elections), and six (6) TAC member organizations (not subject to elections). Mr. Fewell mentioned that the organizations are appointed by the CEO based on current TAC guidelines. Gaslamp Quarter Association has missed four (4) consecutive meetings and may be subject to removal. Mr. Fewell requested feedback from TAC on whether to replace them with a new organization such as the Border Transportation Council, the Downtown Partnership, or a member-at-large organization.

##### **Public Comment**

There were no Public Comments.

##### **Committee Comment**

Committee Member Hueso stated he liked the idea of including the Border Transportation Council to boost participation from that area. He remarked there are pressing problems needing more discussion and indicated it would be good to include those who are a part of that area.

Committee Member Hussein inquired if the Sheriff's Department is still a non-voting member of the Committee and suggested it might be beneficial for them to become a voting member. Mr. Fewell responded to Committee Member Hussein's question by stating the Sheriff's Department was unable to attend the meeting but, along with San Diego County Weights and Measures, remain one of two members that serve the Committee in a non-voting capacity. Mr. Fewell asked that potential replacement organizations be sent directly to him via email.

### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **5. TAC Election Update (Leonardo Fewell)**

Mr. Fewell presented on the TAC election update. He stated the TAC three-year term for permit holders and lease drivers would expire in June 2025, and a valid email address would be needed from permit holders and lease drivers to cast a vote via the online voting system, AssociationVoting.com. Mr. Fewell outlined the outreach methods used to obtain lease drivers' emails, utilizing resources from the San Diego Sheriff's Licensing Division, cross-referencing FHVA's database, contacting lease drivers by phone, and emailing permit holders to obtain valid emails from lease drivers who were unreachable by phone. He also mentioned United Taxi Workers San Diego (UTWSD) would be sharing the upcoming TAC election via its social media channels. Mr. Fewell highlighted: June 15, 2025 – Distribution of TAC election information via email, the sdmts.com FHVA website, and through field interactions with Regulatory Inspectors handing out flyers. June 30, 2025 – Self-nominated forms must be received by FHVA, no later than 5:00 PM. July 1 – July 3, 2025 - Nominees' information compiled and submitted to AssociationVoting.com, July 7 – July 18, 2025 - Voting period, July 21, 2025 – AssociationVoting.com will provide a certified election letter, and on July 22, 2025 - FHVA will notify newly elected members by email and will introduce the members at the July 30, 2025, TAC meeting.

### **Public Comment**

There were no Public Comments.

### **Committee Comment**

There were no Committee Member Comments.

### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

### **6. Airport Originated Trips (Leonardo Fewell)**

Mr. Fewell reported on airport originated trips. He discussed: driver reported increase of airport short trips and possible contributing factors such as increased passenger preference for Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), ending of the San Diego Airport's A/B permit system for taxicabs. He referred to the airport flat-rates research presented by FHVA at the May 22, 2024, TAC meeting, and requested attention to the impact flat rates would have on competition with TNC's and passenger costs. Mr. Fewell stated FHVA will be working with and request feedback from the San Diego Airport to identify the best possible solution that maximizes drivers' benefits and addresses fare rates concerns, by exploring virtual queue technologies, reinstating the A/B permit system, recapping the number of ground transportation permits for taxicabs at the airport, and relocating taxicabs after terminal upgrades have been completed. Mr. Fewell reported that further research into the advancement of taxicab meter technology, also known as smart meters, could benefit the taxicab industry, while enhancing consumer protections and assisting FHVA with complaint investigations, while ensuring compliance with MTS Ordinance No. 11.

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

### **Public Comment**

Ahmed Malinomar – Project Manager, UTWSD, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Malinomar requested having flat rates for all short trips near the downtown and convention areas, allowing drivers to earn a decent wage while waiting in the queue.

Flavio Oliveira – A taxicab driver, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Oliveira expressed frustration with some of the Airport Traffic Officers (ATOs) who treat taxicab drivers with no respect, like criminals.

### **Committee Comment**

Chair Elo-Rivera asked Mr. Fewell to follow up with the Public Commenters on Agenda Item 6, to provide them with more information and gather follow-up questions.

