

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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DEPARTMENT OF FOR-HIRE VEHICLES

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FOR-HIRE VEHICLE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

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THURSDAY  
JUNE 22, 2017

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The Council met in Suite 2032, 2235  
Shannon Place, S.E., Washington, D.C., at 1:17  
p.m., Linwood Jolly, Chairperson, presiding.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

LINWOOD JOLLY, Chairperson  
JASON ARVANITES, Member  
ERNEST CHRAPPAH, Member  
ERIK MOSES, Member  
EVIAN PATTERSON, Member  
JEFFREY SCHAEFFER, Member  
ANTHONY THOMAS, Member

STAFF PRESENT:

JUANITA MIXON, SECRETARY TO THE COUNCIL  
MONIQUE BOCOCK, ESQ., INTERIM GENERAL  
COUNSEL

C O N T E N T S

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1:17 a.m.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Good afternoon.

I'd like to call this meeting to order. This is the second Advisory Council meeting for the Department of For-Hire Vehicles.

We're in 2235 Shannon Place, Northeast, main conference room on the second floor. At this time I'd like to call the meeting to order and we'll observe a moment of silence for those that have departed.

Thank you. I want to welcome everybody here today. And thank you for coming out today. It's 1:00 in the afternoon.

And we see that there are a good number of drivers here. And we also would like your input on if 1:00 is a good time. Versus our normal time at 10:00. But we can do that later on in the public comment period.

We're fortunate today to have Dr. Chrappah as one of our Advisory members. And at this time he's going to give us a brief update on

1 things that have been going on at the Department  
2 of For-Hire Vehicles.

3 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Thank you,  
4 Chairperson Jolly and my fellow members of the  
5 For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council. Welcome.  
6 Very nice to see you all.

7 The Department has been quite busy for  
8 the last couple of months since we met as a  
9 group. And I'm delighted to announce some of the  
10 accomplishments that we've been able to put in  
11 place, particularly to help drivers, companies,  
12 and also our residents who use for-hire vehicles.

13 I'm going to start by giving a quick  
14 update on our progress with respect to the  
15 digital taxi solution. The genesis of the  
16 digital taxi solution was not only to help taxis  
17 compete, but also reduce the burden of  
18 regulations or legislation in a way that impacts  
19 the gross margins for the taxi business.

20 So more specifically, the digital taxi  
21 solution drastically reduces the equipment cost  
22 that a taxi owner or operator has to incur.

1 Where we are today is we've received and  
2 processed seven applications from various  
3 companies who want to be DTS providers.

4 We've stated a process of field  
5 testing. And we've also partnered with Square so  
6 that drivers have an option for credit card  
7 processing at 2.65 percent.

8 Which is pretty phenomenal. If you  
9 look at the current marketplace, drivers are  
10 paying up to five percent plus ancillary fees  
11 just for credit card processing.

12 So this transition is going to save  
13 drivers several millions of dollars across the  
14 entire fleet. More importantly, it also  
15 introduces advanced features to enhance ridership  
16 experiences.

17 So, taxi companies, taxi drivers, will  
18 be positioned to be able to provide frequent  
19 rider discounts. They will be able to provide  
20 discounted fares consistently during slow  
21 periods.

22 And they'll be in an environment where

1 they can have access to expanded economic  
2 opportunities. Whether that is shared rides  
3 without necessarily having to invest in  
4 additional equipment.

5           Whether it is scheduled deliveries.  
6 Whether it is integrating the Pandoras, the  
7 Spotifys or music applications to enhance their  
8 ridership experience.

9           And beyond all of that, they will have  
10 an easy way to execute rider surveys. For riders  
11 to provide feedback on their ridership  
12 experience.

13           So, these changes will definitely put  
14 D.C. taxies in a position where the real and true  
15 operators who are committed to service, will be  
16 able to excel.

17           We have reason to believe that the  
18 excitement that we've seen so far around the  
19 digital taxi solution will continue. And we will  
20 work with all the companies who get approved, and  
21 all the drivers, to manage the implementation.

22           Something that we did a couple of

1 weeks ago was also distributed to the industry, a  
2 Know Your Rights card or flyer. So that  
3 individuals will know how to address their  
4 contract situations.

5 Individuals will know how to avoid  
6 being victims of scams. Because we've received  
7 reports about some drivers being coerced or being  
8 put in a position where they can sign contracts  
9 beyond the current licensing period for the  
10 morning taxi solution.

11 Which we think is a problem. So we'll  
12 continue to educate drivers, help them during the  
13 transition. And then reposition at least the  
14 taxi market in a way that it can be competitive  
15 and supports the overall integration of all for-  
16 hire modes in the District of Columbia.

17 Secondly, I want to touch on the D.C.  
18 Taxi App. We transitioned the D.C. Taxi App to  
19 the industry cooperative over a year ago.

20 And we are delighted that they were  
21 able to relaunch the app a couple of months ago.  
22 And they are focused on additional revenue

1 streams to help taxis. So the progress there has  
2 been very good.

3 The third category of updates from the  
4 Department is with respect to, you know,  
5 Innovation Grants Programs we launched a few  
6 months back. The idea behind Innovation Grants  
7 Program was for the industry to propose solutions  
8 to address transportation equities and to also  
9 help them open new revenue streams.

10 Based on the applications that we  
11 received, we've so far made awards in a number of  
12 categories. The first is school transportation  
13 service.

14 We have a grantee who now transports  
15 children in foster care to school. And the value  
16 promise has been very good.

17 We have one instance where, instead of  
18 a child traveling for two hours to school,  
19 they're able to get to school in 15 minutes. We  
20 have another instance where instead of siblings  
21 being transported in different vehicles, they get  
22 a ride together and have that family bonding

1 moment over a short period of time.

2 So, for us, this is an example of how  
3 the industry can transform to not only enhance  
4 ridership experiences, but also grow a pie in  
5 terms of our revenue.

6 The second category where we made an  
7 award is a Vehicle On-Demand program. The idea  
8 behind the Vehicle On-Demand program is that  
9 instead of government employees using fleet share  
10 or other transportation means to get to  
11 appointments or business travel within the  
12 District of Columbia, they can hail a taxi cab  
13 and it will take them to the appointment.

