

MEETING OF THE SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
TAXICAB ADVISORY COMMITTEE

July 15, 2020

[Clerk's note: Except where noted, public, staff and committee member comments are paraphrased. Meeting conducted via webinar to comply with public health orders].

1. Roll Call

Chris Ward, Chair of the Committee, called the Taxicab Advisory Committee meeting to order at 10:08 am. A roll call sheet listing the Taxicab Advisory Committee member attendance is attached.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 15, 2020

Approval of January 15, 2020 minutes moved to next scheduled TAC due to no quorum.

3. Non-Agenda Public Comment

There were no non-agenda public comments.

4. Proposed Revisions to City Council Policy No. 500-02

Mr. Fewell reviewed the proposed revisions to Policy No. 500-02. Fundamental proposals included: Removal of six (6) month commercial driving experience for permit applicants, removal proof of ability to meet insurance requirements, removal proof of ability to finance meeting screening criteria and regulatory requirements, addition of ADA-compliant vehicle guidelines to “be consistent with MTS Taxicab Administration regulations and policies...”, remove security camera requirement and update to require that Customer Service Plans include “utilization of GPS”, replacement of current vehicle age requirements from 10 years to 15 years, and removal of the salvage title restriction; as long as vehicle passes MTS’s 49-point inspection and complies with the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Changes to requirements regarding adequate administrative and vehicle maintenance facilities, removal of street parking restrictions, revision to 24-hour dispatch coverage requirement and revision to policy section that specifies Corporation and LLC compliance with Screening Criteria within 5 years to reflect **all** existing permits shall comply. Policy No. 500-02, and the specific detail of each proposal, background and alternative was provided with the original meeting packet.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Committee Member Comment

Mr. Ward said these changes will be good for the industry without compromising quality of service, or safety, to passengers. Ms. Leslie noted that these changes are slated to go in to effect in January and that it is critical to present to the City of San Diego prior to maturation date, or any possible enforcement, of the current policy.

Mr. Majid said he feels that the majority of the revisions being presented are in response to guidelines that were initially politically motivated, rather than based on any data or facts. He said the age limit of the vehicle impacts Corporations/ LLC's but exempts Sole Proprietors and is possibly discriminatory. He has some concern that the 10-year age limit was selected arbitrarily and the same is being done with choosing the 15-year age limit. Vehicles frequently used for current fleets are lasting much longer and this policy may again require further revision. He proposes to consider asking for no age limit but does acknowledge the most important thing is to move forward.

Mr. Hueso also expressed concerns about the time frame of the changes as he noted that Chair Ward would be moving on and continuity would be impacted.

Mr. Zschiesche was in agreeance with Mr. Majid, he thinks that the year of the vehicle is insignificant if the vehicle is deemed safe. He also would like to see this moved forward so that the changes may already be in place once the pandemic restrictions ease up.

Ms. Tanguay said she doesn't believe these matters are political and that these are logical concerns. She does have some concerns about not having 24-hour dispatch, particularly in the event of an emergency.

Chair Ward suggested taking the matter back to the Workshop on Regulatory Matters (WORM) and then presenting it to City based on Committee Member support. He suggests offering the proposal to the City tentatively in September and also recognizes that timeliness is of the essence. He said he also thinks the year seems a bit arbitrary, but it was selected based on when the policy went into effect, current vehicle ages and to ensure currently operating vehicles are still in compliance. Mr. Fewell clarified that CARB, and their standards, is the main determinate factor when it comes to vehicle age. When doing research on the matter he solicited information from other industry counterparts and learned that some have already removed agency age restrictions, while others are contemplating revisions. As an example, he noted that although the San Diego Airport has existing guidelines regarding taxi vehicle age, they have currently suspended their 10-year age requirement.

Action Taken

None. No quorum.

5. Revisions to Taxicab Advisory Committee Guidelines

To address vacancies, and/or low attendance appointments, on the Taxicab Advisory Committee (TAC) impacting quorum, the following revisions were proposed to the TAC Guidelines: removal of the San Diego Travelers' Aid Society and San Diego Hotel Industry and appointment of the Gaslamp Quarter Association and Cross Border Xpress (CBX).

MTS has confirmed that both Jorge Goytortua, Chief Executive Officer for CBX, and Michael Trimble, Gaslamp Quarter Association, are interested in joining TAC. Upon TAC member approval of the appointment of the Gaslamp Quarter Association and CBX, a proposal to amend the Taxicab Advisory Committee Guidelines will be presented to Board of Directors at the July 30, 2020. Ms. Leslie noted that if TAC is in support of the item, even though there is not a

quorum, it can still be presented to the Board at the July meeting. This should to ensure a quorum at the October 2020 TAC Meeting.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Committee Member Comment

Ms. Tanguay stated that Gaslamp is in very bad shape and she is in support of bringing them on. She also said that she is aware of some of the problems CBX is experiencing and thinks they are also a very wise addition to help the industry.

Mr. Majid also feels both organizations will be good additions, particularly as they are not well versed in the taxi industry.