Committee Member Seifu commented that the flat rates should include passengers traveling long distances from the airport so taxicab drivers can find a way to uniformly lower their rates. Committee Member Seifu stated that stopping the issuance of new permits, implementing the A/B system, and applying front of the line privileges at the San Diego Airport was ineffective in the past. He suggested MTS stop issuing new permits and proposed creating a subcommittee to discuss in detail the flat rate issue and having dispatch companies establish their own pricing. Mr. Fewell responded to Committee Member Seifu by stating the next step would be to deal directly with the airport on how to leverage technologies and policies to assist taxi drivers. Mr. Fewell mentioned that raising fees would be counterproductive and could be detrimental to the industry and he stated the Committee would need to consider other factors to formulate the best solution. Committee Member Seifu reiterated to Mr. Fewell that the drivers want to focus on lowering the rates, not always raising the rates. Mr. Fewell acknowledged Committee Member Seifu's point and stated he is confident the agency will eventually be able to offer data-driven decisions with reliable results by working with the airport, utilizing UTWSD's driver outreach information, and revising the research on flat rates. Mr. Fewell emphasized his office is always open for feedback and will share it with TAC. Mr. Fewell stated this item will remain a topic in future meetings with the goal of determining how to proceed.

Committee Member Hueso pointed out that certain indicators in the transportation marketplace show the demand for transportation has increased while the volume of the taxi industry has decreased. He stated there are many differences and opinions, but the bottom line is the industry needs to change the minimalist culture and attitude to be competitive, lower prices, figure out what to contribute to the marketplace to attract customers, and use technology to the fullest.

Committee Member Hussein mentioned that UTWSD have been driver advocates for the past 15 years. He requested a meeting with MTS and the airport prior to the next TAC meeting to address issues raised and discuss ways to collaborate more effectively.

Committee Member Majid noted that the industry priced itself out of the market when rates increased, and warned it risks further losing competitiveness by pushing for flat rates that exceed the maximum allowed. He stated that the taxicab industry has reached a saturation point with existing problems exacerbated by rising rates, efforts to impose flat-rates, and the issuance of additional permits. Committee Member Majid suggested either placing a cap on

permits or introducing an ABCD system similar to the one used in the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) noting that such a system would help taxi drivers know what to expect.

Committee Member Anderson expressed he is not convinced this is solely an airport-related issue but is open to collaborating to improve the overall business environment. He noted that whether the operations take place at the airport or on the street, the underlying challenge remains: if pricing is too high and lacks flexibility, similar issues will persist. Committee Member Anderson also emphasized that an oversaturation of taxi drivers on the street can lead to a diluted market.

Committee Member Abraham mentioned that business improved in the past when there was a cap on the number of taxicabs permits issued. He suggested finding a way to advertise taxicab services to make them more attractive to the customers and holding a meeting beforehand to discuss key issues, so the upcoming TAC meeting could be more focused and productive in exploring options to improve the industry.

Committee Member Hussein stated that in the past, the focus was on innovation, price reduction, and customer service. However, he emphasized that the industry should reflect on why San Diego has the highest rates in the United States and consider alternative business models, rather than relying solely on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to improve overall performance.

Committee Member Hodoyan commented that if all taxi drivers charged the same rate, it would level out the playing field.

Mr. Fewell noted the topics for discussion have included rates of fares, capping permits at the airport, and what the airport can do to leverage technology. He pointed out that this is a nationwide issue affecting the entire industry, not just San Diego alone. Mr. Fewell reiterated that the Committee will carefully review the concerns raised and find solutions rather than simply raising fees, which could lead more passengers to switch to other forms of transportation. He also expressed a willingness to work with the airport in the short term and to use the feedback as part of the ongoing review process.

Chair Elo-Rivera asked if it was a requirement at the LAX for Uber and Lyft drivers to have a placard in order to pick up passengers. Committee Member Anderson responded that San Diego Airport does not require a placard but does require Uber to provide educational training for their drivers. Chair Elo-Rivera commented that Uber and Lyft were able to establish market dominance on a completely different playing field than taxicab drivers as they were not under immediate pressure to generate revenue. He emphasized that picking up the pieces and figuring out a way forward after the fact is not so simple to do.