14 They don't have to worry about  
15 parking. And based on our initial analysis, this  
16 program can reduce the District's expenses by as  
17 much as 50 percent on transportation.

18 And it would also provide a revenue  
19 stream to the vehicle for-hire industry. So  
20 that's another area where we made a grant.

21 The third, is for non-emergency  
22 medical transportation. As some of you know,

1 sometimes people use 911 as a service to get to a  
2 doctor's appointment.

3 And that puts a strain on the city's  
4 resources. So one of the proposals we received,  
5 which was innovative, we think, is using taxis to  
6 provide transportation service to people so that  
7 they don't have to call 911 when they need a ride  
8 to a doctor's appointment or they need to do a  
9 checkup.

10 We've partnered with the Department of  
11 Healthcare Finance to provide us with guidance on  
12 how to implement this program. So that they can  
13 get knowledge transfer as well.

14 The fourth area is to address the lack  
15 of charging infrastructure. We've made a grant  
16 that would lead to the installation of at least  
17 two fast-charging, electric stations in -- at  
18 Union Station.

19 So this would give the industry  
20 members who've invested in zero emissions  
21 vehicles additional options to refuel at one of  
22 the hottest pickup and drop off destinations in

1 the District of Columbia.

2 Based on what we know so far, we are  
3 on schedule for that project to be completed  
4 before the end of the fiscal year. And that  
5 should alleviate some of the challenges vehicle  
6 owners currently have in terms of access to fast-  
7 charging stations.

8 There are charging stations. But  
9 there are just not enough fast-charging stations.  
10 So, we support this initiative very strongly.

11 The other area with respect to  
12 electric vehicles also, is a rebate program that  
13 we put in place. We put in place a rebate  
14 program that gives owners, or new owners of 100  
15 percent electric vehicles or hybrid electric  
16 vehicles, five thousand dollars towards the  
17 acquisition or reducing the operating cost of  
18 that vehicle.

19 And it was open to at least 150  
20 people. We received just tepid response, in that  
21 we received 27 applications.

22 And so far, 18 have been processed,

1 because they've come in to provide additional  
2 information. And we have reason to believe that  
3 in about 30 to 45 days, people will be getting  
4 checks in their hands.

5 Then the last area, which is a subset  
6 of the Innovation Grants Program, but has not  
7 been fully released yet, and this is more an FYI  
8 to the industry. Is we'll be looking at putting  
9 in place a wheelchair accessible vehicle driver  
10 and company incentive program.

11 Currently there are a number of  
12 wheelchair accessible vehicles that are not being  
13 utilized. And that creates a problem in that it  
14 reduces the accessible vehicle service in the  
15 District of Columbia.

16 So, we're working through our research  
17 department to craft an incentive program that  
18 would reward drivers for completing qualified  
19 trips. It would also reward vehicle owners or  
20 companies for meeting standards and completing  
21 wheelchair accessible trips.

22 And more importantly, it would ensure

1 that vehicles are in service for those who need  
2 them. So that is so far our updates from the  
3 Department in terms of what we've been able to  
4 accomplish so far since we last met.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you. So, as  
6 we move into the public comment period, I wanted  
7 too just first make a few remarks.

8 Being that we're a new Advisory  
9 Council, we have not taken any time to put  
10 together our internal processes here for handling  
11 the public comment period. You will remember  
12 when we were a Commission, the Commission had  
13 different rules on public comment.

14 Well, as of today, we don't have any.  
15 And we will be forming some soon. So, if there's  
16 anyone that has public comment, I invite you to  
17 get ready to come to the mic. We'll definitely  
18 hear you out.

19 And then I would also invite my  
20 Advisory Council members, if you have questions  
21 for any of the people that are presenting, feel  
22 free to do so. Bear in mind that our role here

1 today as Advisory members is to listen and to  
2 make recommendations to the Department of For-  
3 Hire Vehicles.

4 And the way that we hope to continue  
5 to do that is by engaging with you as you provide  
6 your public testimony. So, with that in mind, if  
7 there are folks here, you can raise your hand.  
8 Okay.

9 And if you have statements, you can  
10 give them to Ms. Mixon. And Ms. Mixon, I guess,  
11 we can at least, have you come to the microphone.  
12 Introduce yourself. And you can proceed from  
13 there.

14 SECRETARY MIXON: And sir, if you  
15 would you just state your name and spell it so  
16 that the court reporter has it. And then, how  
17 long?

18 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: We don't have  
19 folks here -- we don't have many folks here.

20 SECRETARY MIXON: Okay.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Give them five to  
22 seven minutes.

1                   SECRETARY MIXON: All right. Okay.  
2                   So you'll have adequate time, five to seven  
3                   minutes.

4                   MR. ZEWDU: Thank you. Good morning.  
5                   That's just one of the jobs you give me. My name  
6                   is Abebe Zewdu.

7                   As you remember me, I attended the 1/4  
8                   meeting with Council Member Brandon Todd about  
9                   the taxi industry. At the end of the meeting, I  
10                  met with Mr. Chrappah and discussed an issue that  
11                  I was having with my meter being locked.

12                  When we spoke with Mr. Chrappah, told  
13                  me to forget the old car. And he advised me to  
14                  apply for the grant and buy a new car.

15                  I took his advice. And I spent some  
16                  money to prepare the grant application  
17                  professionally.

18                  Unfortunately, I received a rejection  
19                  notice. My question is, what was the purpose of  
20                  the grant program? And how could it have helped  
21                  me?

22                  I would like to know why there is so

1 much confusion about the grant program? And why  
2 everyone was rejected?

3 I was told that the grant program was  
4 cancelled. And now there is a rebate program.

5 Could you kindly explain to me how the  
6 rebate program works? And also, how drivers may  
7 participate within this program?

8 Thanks again.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: So at this time  
10 I'll ask if any of my other Advisory Council  
11 members have any questions for this presenter.  
12 And then Director Chrappah, I'll ask you to make  
13 some final comments.

14 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Thank you  
15 Chairperson Jolly. Abebe, the grant program is a  
16 competitive process. No grant program has been  
17 cancelled.

18 What we do know is some times our  
19 stakeholders have challenge or have a series of  
20 challenges perhaps comprehending notices and  
21 letters that were sent to them, or instructions  
22 that they have to follow.