Mr. Zschiesche said the Hotel Industry should be represented; Mr. Fewell explained that neither prior Hotel Organization was interested in participating.

Action Taken

None. No quorum.

6. COVID-19 Sanitary Measures for Taxicab, Jitney, Low Speed, Charter and Nonemergency Medical Transport Vehicles and Associated Administrative Penalties

Mr. Fewell reviewed the established mandatory COVID-19 sanitary measures for all modes of MTS Regulated For-Hire Vehicles. The following organizational mandates and guidelines were reviewed and utilized in doing such: The County of San Diego (COSD) Health Orders; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sanitary recommendations for Rideshare, Taxi, Limo, and other Passengers and Drivers of For-Hire vehicles; and COVID-19 related measures implemented by other for-hire and TNC industries. A 10-day period beginning June 17, 2020 and ending on June 27, 2020 was given to allow permit holders and lease drivers to comply with these measures.

Mr. Fewell shared that on June 19, 2020, MTS issued a news media release announcing New Safety Protocols for Taxicab Drivers and Passengers. Additionally, Taxicab Administration distributed an informational memorandum and sample COVID-19 response plan to Taxicab Advisory Committee members, dispatch services, interested parties and other industry stakeholders. Mr. Fewell presented a list of the COVID-19 sanitary measures implemented on June 17, 2020 and noted that they will remain in force until further notice. The summarized required measures are: Driver Temperature/Symptom Screening, Driver Face Coverings, Disinfection of vehicle touchable surfaces, no passenger/fares in front seat and posting of a COVID-19 Business Plan. The additional recommended measures are: partitions between front and rear passenger seats, car ventilation via windows and vents, and driver hand sanitizer usage after handling passenger items. MTS Taxicab Administration will be utilizing warnings and re-training as the primary tool for enforcement. Following issuance of two warnings to any driver and/or permit holder, administrative penalties will apply which include, but are not limited to: five-day Driver I.D. Suspension and/or removing vehicle from service until corrected (RTC).

The vehicle will remain out of service pending a vehicle inspection by MTS Inspectors to verify the violation(s) have been corrected. Detailed specifications of required, and recommended, items were provided with the original meeting materials.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Committee Member Comment

Chair Ward stated that he appreciated MTS coming up with industry standards in order to ensure the safety of drivers, passengers and subsequent passengers. He asked if there were any passenger requirements, particularly for those who appear ill. Ms. Leslie replied that it is up to the driver to decide to provide rides to those they feel may be ill, additionally for those passengers it is recommended that drivers refer them to immediate appropriate medical care. Chair Ward asked specifically about any requirements for passengers regarding face coverings. Mr. Fewell said that there are existing County mandates regarding face coverings, MTS does not have a separate specific mandate. Mr. Fewell said that any drivers who deny fare based on COVID related reasons should notify their dispatch company immediately to ensure appropriate record keeping. He stated that, to date, there have not been any complaints or concerns arising from passengers not following the COSD mandate.

Mr. Hueso wanted clarification on interior partitions being mandatory, and if so, when the sunset date would be. Mr. Fewell responded that interior partitions are only an optional recommendation at this time. He said that as COSD guidelines are currently being utilized there is no established sunset, or expiration date; requirements may change as the COSD changes their guidelines or recommendations. MTS will communicate any changes with all permit holders as they happen.

Mr. Banks asked if a passenger does not seem sick, and the number of passengers exceeds the backseat, they can use the front seat. Mr. Fewell responded that a driver does have the discretion in such situations but suggested that calling for a second vehicle may be safer solution to consider.

Action Taken

None, informational only.

7. Preliminary Report on Regulatory Fee Payments and Voluntary Surrender Permit Update

Mr. Fewell gave a preliminary report of Regulatory Fee deadline updates and Surrendered Permits to date. He announced the extension of the full payment deadline from June 8, 2020, to September 1, 2020. He explained that permit holders have the option of paying the entire \$600 per permit or a minimum \$200 payment per permit on, or before, June 8, 2020 with remaining balances to be paid on, or before, September 1, 2020. Failure to pay the remaining \$400, or other outstanding balances, will result in permit revocation. No further payment extensions will be provided. A preliminary update on payments was reported as 27% (390) paid in full, 63% (927) partial payment and 10% (153) no payment made.

Permit holders were also allowed to place their vehicle under voluntary surrender at any time, free of charge. MTS provides proof that the vehicle is placed under voluntary surrender as necessary for the purpose of suspending insurance, dispatch service and other operating costs while the vehicle is not in service. He reported the current “voluntary surrender” figure for all permits as 46% (664 of 1450). The figures by permit mode were reported as: Taxi 64% (545 of 850), NEM 10% (39 of 394), and combined Charter, Jitney and LSV as 39% (80 of 206).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Committee Member Comment

Mr. Banks asked when the airport is opening and if permit status with MTS will impact the ability to work the airport. Mr. Fewell said that as long as the MTS permit is paid and valid, even if the vehicle is temporarily surrendered, they are still eligible to apply for an airport permit.