Committee Member Hueso commented that not holding Uber and Lyft drivers to the same continuous enforcement standards as taxicab drivers is unfortunate. Chair Elo-Rivera stated that some people welcomed it as innovation while others weren't willing to stand in the way of the technology companies running those platforms.

### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

7. FHVA Operations Update

Mr. Fewell, presented on FHVA operations update. He provided details on: email as the primary method of communication for all purposes, MTS Ordinance No. 11 § 1.8 (c), and FHVA staff availability and directory. He mentioned a wildcatter follow up meeting was held on May 22, 2025, hosted by the San Diego District Attorney's office, with the key takeaway being the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) expressed interest in increasing their role in mitigating the wildcatter problem. Mr. Fewell also presented data on the 2025 regulatory fees and documentation, late fee payments, waivers, 2025 permits renewed and voided, field inspections and statistics, contact per vehicle type, issued warnings, customer feedback cases, airport trips, and active and surrendered FHVA permits.

**Public Comment**

Laura Ramirez – A taxicab driver, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Ramirez expressed frustration with the progress since the November 2024 press conference about wildcatters, stating MTS and City of San Diego Police Department have done nothing against wildcatters and threats of violence, that drug dealing and mistreatments from the wildcatters have increased, and asked for MTS to address this matter.

Juan Castro – A taxicab driver, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Castro expressed he has been a taxi driver for over 30 years and dissatisfaction with the inaction of law enforcement at the San Ysidro Border with the dangerous wildcatter issue and believes the city is waiting for something serious to happen before taking action. He also stated the City of San Diego Police Department indicated they are unable to pursue a course of action until they receive direction from higher authorities. He stated that if something were to happen, taxi drivers will bring legal action against the City, the Police and MTS.

Cesar Lopez – A taxicab driver, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Lopez stated more signage advertising that wildcatting is illegal, is needed at the port of entry and would like some action to be taken since the situation has become worse and unsafe as wildcatters are now carrying guns and he fears a taxi driver will get shot.

Ahmed Malinomar – Project Manager, UTWSD, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Malinomar noted the wildcatters have displaced taxi drivers from the authorized taxi stands and have vandalized some taxicabs. Malinomar spoke about the challenge of obtaining affordable insurance, as many insurance companies classify wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs) as Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) vehicles, which significantly increases coverage costs.

Kamran Hamidi – Owner, SD Taxi and Airport Dispatch, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Hamidi spoke about the wildcatter issue and that there are drugs and guns involved. He thanked Chair Elo-Rivera for coming out to the Wildcatter press conference with District Attorney Summer Stephan and requested change through design in order to address wildcatting. He also spoke about FHVA's contingency reserves being currently over \$1,000,000.00 and that the hearing case regarding the regulatory fees is coming up in July. He stated that it was unfortunate that MTS had hired outside attorneys and believed that this was not a good use of the money but hoped that ultimately permit holders would get their money back. He also asked for the possibility of TAC candidates including a statement in their profiles for the upcoming TAC election and referred to the upcoming increase to the airport trip fee.

### **Committee Comment**

Committee Member Seifu suggested that FHVA Regulatory Inspectors should issue taxi drivers a warning before citing MTS Ordinance No. 11 violations involving displaying of a County of San Diego Sheriff's Office Identification (Sheriff's ID) and address them when away from waiting customers.

Committee Member Hueso stated the San Ysidro Border issue has been a longstanding problem, since at least 1982. While he acknowledged that MTS has been doing their part, especially considering the FHVA Department's limited size, he emphasized that other entities also needed to fulfill their responsibilities. He suggested the City of San Diego consider appointing someone to oversee enforcement at the San Ysidro Border. Additionally, Committee Member Hueso proposed forming a collaborative effort with the City of San Diego or the City of San Diego Police Department to ensure taxicabs are operating properly at the Border. He stressed the need for a coordinated, multi-agency approach to resolve the issue and encouraged taxicab drivers to identify and document their key concerns, work together on a plan, and move forward with a shared agenda to support the industry.