1           So, some of the things we've put in  
2 place depend on our Client Services Department to  
3 do an outreach. I don't know the specifics of  
4 your particular application.

5           What I do know is, anybody who  
6 received a denial letter, it was based off the  
7 evaluation criteria, how much they scored, or  
8 whether they not complete the requirements of the  
9 application.

10          We also made it crystal clear that  
11 drivers don't have to pay somebody to prepare an  
12 application for them. However, it was on an  
13 individual decision.

14          So, if you decided to pay somebody to  
15 prepare your application for you, that is between  
16 you and them. It is not a requirement.

17          The purpose of the rebates program,  
18 which is -- which was another incentive to  
19 drivers and owners on top of everything else that  
20 was in place, was to give five thousand dollars  
21 for taxi owners or drivers who choose to invest  
22 in greener vehicles.

1           Most people who received, if not all,  
2           who received a denial letter for what they didn't  
3           qualify, also received pre-approval notice and  
4           letter with instructions on how to apply for the  
5           rebate program. Some did. Some didn't.

6           We know at least 27 people followed  
7           the process and applied. So, they must have done  
8           something right. And those who chose not to  
9           apply, they made an individual decision.

10           The deadline for the rebate program I  
11           believe was June 12. So, between the time to go  
12           receive their notice to June 12, you would have  
13           to figure out why you didn't apply.

14           And if you applied, I'm sure your name  
15           would have been in the 27. I don't recall the  
16           27 applicants off the top.

17           But, the Department's commitment to  
18           helping vehicle owners or drivers, has not  
19           changed. In fact, the Department has double  
20           downed on our investments to help the industry.

21           That is one reason why even people who  
22           didn't meet the qualification or people who

1 didn't have strong applications for any of the  
2 Innovation Grant Programs, received a notice and  
3 a letter about another opportunity that was  
4 available to them.

5 So, if there is something more that  
6 you think the Department should do, we are open  
7 to suggestions. But what we will remain  
8 steadfast on, is that we expect and we will hold  
9 individuals and companies accountable to  
10 standards that we put out there.

11 There's no such thing as cut me a  
12 check. Because that's not the way the City  
13 operates. There are rules that the Department  
14 has to follow.

15 There are rules that must be abided by  
16 to ensure that if we are giving funding to  
17 individuals or companies with taxpayer dollars,  
18 it is done appropriately.

19 MR. ZEWDU: Well, can I just say  
20 something about it? First you mention about not  
21 to pay any money for the application process.

22 But the reason why we go there is, we

1 are trying to avoid this rejection notice. We  
2 are trying to just be online, no.

3 That's why we just looking for  
4 professional applicant fillers, you know. And  
5 also, if you remember the time when I spoke to  
6 you, there was electric and wheelchair cars.

7 It was simply, and appropriately, and  
8 fairly, based off my meter. That was my  
9 complaint for you.

10 But you told me just forget about the  
11 old car. Forget about this. Just apply there  
12 for the grant money and buy a new car, and be on  
13 the street. If you remember that.

14 So now, all of a sudden it comes to me  
15 now, the electric cars and some wheelchair  
16 vehicles if we -- I'm just telling you right now.

17 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: I think you're  
18 conflicting different things. Your meter was  
19 deactivated. And if I recall, it was because  
20 your vehicle had aged out.

21 That is separate from grant  
22 opportunities. And if I recall, you wanted to

1 know what the Department could do to help  
2 individuals or owners who had aged out vehicles.

3 And I mentioned to you that there are  
4 grant programs available. Now every grant  
5 program has terms and conditions.

6 At no point did I or anybody from our  
7 office say, you get a free pass. You get to go  
8 buy another car. No.

9 The requirements have to be met. So,  
10 you had an opportunity to replace your vehicle at  
11 your own cost as long as it meets existing  
12 regulations.

13 You had an opportunity to take  
14 advantage of the rebate programs and subscribe to  
15 the terms and conditions with it. You were  
16 firmly, and still are firmly, in the driving  
17 seat.

18 The choice is yours. Thank you.

19 MEMBER PATTERSON: Sorry, may I have  
20 a question, sir? Just a question about the  
21 confusion that you mentioned in your statement.

22 I guess this is a question for you and

1 also for the agency. What information did you  
2 receive prior to, you know, filling out the grant  
3 application?

4 Where there things like information  
5 sessions available to you? Did it explain the  
6 grant process and what would be in the  
7 requirements?

8 MR. ZEWDU: You know, I just -- in  
9 fact this is a good question. I just took the  
10 word from Mr. Chrappah.

11 And when he just told me about the  
12 grant program, we were mentioned about the  
13 regular car. We were talking about the regular  
14 car issue.

15 And then I took it just like, you  
16 know, well, if I was like, everybody knows about  
17 these dates because of, you know, our business  
18 was -- is going down.

19 So, because of that, the City  
20 government or the Department of For-Hire Vehicle,  
21 they just made some kind of money to support the  
22 drivers. I took it just like that.

1                   And in fact, I told you before, we  
2                   tried, me and my friends, we tried to avoid this,  
3                   you know, unnecessary applications, you know.  
4                   And we tried to protect our application from the  
5                   denial.

6                   And we go further. And we pay almost  
7                   eight hundred dollar, each of the -- each of us,  
8                   to apply that application to fill it for us.

9                   MEMBER PATTERSON: Sure.

10                  MR. ZEWDU: But, unfortunately, we  
11                  received denial notice.

12                  MEMBER PATTERSON: And I'm sorry you  
13                  received that denial notice. But, I have, you  
14                  know, if we are to advise the Agency, perhaps  
15                  some more information on, you know, what are the  
16                  expectations that are in the grant process so  
17                  that you know what you're getting into when you,  
18                  you know, when you apply?

19                  The Director and the Agency, and  
20                  they're doing their good faith to provide you  
21                  with the opportunities and what's available out  
22                  there. But, I wonder what is available to the

1 industry, the information on just -- on the grant  
2 process? Because I'm not an expert.

3 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Yes. A very good  
4 question. A number of things. The resources  
5 available is, quite frankly, incredible.

6 It is on our website in terms of the  
7 requirements, the deadlines, FAQs, what to do and  
8 what not to do. One example of what not to do,  
9 is to pay somebody to secure a grant application.

10 An example of what not to do is to  
11 say, just give me money because my business is  
12 down. You know, we went as far as to even  
13 provide templates that individuals can follow.

