MINUTES

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM

TAXICAB ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)

February 27, 2026

[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 1:05 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**

Due to the absence of a quorum, the committee was unable to proceed with the approval of the November 19, 2025 minutes. The approval of the November 19, 2025 minutes will be deferred to the next TAC meeting.

**4. Public Hearing: 2026 Maximum Rates of Fare (Leonardo Fewell)**

Leonardo Fewell, MTS For Hire Vehicle Administration Manager, presented on Public Hearing: 2026 Maximum Rates of Fare. He presented an overview of the proposed 2026 Maximum Rates of Fare, including a comparison between the 2025 and 2026 rates. He discussed MTS Board Policy No. 34, noting that taxicabs equipped with Point of Sale (POS) systems may charge up to 6% more, and clarified that the 2026 maximum rates do not apply to electronically booked trips. He highlighted a significant increase in the 2025 Consumer Price Index (CPI) annual change compared to 2024 and provided a comparison of standard rates as well as rates with the additional 6% for POS-equipped vehicles. Mr. Fewell explained that adoption of the 2026 rates is optional, allowing permit holders to continue using the 2025 rates at their discretion. He also outlined changes impacting taxicabs with traditional hard meters and soft meters, as well as the taximeter registration and certification process through the County of San Diego Department of Weights and Measures. Additionally, he noted that FHVA regulatory inspectors will conduct random field inspections, and any taxicabs found in violation of the 2026 maximum rates will be taken out of service until corrected and subject to a $75 re-inspection fee.

**Public Comment**

Akbar Majid – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Akbar thanked the Chair and committee. He stated that optional rate increases often lead to higher fares, which could harm public perception, impact operators, and increase airport wait times. He urged the industry not to raise rates.

**Committee Comment**

Committee Member Able Seifu thanked the Chair and requested an update on the flat-rate issue that had been under discussion since May 2024. He stated that the proposed rate would drive our customers away from the airport, despite being described as optional. He expressed concern that repeated rate increases were occurring without addressing the underlying problem and urged the Board to develop a workable solution that would support the industry. Mr. Fewell

explained that current rate considerations were being evaluated in the context of historically high inflation based on the CPI. He stated that these conditions changed the intent behind a potential flat rate, noting that if the purpose was to compensate for reduced airport trips and short trips, the resulting flat rate would likely exceed already-recorded maximum rates. Mr. Fewell emphasized that neither the committee nor the industry favored adopting rates higher than the highest levels already recorded. He added that while the administration continued to explore a potential airport flat rate, consumer protection and proper implementation were priorities. He emphasized that technology, specifically smart-meter systems using geo fencing or distance-based tools was key for enforcement and complaint investigations. He concluded that the administration would not recommend rates that priced taxis further out of the market and stated that updates on technological developments would be presented at the May TAC meeting for assessment.

Committee Member Peter Zschiesche thanked Akbar for his public comment and explained that while the CPI was an objective tool, it no longer aligned with the realities of the taxi market. He stated that reliance on the CPI guaranteed rising rates that could price taxis out of the market and noted that the tool may have been useful in the past but did not serve the industry today. Committee Member Peter Zschiesche proposed holding an Ad Hoc meeting to openly discuss alternatives to CPI based pricing and to better understand airport specific considerations. He emphasized that industry decentralization made coordination more difficult but stressed the importance of exploring new pricing mechanisms to preserve the taxi market. Chair Elo-Rivera asked Mr. Fewell if an Ad Hoc meeting could be held. Mr. Fewell stated that staff consults with peer regulators nationwide and noted that many jurisdictions used alternatives to the CPI, sometimes set by agencies or developed with industry input. He clarified that the CPI used locally was a transportation specific index for the San Diego/Carlsbad area but acknowledged that inflation continued to drive increases. He expressed concern that CPI based rates limited small taxi operators' pricing control, compared to other small businesses, and agreed to explore convening an Ad Hoc meeting to evaluate alternative pricing options, thanking participants for their input. Committee Member Peter Zschiesche stated that the taxi industry consists of hundreds of small business owners whose maximum rates were set by a regulatory agency, unlike many other small businesses that control their own pricing. He stated that tying taxi rates to a regional CPI driven by unrelated industries was inappropriate and further limited drivers' ability to compete. He emphasized that CPI based pricing reduced taxi drivers' control over how they entered the marketplace and concluded that a better understanding of the CPI's complexity was necessary to explore alternative pricing options, thanking participants for their input and time.