Committee Member Hussein reiterated an earlier point of ticketing taxi drivers away from the customers at the airport.

Committee Member Abraham stated that taxi drivers are now on the same level as owners and the money in the FHVA contingency reserve belongs to all. He expressed trying to find a way to settle the FHVA contingency reserve money issue without having to hire outside lawyers.

Committee Member Majid suggested part of the FHVA contingency reserve money could be utilized towards overtime compensation for one or two City of San Diego Police Department Officers who would work once or twice a week at the San Ysidro Border to enforce the law.

Mr. Fewell summarized that MTS will work with the CPUC on the wildcatters' issue and will remain open to cooperation with law enforcement agencies to devise a plan to combat the problem. He also pointed out that the FHVA Regulatory Inspectors are limited in their capacity to combat the wildcatter problem. Mr. Fewell commented that the WAV insurance issue is a nationwide issue that has to do with the overall rising costs of insurance and is a standing discussion item with the International Association of Transportation Regulators, but MTS is looking for ways to address this problem. Mr. Fewell affirmed that citing taxicab drivers at the airport island for not displaying a Sheriff's ID will continue as it is the FHVA Department's job to ensure compliance with MTS No. Ordinance 11, and safety of the passengers. He noted that display of a Sheriff's Identification (ID) and name is not only an MTS rule, but it is also a County of San Diego Sheriff's Office rule, industry standard, and basic cornerstone of regulation for a taxi driver.

Chair Elo-Rivera expressed frustration with the lack of prioritization from the City of San Diego Police Department and indicated it did not seem like the taxi drivers' complaints and safety were being taken as seriously as other more affluent communities with less serious complaints.

### **Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

## OTHER ITEMS

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

Chair Elo-Rivera asked everyone to review Agenda Item 8 on their own and send additional ideas to Mr. Fewell.

#### Public Comment

Juan Castro – A taxicab driver, provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Castro asked what solution is being presented in terms of the wildcatters.

#### Committee Comment

Chair Elo-Rivera concurred with Castro's frustration and his desire for a specific response to the issue but clarified that this agenda item was focused on topics for the next meeting. He emphasized that not all of the taxicab industry problems could be solved in the TAC meeting, and that enforcement should be directed to agencies like the City of San Diego Police Department, the City of San Diego, the District Attorney's Office, or the CPUC, not necessarily the TAC committee or MTS.

#### Committee Member Communications

There was no Committee Member Communications and Other Business discussion.

### 9. Next Meeting Date

The next Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for July 30, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

### 10. Adjournment

Chair Elo-Rivera adjourned the meeting at 3:01 p.m.

/S/ Sean Elo-Rivera

/S/ Brenda Jackson

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Chairperson  
San Diego Metropolitan Transit System

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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): May 28, 2025

CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:08 pm

ADJOURN: 3:01 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	12:56 pm	3:01 pm
Able Seifu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Odyssey Cab	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
Agustin Hodoyan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Soul Cab	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
Akbar Majid	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / SDYC Holdings	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
Gonzalo Ayala	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Heritage Cab	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
George Abraham	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Fesshaye	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / Eritrean Cab	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
Antonio Hueso	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permit Holder / USA Cab, LTD	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
Letty Canizalez	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Tourism Authority	ABSENT	ABSENT
Eduardo Gonzalez	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jose Raul Alcantar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cross Border X-Press	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
Mikail Hussein	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Peter Zschiesche	<input type="checkbox"/>	United Taxi Workers SD	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
Daryl Mayekawa	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thanh Nguyen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SD Convention Center	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
Marc Nichols	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael Anderson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SD Regional Airport Authority	1:03 pm	3:01 pm
Michael Trimble	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	SD Gaslamp Quarter Association	ABSENT	ABSENT
Fabiano Sarmiento	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	ABSENT	ABSENT
Boris Masarskiy	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	ABSENT	ABSENT
David Tasem	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taxicab Lease Driver	ABSENT	ABSENT
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

COMMITTEE CLERK: /S/ Brenda Jackson