14 We provided an information session  
15 about a grant on 4/20. We sent email notices out  
16 about the grant programs. Our client services  
17 department engage with drivers on a one on one  
18 basis when they come to the service center to  
19 understand their unique challenges, what they  
20 need to do.

21 But, one thing that we are not able to  
22 solve is the -- what I call herd behavior. Where

1 one driver hears something and they all decide to  
2 do the same thing. In spite of the information  
3 that is clear.

4 And that is a natural issue within the  
5 industry. And we think one way of mitigating it,  
6 because we cannot eliminate it, is to ensure the  
7 messaging goes directly to the drivers, and we  
8 provide additional support in terms of questions  
9 and answers.

10 We've even gone as far as to simplify  
11 the application process for the rebate. You have  
12 to put in only, I think, seven distinct fields.  
13 Your name, the address where the payment should  
14 be sent, the VIN Number of the vehicle if you  
15 have it, the PVI. Basic stuff.

16 So, fill out a form with about seven  
17 to nine fields. Sign a grant agreement. And we  
18 initiate a process to get a check to you.

19 So we can't lower the barriers any  
20 further then that. Or else, it will be  
21 irresponsible on the government side.

22 MEMBER MOSES: So. I appreciate the

1        comments of the Director and Mr. Zewdu. Thank  
2        you for bringing your concerns to us.

3                    I have some experience with running  
4        grant programs. Not as the primary activity of  
5        the organizations that I've run, but as a  
6        supplementary activity. Which just sounds like  
7        is the same case here for the Department.

8                    Any time anyone puts forth their  
9        effort and gets their hopes up about potentially  
10        benefitting financially from a grant program,  
11        it's going to be disappointing when you're not  
12        successful.

13                    The Department, I assume, has a very  
14        limited set of funds for grants. And there are  
15        probably way more applicants than there are funds  
16        to provide satisfaction to those applicants.

17                    So, what I would say is, and a thing  
18        that I've done in the past, and our agency has  
19        been to, if necessary, to have those information  
20        sessions. Which it sounds like you have, and  
21        FAQs and information that's available on line.

22                    But it might be to the extent that you

1 have the bandwidth on the staff side, for someone  
2 to sit down with an applicant like this. And to  
3 explain if there are ways that the application  
4 could have been improved.

5 Or if there is something that was  
6 outside of the guidelines. Or was not fitting.  
7 If there are particular reasons.

8 Now, sometimes the reason will just  
9 be, we had a hundred applicants for X number of  
10 dollars. And we simply could not satisfy the  
11 demand.

12 And that doesn't mean that you  
13 shouldn't apply in the future. It does sound  
14 like it means that you should not pay someone to  
15 help you to apply in the future. Because it  
16 doesn't sound like that's necessary in order to  
17 put forward an application that will meet the  
18 guidelines and will qualify.

19 And so, I think the -- I think what  
20 you hear from the Director is a concern about  
21 drivers like yourself and others being preyed  
22 upon by people who might say to you, we can

1 ensure that you get a grant if you allow -- if  
2 you pay us to put forward your application.

3 And that happens across the board in  
4 many different forms. But it doesn't sound like  
5 that's necessary in order for you to be  
6 potentially successful.

7 You may have to be persistent. You  
8 may have to apply a number of times. But, you  
9 know, thank you for the effort you put forward.

10 I know it's disappointing. But, there  
11 is a balance that has to go on between limited  
12 funds, probably unlimited demand, and how those  
13 things come together.

14 So, if at all possible, perhaps  
15 someone on the staff can meet with this gentleman  
16 and go over his application. And if there are  
17 some tips that can be applied.

18 But, I would ask for your patients and  
19 understanding about the balance the Department  
20 also has to seek in trying to provide this kind  
21 of support.

22 CHAIRMAN JOLLY: Thank you. I think

1 -- oh, go ahead.

2 (Off record comments)

3 MEMBER THOMAS: I just wanted to kind  
4 of chime in on that note as well. I do have  
5 experience managing grants for the Federal  
6 Government as well as D.C. Government.

7 And so as a project officer, I'm  
8 familiar with, you know, the stipulations and  
9 just how grant applications have to be processed  
10 and reviewed and scored and et cetera. So, it's  
11 very important to know that, you know, when  
12 you're answering criteria or that you're very  
13 specific in what you're applying for.

14 But, I was going to make a suggestion  
15 that moving forward, like if the Department is  
16 moving towards grant, you know, applications, or  
17 grant funded programs that perhaps from an  
18 educational perspective we could hold like some  
19 trainings or just guidance with how to respond to  
20 grants. Or to our phase.

21 If you've never responded to one, it  
22 is a very difficult task. And again, it's, you

1 know, if you are paying someone to do it, they  
2 may not have the knowledge or the information to  
3 be able to prepare it in a way that you could  
4 win.

5 So, I would just propose that to the  
6 Council as an idea moving forward to be able to  
7 educate drivers on how to, you know, how to apply  
8 for grants. And I'd be happy to assist with  
9 that.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Okay. Mr. Abebe,  
11 so, you've got -- we've had a lot of dialog about  
12 this.

13 So, one thing that I heard, it sounds  
14 like your rejection doesn't mean that there's no  
15 alternative. Correct?

16 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: That's correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: So, and I don't  
18 want to get to into of it because for privacy  
19 issues. But, so there's going to be some follow  
20 up for you, sir, okay.

21 Who's next? Ms. Nixon? Oh, go ahead.

22 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Yes I want to

1 address two things here for others who may be  
2 listening as well. And also to Abebe.

3 You received an offer for the rebate  
4 program. You did. It was standard. Anybody who  
5 received a letter received the rebate offer.

6 By not taking advantage of the rebate  
7 offer, you have to blame yourself. This is not  
8 about DFHV or the government.

9 Yes, you got a denial letter for the  
10 application you put in. But you received an  
11 offer for five thousand dollars. You didn't take  
12 advantage of it.

13 MR. ZEWDU: Not anything comes of it.

14 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: It's for electric  
15 and hybrid electric vehicle. If that is not what  
16 you're interested in, then there's nothing from  
17 the Department.

18 So, we have to be clear. Because  
19 sometimes people want grant funding for things  
20 that are not within the scope of the grants.

