



Taxicab Services Commission

Tuesday March 26, 2024

6 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Meeting held via Microsoft Teams



Attendees:

Commission members present:

Elizabeth “Buffy” Ellis, David Mohebbi, Charles Kauffman, Reza Raoofi, Joyce Plaxen, Afework Kidane

Commission members absent:

Nelson Biama, Becaye Traore,

MCDOT Staff: Ulysses Delaney, Walton Harris, Antoinette Brunson, Kofi Bempah, Kristopher Starks, Sam Oji

Ex-Officio members Present:

None

Ex-Officio members Absent:

Chris Conklin – Director – Montgomery County Department of Transportation

David Lorenzo-Botello on behalf of Evan Glass – Montgomery County Council President and Chair of the Transportation and Environment Committee

Guests:

None

Chair Ellis called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Action Item:

- Taxicab Regulation Unit staff indicated that minutes for the January 24, 2024, Taxicab Services Commission meeting were not sent to commission members in a timely manner to allow a proper review. Staff indicated that minutes to this meeting will be sent to members and the commission could then subsequently vote to approve at the May 21, 2024 meeting.

Discussion Items:

Discussion – Legislation currently before the Maryland General Assembly to increase the assessment to Transportation Network Companies

- Commission chair Ellis informed Taxicab Services Commission (TSC) members that Senate Bill 505 and House Bill 133 did not move beyond crossover day before the Maryland General Assembly, and therefore would not receive a final vote.
- Commission member Kauffman commented that there was a competing statewide bill.
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) staff member Oji mentioned that he provided testimony in Annapolis in support of Senate Bill 505 and House Bill 1133, and that Maryland State Senators were in support of the Bill, but the legislation did not survive crossover day.
- Commission Chair Ellis emphasized the need to ensure that future legislation that increases the assessment on Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) be successful moving forward.
- Commission Chair Ellis indicated that she would contact Melanie Wenger, Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, and request that she participate in an upcoming TSC meeting to discuss a strategy for next year's Maryland General Assembly session in Annapolis.

Discussion – Biennial Report

- Commission member Raoofi expressed a need to increase the taxicab meter rate.
- MCDOT staff member Oji stated that the commission needs to be careful regarding an increase to taxicab meter rates and indicated that they are comparable to other jurisdictions.
- MCDOT staff member Oji stated that the department will introduce a new transportation debit card system for Call-n-Ride participants.
- MCDOT staff member Oji stated that the new system is the result of taxicab service complaints received by the department.
- Commission member Raoofi stated that there is not enough money in the county taxicab industry to attract more drivers to meet demand.
- Commission member Kauffman inquired why the TSC was not informed of the policy change to incorporate more diverse transportation to Call-n-Ride options earlier.
- Commission member Oji stated that the balance of the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF) is running low.
- Commission member Mohebbi inquired if the department could provide statistics regarding the number of completed trips versus the number of complaints received.
- Commission member Ellis inquired if Regency Taxi compensates customers for missed trips.
- Commission member Mohebbi indicated that all complaints are resolved with one or two days and relevant parties are copied on email correspondence.

- Commission member Mohebbi stated that taxicab operators have not had a raise in five years. He also requested that the department implement a meter rate schedule similar to Frederick County Maryland.

Discussion – Changes to the Composition of the Taxicab Services Commission

- Commission Chair Ellis stated that a Passenger Vehicle License (PVL) holder had expressed interest in joining the TSC as a member.
- MCDOT staff member Harris indicated that a virtual panel interview must be arranged and that the Chair and one additional commission member must interview the applicant.
- Commission members Mohebbi and Plaxen volunteered to assist with the interview process.
- MCDOT staff member Oji stated that perhaps a representative with the Small Business Office would be interested in joining the TSC as a member.
- Commission member Kauffman suggested including cab users on the commission.
- Commission Chair Ellis suggested including a Call-n-Ride customer as a commission member.

New business

- No new business was discussed, however, Commission Chair Ellis suggested that the next in-person TSC meeting be held in September of 2024.

Meeting adjourned:

Commission member Mohebbi made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commission member Kauffman. The motion was passed unanimously by those in attendance.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.