Action Taken

None, informational only.

8. National Science Foundation Civic Innovation Challenge Grant Opportunity

Mr. Fewell announced a collaborative partnership between UCSD and MTS on the National Science Foundation’s “Civic Innovation Challenge” grant competition. The competition consists of a \$50,000 planning grant to be awarded this fall, and a follow-up \$1,000,000 full grant starting by fall 2021. The grant is designed to develop a way to connect a traveler’s origin/destination and a transit station/stop, commonly referred to as the “first/last mile”. Grant funds would be used to develop a taxi dispatch software application that could synchronize with future MTS fare collection and trip planning mobile applications. With the MTS mobile application, passengers can pay for both their MTS fare and their taxicab fare in order to complete their trip. This pilot program would both assist MTS’s goal of increasing ridership on public transportation and provide a source of additional business for the local taxicab industry. If the grant application is successful, MTS plans to elicit feedback via public engagements with community stakeholders to be used by UCSD in developing the pilot program. The National Science Foundation should announce the grant award recipients late in the fall of 2020.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Committee Member Comment

Mr. Banks asked how fares will be collected; if tickets, vouchers or some other payment method will be used. Mr. Fewell replied that the specific details will be worked out at a later date.

Mr. Hueso asked if this is something that will this be available to single, or multiple, service providers. Mr. Fewell said that MTS did share with UCSD that they would like multiple service providers to be able to participate to ensure equitability. He does envision that there will be

some guidelines developed for those who may provide the service; these details will be worked out and shared with the TAC as they develop.

Action Taken

None, informational only.

9. Committee Member Communications

No additional committee member communications were received.

10. Next Meeting: October 14, 2020

11. The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 am.

Accepted:

/s/Chris Ward
Chris Ward
Chair of Taxicab Advisory Committee

Filed by:

/s/Jamila L Larkins
Jamila Larkins, Clerk of the Committee
MTS Taxicab Administration

Attachment: Roll Call Sheet

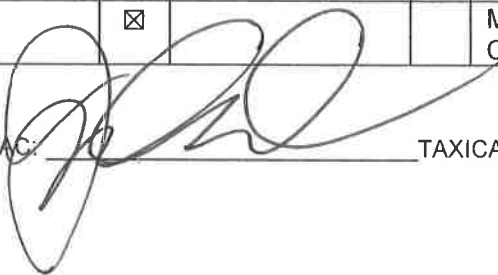
SAN DIEGO METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SYSTEM
TAXICAB ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) MEETING
ROLL CALL

MEETING OF (DATE): July 15, 2020

CALL TO ORDER (TIME): 10:08 am

ADJOURN: 11:32 am

COMMITTEE MEMBER		(Alternate)		ORGANIZATION	PRESENT (TIME ARRIVED)	ABSENT (TIME LEFT)
Christopher Ward	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			MTS Board of Directors/SD City Council	10:00 am	11.32 am
George Abraham	<input type="checkbox"/>			Taxicab Owner/Eritrean Cab Co.		
Alfred Banks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Taxicab Lease Driver	10:00 am	11.32 am
VACANT (Chasteen)	<input type="checkbox"/>			Hotel Industry		
Brian Hilemon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			San Diego Tourism Authority	10:00 am	11.32 am
Antonio Hueso	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			USA Cab, LTD	10:00 am	11.32 am
Mikail Hussein	<input type="checkbox"/>	Peter Zschiesche	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	United Taxi Workers Federation San Diego	10:00 am	11.32 am
Daryl Mayekawa	<input type="checkbox"/>			San Diego Convention Center		
Akbar Majid	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Taxicab Owner/SDYC Holdings, LLC	10:00 am	11.32 am
Guillermo Morquecho	<input type="checkbox"/>			Taxicab Lease Driver		
Houshang Nahavandian	<input type="checkbox"/>			Taxicab Owner/ESM Corporation		
Marc Nichols	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Michael Anderson	<input type="checkbox"/>	San Diego County Regional Airport Authority		
VACANT (Palmeri)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	San Diego Travelers Aid Society		
Margo Tanguay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Taxicab Lease Driver	10:00 am	11.32 am
David Tasem	<input type="checkbox"/>			Taxicab Lease Driver		
Nasser Tehrani	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			Taxicab Owner/N.A.T. Cab Co.	10:00 am	11.32 am
Garret Cooper non-voting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			San Diego Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures	10:00 am	11.32 am
Edna Rains non-voting	<input type="checkbox"/>			San Diego County Sheriff's Department Licensing Division		
Sharon Cooney non-voting	<input type="checkbox"/>			MTS Chief Executive Officer		
Leonardo Fewell non-voting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			MTS Taxicab Administration Manager	10:00 am	11.32 am
Samantha Leslie non-voting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			MTS Staff Attorney/Regulatory Compliance	10:00 am	11.32 am

CLERK OF THE TAC: 

TAXICAB ADMINISTRATION MANAGER: 