21 If that's not what you're interested  
22 in, then there's not a specific resource to

1 assist you.

2 For the others, we are going to be  
3 launching a resource center for drivers and  
4 companies and our customers, who will be  
5 operating two days in addition -- two days a week  
6 for two hours each, or on a Saturday for four  
7 hours, to assist drivers with whatever issue they  
8 have.

9 Completing an application, submitting  
10 a form. Whatever it is. That, in addition to  
11 information sessions and training sessions, will  
12 reflect our ongoing commitment.

13 Where it will stop, is where people  
14 have to make a decision and accept the  
15 consequences of their decision. Because as they  
16 say, you can lead a horse to the river, but you  
17 can't force it to drink.

18 So, if you are counting on the  
19 Department to get some financial incentive, yes,  
20 we have rebate financial incentives that we'll  
21 continue to support. Wheelchair accessible  
22 vehicles, incentives for certain types of

1 behavior, incentives for certain types of  
2 vehicles.

3 But, if you're not interested in any  
4 of those, then there's very little that we can do  
5 to help.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Ms. Nixon?

7 SECRETARY MIXON: And then thank you  
8 for your statement. And if you will still state  
9 your name and spell it for the court reporter,  
10 please.

11 MR. DAGNEW: Good afternoon. My name  
12 is Dawit Dagneu, a District resident and a taxi  
13 driver.

14 In the past few years there have been  
15 many changes in the taxi cab industry that has  
16 resulted in a loss of review for drivers,  
17 decreased number of the street wells, and  
18 overwhelming competition from Uber, Lyft, and et  
19 cetera.

20 Drivers' frustration is at all time  
21 high. And we do not see any successful pathway  
22 forward. Drivers are beginning to organize in an

1 effort to survive.

2 And we disparately need the Department  
3 For-Hire Vehicles to work with us in an open and  
4 transparent manner to solve the variety of  
5 problems that we face. And to come up with  
6 innovative ideas to level the playing field  
7 somewhat for taxi drivers.

8 Taxi drivers understand that we must  
9 compete for business. And we also understand  
10 that the industry is changing. And we need to  
11 understand where we fit in.

12 Today I would like to outline some  
13 issues that we face. And secure assistance in  
14 working together to solve these issues.

15 Number one, taxi drivers are spending  
16 too much time in this facility conducting  
17 business. And we can -- and we are suggesting  
18 that a lot of the drivers' services to be  
19 decentralized and automated.

20 We further suggest that the -- you  
21 continue to roll back fees that impose on the  
22 driver. Such as fiscally new administrative fee,

1 tags, and so forth.

2 Number two, taxi drivers would like to  
3 understand why there is such a disparity of the  
4 tickets written by hack inspectors on taxis, but  
5 not for Uber and Lyft.

6 Number three, we taxi drivers would  
7 like to know the status of the taxi app. And  
8 have hard dates for release to gain a clear  
9 understanding of the benefit of the app. We  
10 disparately need this app for our success.

11 Number four, I repeat Mr. Abebe's.  
12 Recently, there was a grant program that was  
13 announced. And many drivers were told that they  
14 qualified for a grant.

15 The grant was a great idea. And we  
16 thought that this would be our opportunity to  
17 obtain critical fundings for -- to offset the  
18 high operating cost of our taxis and to implement  
19 innovation.

20 What we found out was that our over 65  
21 applications were rejected. We also found out  
22 there's a 100, over 100 drivers of electric

1 vehicles submitted grant applications, and they  
2 too were rejected.

3 While the electric drivers were  
4 offered the rebate, we know that none of the  
5 electric drivers have accepted the rebate. This  
6 program would have been a great innovative  
7 incentive for struggling drivers.

8 And we would like to find out the  
9 status of the grant program. And if we are still  
10 eligible.

11 I have spent a lot of time over the  
12 past few weeks and months organizing a group of  
13 drivers that now took on approximately 65  
14 drivers.

15 My goal is to make sure that drivers  
16 are informed about the new changes in the  
17 regulations. And to work together for our  
18 survival.

19 I would like to ask the members of the  
20 Advisory Board to meet with myself and  
21 representative of my group. So that we can  
22 continue to provide you with ideas for the

1 Department.

2 Finally, I'm hopeful that if we work  
3 together, we can begin to solve some of the  
4 issues that I have addressed today. But there  
5 are many other issues as well.

6 I respectfully ask that we begin  
7 working together. Because if we don't, the taxi  
8 cab industry will continue to decline. And  
9 drivers will continue to go out of business.

10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you. Any  
12 questions from Advisory?

13 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Yes. We thank you  
14 for your many statements.

15 We've had a history of working  
16 together on a number of different topics, from  
17 Xclass to enforcement and all of that. And I  
18 expect that relationship to continue.

19 Two things to get some context behind  
20 some of the questions or suggestions. The first  
21 one about decentralizing driver services.

22 Could you tell me what else can be

1 done in addition to giving drivers the online  
2 portal? As you know, we rolled out a portal for  
3 drivers or companies to initiate their licensing  
4 transactions online.

5 What else should be done in addition  
6 to that? To sort of like, you know, reduce the  
7 need for drivers to come here physically?

8 MR. DAGNEW: Thank you. Drivers  
9 services, we know what these are for the most  
10 part.

11 So, any government agencies these  
12 days, they have alternative application online.  
13 Such as renew my fees. Where do I have to come  
14 to pay. Renew my fees here.

15 If I can submit my application and  
16 keep me in my car. This business is not good no  
17 more. So don't bring me here. Let me sit and  
18 struggle in my car.

19 Give us an opportunity to do things  
20 online. For example, just recent I have to -- we  
21 have this meter.

22 A lot of cab drivers' meters have been

1 shut off often time for various reasons. Expired  
2 fees, expired drivers' license, anything.  
3 Anything or information.

4 So would that be possible to contact  
5 the driver through his email? Of course we have  
6 everybody's email now in the database. Or at  
7 least address or phone numbers.

8 And instead of just shutting it off  
9 from here and bringing the driver all the way  
10 here to solve it, would it be possible  
11 electronically to connect him through his email?  
12 Or even a phone call? Or even send him at his  
13 address, whatever concern or outstanding issue  
14 that he may have.