Committee Member Horacio Sanchez thanked Chair Elo-Rivera and Mr. Fewell and acknowledged efforts to establish fair rates for taxi drivers. He stated that, at the airport, the optional nature of rate increases created challenges because taxi companies were unable to advertise lower rates. As a result, drivers were effectively forced to operate at the highest allowed rate to remain competitive, which he noted often led to confusion and operational issues. He advocated for a standardized rate at the airport.

Committee Member Michael Anderson thanked Mr. Fewell for involving industry stakeholders in the rate setting process and acknowledged the effort to achieve fair pricing for taxi drivers. He stated that variable pricing was common across industries such as hotels, airlines, and transportation network companies, and emphasized the importance of continuing to move toward technology-supported solutions. He expressed willingness to collaborate as variable pricing and technological changes were implemented. Committee Member Michael Anderson stated that the airport could work with MTS on adjustments such as signage and marketing strategies to clearly communicate taxi pricing to passengers. He concluded by affirming support

for continued coordination on how taxi services were marketed at the airport, including how pricing was presented and promoted. Mr. Fewell thanked Committee Member Michael Anderson for his comments and expressed appreciation for the collaboration. He stated that he looked forward to following up with him and his team to convene an Ad Hoc meeting focused on developing more uniform practices and consistency for taxi operations at the airport. Chair Elo-Rivera responded by thanking Mr. Fewell and shared his perspective as a customer. He explained that while taxis were often more readily available from the airport, fare uncertainty made them less competitive compared to app-based services that clearly displayed cost and wait time. He stated that providing passengers with clear and verifiable pricing would meaningfully enhance the customer experience and improve the competitiveness of taxis at the airport. Chair Elo-Rivera concluded by expressing appreciation for everyone's willingness to work collaboratively on the issue.

**Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

**5. 2026 Airport Ground Transportation Access Fees (Marie Cole of San Diego International Airport and Leonardo Fewell)**

Leonardo Fewell, MTS For Hire Vehicle Administration Manager, and Marie Cole San Diego International Airport presented on Airport Access Fees. They presented on: Objectives, current users, approved rate changes, implementation schedule, summary of rates and 2026 Airport Access Fees.

**Public Comment**

There were no Public Comments.

**Committee Comment**

Committee Member Peter Zschiesche stated that MTS Ordinance No. 11 had been adopted at a time when the airport did not charge fees for passenger drop-offs. He stated that requiring taxi drivers to continue providing this service while incurring new airport charges was unfair. Committee Member Peter Zschiesche suggested that modifying MTS Ordinance No. 11 should be considered as an option. He explained that the existing requirement forced drivers to absorb penalties or financial costs that were not part of their business. Mr. Fewell agreed with Committee Member Peter Zschiesche and stated that the issue had been identified early on and explained that the staff was exploring possible measures to avoid penalizing any driver who chose not to, or was unable to, provide airport service due to newly imposed airport charges. Chair Elo-Rivera thanked Mr. Fewell for the presentation and stated that the issue would likely prompt a significant conversation throughout the City of San Diego and region, extending beyond the taxi industry. He noted that rising cost of living concerns would draw broader public attention and expressed interest in seeing how the public responded. He added that from a city perspective, new charges regardless of how common they were elsewhere, had consistently generated public opposition and increasing frustration. He concluded by acknowledging the anticipated challenges ahead.

**Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

**6. 2026 Regulatory Fee Payment Update (Leonardo Fewell)**

Leonardo Fewell, MTS For Hire Vehicle Administration Manager, presented on 2026 Regulatory Fee Payment Update. He provided and update on the 2026 Regulatory Fee payment, FHVA operating revenue, FHVA communication with all permit holders, permit invoice process, and total invoices processed for 2026. Payment options for permits holders and due dates for varied permit fees and late payments were provided.

**Public Comment**

There were no Public Comments.

**Committee Comment**

Committee Member Peter Zschiesche asked about the percentage of people who had paid their fees. Mr. Fewell explained that most permit holders typically wait until the deadline to submit payments. He reported that an influx of payments had been received over the past week and assessed that approximately 75–80% of payments had been made, which is positive progress. Mr. Fewell noted that these numbers did not include those who had inquired about the late payment period. Committee Member Peter Zschiesche stated that a WhatsApp notice would be sent over the weekend to permit holders to encourage timely payment and help them avoid late fees. Mr. Fewell noted that a mass text message had been sent earlier that day reminding permit holders to renew. There was a strong response to the text message which resulted in many follow-up calls. Mr. Fewell stated that renewal numbers would be available after April 3rd.

**Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

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

Leonardo Fewell, MTS For Hire Vehicle Administration Manager, presented on For Hire Vehicle Administration Operations Update. He discussed: FHVA Operations Updates, update on staff directory, update on active and surrendered permits, data and field contacts, customer feedback cases, future online permitting portal, electronic payments, phone text messages communication, wildcatting enforcement efforts, driver incentive program, Prohibition of 1P Integration for TNC and Electronically Booked Trips and Airport Trips for CY 2025

**Public Comment**

There were no Public Comments.

**Committee Comment**

There were no Committee Comments.

**Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

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

Leonardo Fewell, MTS For Hire Vehicle Administration Manager, presented on Topics for Next Taxicab Advisory Committee Meeting. He outlined: Proposed Ordinance No. 11 Revisions, Sustainable Measures for the Taxicab Industry: Smart Meters, For-Hire Vehicle Administration Operations Update.

**Public Comment**

Tony Hueso – Provided a verbal statement to the Committee during the meeting. Tony thanked the committee and addressed ongoing negotiations with the airport, expressing opposition to what he described as a “double tax” on trip fees. He noted the issue remains under discussion, with plans to meet the new airport chair, and emphasized the need for industry support.

**Committee Comment**

There were no Committee Comments.

**Action Taken**

Informational item only. No action taken.

OTHER ITEMS

**9. Committee Member Communications**

There was no Committee Member Communications and Other Business discussion.

**10. Next Meeting Date**

The next Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

**11. Adjournment**

Chair Elo-Rivera adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m.

| /S/ Sean Elo-Rivera | /S/ Adriana Castro |
|---|---|
| Chairperson | Committee Clerk |
| San Diego Metropolitan Transit System | 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 27, 2026 CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 1:07 p.m.

ADJOURN: 2:15 p.m.

| COMMITTEE MEMBER | | ALTERNATE | | ORGANIZATION | PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED) | ABSENT (TIME LEFT) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Voting Committee Members | | | | | | |
| Sean Elo-Rivera (Chair) | ☒ | None | ☐ | MTS Board of Directors/ SD City Council | 1:07 PM | 2:15 PM |
| Able Seifu | ☒ | None | ☐ | Permit Holder / Odyssey Cab | 1:07 PM | 2:15 PM |
| Alemayehu Tegegne | ☐ | None | ☐ | Permit Holder / AT Cab | Absent | Absent |
| Gonzalo Ayala | ☐ | None | ☐ | Permit Holder / Heritage Cab | Absent | Absent |
| Aklilu Fray | ☐ | None | ☐ | Permit Holder / AK Cab | Absent | Absent |
| Laura Ramirez | ☐ | None | ☐ | Permit Holder / Cristobal Cab | Absent | Absent |
| Kidane Tesfagebriel | ☐ | None | ☐ | Permit Holder / Western Cab | Absent | Absent |
| Letty Canizalez | ☐ | None | ☐ | SD Tourism Authority | Absent | Absent |
| Eduardo Gonzalez | ☒ | Jose Raul Alcantar | ☐ | Cross Border X-Press | 1:07 PM | 2:15 PM |
| Mikaiil Hussein | ☐ | Peter Zschiesche | ☒ | United Taxi Workers SD | 1:07 PM | 2:15 PM |
| Daryl Mayekawa | ☐ | Thanh Nguyen | ☐ | SD Convention Center | Absent | Absent |
| Marc Nichols | ☐ | Michael Anderson | ☒ | SD Regional Airport Authority | 1:07 PM | 2:15 PM |
| Eric Lopez | ☐ | None | ☐ | Border Transportation Council (BTC) | Absent | Absent |
| Cesar Lopez | ☒ | None | ☐ | Taxicab Lease Driver | 1:07 PM | 2:15 PM |
| Horacio Sanchez | ☒ | None | ☐ | Taxicab Lease Driver | 1:07 PM | 2:15 PM |
| David Tasem | ☐ | None | ☐ | Taxicab Lease Driver | Absent | Absent |
| Non – Voting Committee Members | | | | | | |
| Jonathan Garcia | ☒ | Austin Shepard | ☐ | SD Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures | 1:07 PM | 2:15 PM |
| Jessica Marty | ☐ | None | ☐ | SD County Sheriff's Department Licensing Division | Absent | Absent |

COMMITTEE CLERK: /s/ Lucia Mansour