15 Instead of bringing him all the way --  
16 shutting him off and bringing him all the way  
17 here for no reason. And that's what I'm  
18 outlining for, sir.

19 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: So today, any  
20 driver can go to the business portal and see  
21 information the Department has about them. What  
22 else needs to be done on top of that?

1                   That's what I'm asking. Because there  
2 are online forms for drivers to initiate the  
3 avenues.

4                   So, what else needs to be done on top  
5 of that? That's what I'm trying to understand.

6                   MR. DAGNEW: Submitting application  
7 online. And instead of me bringing a hard copy,  
8 for example, if I wanted to renew my driver's  
9 license, I just simply apply online to DMV.

10                   They will mail my driver's license  
11 without me going to downtown. Right?

12                   DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: So the current  
13 online application, where you log in securely.  
14 I'm not talking about pdf. Today on our website,  
15 you can click on a link. Put in your secure  
16 credentials, and see information about your  
17 vehicle and your license.

18                   MR. DAGNEW: So, probably --

19                   DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: So, what is needed  
20 then? More training for drivers to use that  
21 system?

22                   Or there's something missing here that

1 I'm trying to get to. Because this has been  
2 rolled out for months now.

3 Drivers were notified through  
4 townhalls, newsletter, community events, that  
5 this functionality is available. And we're going  
6 to build more on top of that.

7 So, if people still feel that they  
8 have to come here in person when there's an  
9 online application, is it more about reinforcing  
10 that message? And perhaps maybe it is just a  
11 function of time that people will get to this.

12 MR. DAGNEW: Probably you're right.  
13 Maybe if I am misinformed a little bit. Because  
14 I haven't seen or maybe I'm a little behind --

15 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Okay.

16 MR. DAGNEW: With the new idea or the  
17 secured log in process.

18 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Okay. Okay.

19 MR. DAGNEW: If I don't hear it,  
20 probably most of the drivers don't hear it.

21 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Okay. Okay.

22 MR. DAGNEW: I think I am more

1 connected. So, maybe that needs to be released  
2 more over and over. So at least people to hear  
3 that across the board.

4 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: So why don't we do  
5 this. Let's partner. Because once the resource  
6 center is opened, --

7 MR. DAGNEW: Okay.

8 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: We will go over  
9 all these resources that are available to people  
10 already.

11 MR. DAGNEW: Okay.

12 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: That's nothing  
13 new. And then drive adoption. Same with the  
14 idea about this proportion of more tickets being  
15 issued to taxi drivers versus other for-hire  
16 drivers.

17 Because what we hear also from Uber  
18 drivers or Lyft drivers, or Black Car drivers is,  
19 you've given us all the tickets. And you don't  
20 give tickets to taxis.

21 You know so, everybody says they're  
22 the only ones getting the tickets. But, when you

1 go to our website, there's a dashboard that shows  
2 tickets issued, not just by our enforcement  
3 group, but you can also find tickets that other  
4 agencies have issued, at our website.

5 So, there's a bit of a disconnect  
6 between facts and reality. And that is where  
7 perhaps you could help in getting the message  
8 across.

9 Because for example, I have not come  
10 across any ticket issued for somebody with regard  
11 to a manifest. Because we know with digital  
12 systems, electronic manifests are just there.

13 We've taken a different look at what  
14 is defined as loitering. Enforcement has been  
15 retrained. We have a very different enforcement  
16 policy.

17 There are a lot more warnings. In  
18 fact, over three hundred warnings have issued  
19 this year, instead of tickets.

20 So, there's been tremendous progress  
21 in helping people adapt to this new environment.  
22 And sometimes it feels a bit weird when the facts

1 such as something else. But, others have a  
2 different opinion.

3 So, let's figure out ways we can  
4 partner to get a message out there. And unearth  
5 the real opportunities for improvement so that we  
6 can devote our government resources effectively  
7 in doing that.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: All right. Any  
9 other questions from any other members? Jason?  
10 I say Jason first.

11 MEMBER ARVANITES: I just wanted to  
12 ask a quick question about your second point. As  
13 someone who is representative of a, you know,  
14 competitor with Uber and Lyft, I'm just wondering  
15 what kind of tickets you're talking about when  
16 you say that there's a disparity?

17 What tickets -- I'm just trying to  
18 understand what tickets you think you're getting?  
19 But, drivers of Uber and Lyft would not be.

20 MR. DAGNEW: A good question. A  
21 simple example, Union Station is my usual drop  
22 off. At least all cab drivers at least once will

1 get to Union Station.

2           You drop a passenger. You go all the  
3 way -- all the way around Union Station to get in  
4 line. Which is a very long line, if you're out  
5 in the tail, I bet you will get a ticket.

6           Uber, you just drop the passenger  
7 there. Right there you can pick up passengers.  
8 Do you see the difference?

9           They don't even have to go or  
10 anything. Just drop the passenger, pull over to  
11 the curb, and pick up passenger.

12           That much is a difference of what  
13 we're talking about. Cab driver, once he drop  
14 passenger, he has to go all the way around the  
15 block and sit at least 45 minutes to an hour  
16 before he pick up passenger.

17           If he's in a tem -- if he's outside of  
18 the line, enforcement with cab drivers continue,  
19 he's going to be blocked from both sides. Not  
20 even give you a chance to go and hide. And give  
21 you a ticket.

22           Uber and Lyft, I don't know what it

1 is. If you drop a passenger, right where you  
2 are, you can stand there and pick up passenger.  
3 That's what I'm saying.

4 They have what's called loitering. We  
5 are getting ticket for loitering. They're not  
6 loitering.

7 MEMBER THOMAS: So -- okay. So, a  
8 couple of things there. I mean one, Uber, Lyft,  
9 Via are digital dispatch companies.

10 So, the way that their software or --  
11 like I'm a Lyft driver. So the way that our  
12 software, like there aren't any guidelines that  
13 restrict us.

14 Like the agency wouldn't restrict me  
15 as a driver from being able to pick up a request.  
16 And in fact, it's more efficient if I'm at Union  
17 Station and a request comes in, and I can pick up  
18 a passenger.

19 Versus having to go all the way  
20 around. You know, that's different. Because  
21 it's digital dispatch. So the system's built to  
22 increase efficiency.

1           I would think that once the, you know,  
2           the taxi cabs move to more digital dispatch,  
3           that's something that perhaps could be built into  
4           that system as well. I don't know enough about  
5           it.

6           But, you know, I mean, I understand  
7           that that, you know, that that could be a  
8           concern. Because yes, we don't have to wait. We  
9           can pick up.

10           I mean, in fact a lot of times with  
11           Uber, you're queued with a passenger before you  
12           even drop off the one that's in your car for  
13           efficiency. That increases your down time and  
14           increases, you know, waits.

15           And from what I understand, just from  
16           reading about this new software that the digital  
17           taxi dispatch service, maybe that's something  
18           that can be added in.

19           I also want to make a comment as to  
20           the enforcement. I know that -- I don't know  
21           what the records will be, but I'm sure MPD, I've  
22           seen in the U Street corridor as well as other

1 high trafficking areas where MPD does issue  
2 citations to rideshare drivers.

3 I know the airport certainly does it.  
4 That's not under -- I mean, that's in Virginia.

5 But, I think there's a misconception  
6 that for certain traffic guidelines or even for a  
7 hack inspector, there's certain things that an  
8 Uber and Lyft, you know, Uber, Lyft, or Via  
9 driver, that we have to adhere to. That we can  
10 be cited for.

11 I've never been cited. But I've been  
12 close to being issued a citation for something.

13 That for example, I would like to see,  
14 I know a lot of taxi drivers mention this, that I  
15 think it's a law that taxi cabs can't let a  
16 passenger out on the left side. Like, if they're  
17 in the middle of the street, or the person in the  
18 back next to the curb, you know, they need to get  
19 out curbside for safety.

20 That actually, I've never heard of any  
21 instances where a rideshare driver has been cited  
22 for that, issued a ticket. I see it a lot. It's

1 very unsafe.

2 So I will say that's a good example to  
3 bring forth to say that. And you know, I'm  
4 speaking for myself. You know, because I also  
5 when I drop people off, I'm like hey no. You  
6 can't get out on that side, for safety.

7 But, I just want to make it perfectly  
8 clear that we as rideshare drivers, we face not  
9 the same type of, you know, penalties or, you  
10 know, the rules are a little different.

11 But we -- but they do, and maybe the  
12 Director can speak to that, they have issued  
13 citations to rideshare drivers. And we're  
14 subject to following laws just as, you know, any  
15 for-hire vehicle operator.

16 MR. DAGNEW: Well, in my testimony I  
17 have mentioned about leveling the playing field.  
18 Level the playing field for both of our, for taxi  
19 and for share riding.

20 Here's an example. As example, maybe  
21 the gentleman can help me. He's from share  
22 riding.

1                   The District cab drivers cannot go  
2 across the board and pick up passengers where  
3 they're from Virginia or Maryland. The same goes  
4 for Virginia and Maryland.

5                   They can't come and pick up passenger  
6 unless they have a call when they in fact are on  
7 their perspective jurisdiction. I am not against  
8 Uber picking up or Lyft picking up a fair from  
9 Washington. I'm not.

10                  They have to have a District tag is  
11 what I'm asking. I can't go to Virginia and pick  
12 up. So why is Uber in Virginia, Maryland,  
13 Chicago, Dallas, Boston, all kinds of tags are  
14 coming to pick up a fair from D.C.?

15                  Is it a fair playing field? This what  
16 I'm asking. Everybody can come. West Virginia.  
17 I have a Cadillac and can show you pictures.

18                  All kinds of tags are in Washington  
19 sitting around pickup up passengers. Do you know  
20 how much traffic is in Washington in recent  
21 years?

22                  Have you ever followed up with traffic

1 in Washington? It's all because more than half  
2 of the street is occupied by Uber, or Lyft or  
3 somebody else.

4 So there is -- what I'm asking is  
5 level the playing field. Just level the playing  
6 field. That's what I'm asking.

7 MEMBER ARVANITES: Yes. I have a  
8 couple thoughts for you. Just one thing on the  
9 disparity of tickets.

10 You know, to be perfectly honest, I'm  
11 not familiar with all the regulations for the  
12 taxi cab drivers. But I know that people who work  
13 on our platform are subject to, you know, all of  
14 the laws that most people are.

15 And so, if they are doing something  
16 illegal and they get ticketed, you know, that's  
17 sort of like the decision of the hack inspector  
18 or the cop on the beat that would be doing that.

19 I do know that there are some  
20 instances where our drivers are not allowed, our  
21 driver partners. For example, I was working with  
22 the Department of Transportation on some things,

1 and I know that they have certain taxi cab stands  
2 where like, we'll get ticketed if we park there.

3 Or we have our driver partners wait  
4 there. But -- because we're just now allowed.  
5 Whereas, I think you would be.

6 To your point around -- so I guess  
7 just to reinforce that. Like, we're subject to  
8 all the laws that a citizen, partners are subject  
9 to.

10 And then there's some places we're not  
11 allowed where you guys are able to go. To your  
12 point around having to go circle and be partnered  
13 around Union Station, I think the big difference  
14 there is that we won't dispatch a driver partner  
15 to Union Station until there's a ride for them.

16 So there's just the way that we pool  
17 and queue the demand is, I think, fundamentally  
18 different because of the digital situation.  
19 Like, we wouldn't have somebody wait outside  
20 there for 45 minutes, because they just won't go  
21 until someone requested a ride.

22 So, I think that's part of why you

1 might end up sitting there for a while. Whereas  
2 that wouldn't happen to -- or it's less likely to  
3 happen to somebody on the Uber/Lyft platform.

4 And then for the question around the  
5 tags. I can only tell you what I know. But, I  
6 know that we're, you know, very strict  
7 regulations.

8 We can't have people on our platform  
9 that don't have a tag from Maryland, Virginia or  
10 the District of Columbia. So --

11 MR. DAGNEW: You don't?

12 MEMBER ARVANITES: Yes. That's not  
13 something that we can do. We can't operate -- we  
14 can't allow any driver partner on our platform  
15 that doesn't have a Maryland, District of  
16 Columbia, or Virginia tag.

17 And if we do, and we get caught, like  
18 that's a really bad problem for us. So, I don't  
19 know what information you have.

20 But I can tell you from my perspective  
21 as an operator of one of these businesses, and I  
22 don't know why it would be any different for Uber

1 or Lyft. I think they're subject to the same  
2 regulations that we are.

3 So, if somebody is doing that, that is  
4 -- it's certainly not legal. And if that was  
5 something that they were to be caught for, I know  
6 that I would get in a lot of trouble for that.

7 MR. DAGNEW: Okay.

8 MEMBER THOMAS: And let me raise one  
9 more quick point about perhaps what you might see  
10 with out of state vehicles. I can't qualify  
11 this.

12 But, I know that Uber -- I know that  
13 Lyft and Uber both have rental vehicle programs.  
14 All of the Lyft vehicles are registered in  
15 Virginia or Maryland, depending on how they're --  
16 you know, what driver.

17 But, I have seen Uber uses, I think,  
18 Enterprise. And so with Enterprise or Hertz,  
19 keep in mind that vehicles that are rented  
20 through those companies, I mean, you've seen  
21 them, that they -- I saw one the other day that  
22 had New Jersey plates.

1           So, they get these vehicles -- there's  
2 a fleet of vehicles. And it's based -- they  
3 assign them based on availability.

4           And so, it's not guaranteed that a  
5 rental vehicle is always going to have a D.C.,  
6 Maryland, or Virginia plate. But, if that  
7 vehicle, if Uber has an agreement to be able to  
8 rent those vehicles out and operate, those out of  
9 state plates, from my understanding, it is -- I  
10 mean, it's okay. Because it's part of the --  
11 they have that agreement.

12           But, if I had my personal vehicle, and  
13 it was New Jersey plates, I couldn't operate.  
14 So, I wanted to make that distinction.

15           MR. DAGNEW: That was -- oh wait, go  
16 ahead.

17           MEMBER SCHAEFFER: Thank you. I just  
18 wanted to chime in on the app. You asked about  
19 the app.

20           And I just want you to help me let  
21 drivers know that it is working now. There are  
22 trips on it daily.

1 Starting Monday, the 19th, it just  
2 passed, the vehicle on demand grant went in  
3 effect. And there are going to be 57 thousand  
4 dollars worth of trips on the app where agencies  
5 in the District are riding daily under contract.

6 They can get the app downloaded at the  
7 company. Anybody who wants to come by Benning  
8 Road, it's on two locations showing how to use  
9 it.

10 There's people that will help you  
11 download it on your device. There's only about  
12 24 hundred drivers who have it downloaded thus  
13 far. And no more than 350 at any time have been  
14 logged in.

15 So, I encourage you to please get the  
16 word out to download the app. Monitor the app.  
17 Look for trips. Because it is in reality now,  
18 working.

19 So we need to accommodate it. And  
20 respond to those trips.

21 MR. DAGNEW: Oh, great. That's a good  
22 you mentioned that.

1 MEMBER SCHAEFFER: Thank you.

2 MR. DAGNEW: Is that the same app you  
3 talked about in the District?

4 MEMBER SCHAEFFER: The same app. Yes.

5 MR. DAGNEW: Okay. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Dawit, I just  
7 wanted to say, continue to do good in organizing  
8 the drivers. I see you're starting to organize  
9 the drivers.

10 And over the last few years, I've  
11 mentioned, you know, publically that I think  
12 drivers should get better organized. So,  
13 continue to do so.

14 And we'll be following up directly  
15 with you as well on these issues.

16 MR. DAGNEW: All right. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you.

18 Anybody else? Okay, sir?

19 SECRETARY MIXON: Thank you and if you  
20 could say and state your name for the court  
21 reporter, please.

22 MR. AYELE: My name is Girmachew.

1 Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Board Members and  
2 deal colleagues.

3 My point goes around what Mr. Abebe  
4 said already. I would like to add quite a few  
5 points on it.

6 It's the same thing. But, I want to  
7 start my part on behalf of many applicants and  
8 drivers.

9 Today I would like to ask that you  
10 help us develop an action plan that provides  
11 assistance to taxi drivers frustrated by the lack  
12 of opportunity in our industry. We believe that  
13 taxis would always be needed in large cities  
14 throughout the United States.

15 However, We understand that the amount  
16 of taxis is decreasing due to competition. But,  
17 we rely on the Department of For-Hire Vehicles to  
18 help us figure out where taxis fit in.

19 We pay 25 cents fee and other various  
20 related fees to this Department as required by  
21 the regulation. We are always there to serve the  
22 public at best.

1           We expect that if the fees decrease as  
2 they are now, not only we, the hard working cab  
3 drivers, but also the Department of For-Hire  
4 Vehicle will lose tremendous driven what is left.

5           Wouldn't it be a better idea to find  
6 different ways to generate more revenue to this  
7 Department as well as come up with a better  
8 solution to assist the drivers under this  
9 hardship and a descent wage, stay in business,  
10 and be productive? Then out of business and a  
11 burden on the society?

12           I would like to thank this Advisory  
13 Board for the opportunity given to speak to you  
14 about different issues in this -- in our case.  
15 Especially about the hardship assistance grant  
16 program that many of us applied for.

17           We sacrificed financially as well as  
18 emotionally, and recently submitted a hardship  
19 assistance grant application hoping it will bring  
20 the best outcome to satisfy our burning demand.

21           However, we are so saddened when we  
22 saw an email with the -- with an adverse news.

1 Your application is declined.

2 Respectfully, that was not what we,  
3 the hard working applicants, were expecting it to  
4 be. The objective of the case for our  
5 application is clearly stated on each of our  
6 grant applicants.

7 And we believe our wisely spent time  
8 and hardly earned money should not be  
9 disregarded. We work hard and strive for the  
10 best dealing with the almost out of hand  
11 showings.

12 We kindly ask for your timely  
13 assistance, which is so crucial to us. We keep  
14 striving to serve the public and hope to stay in  
15 business.

16 We feel optimistic that this sad news  
17 will duly be reconsidered again. And ask for it  
18 to come up with a better way which would satisfy  
19 our case and put us in a better position.

20 We believe we deserve what we're  
21 asking for. Last but not least, we would like  
22 you to set up a meeting date and time to further

1 discuss about this issue.

2 We thank you in advance for all your  
3 efforts in making this happen.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you. Any  
5 questions from my fellow members on the Advisory  
6 Board?

7 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: I'm looking at the  
8 names on the bottom. I recognize at least Dawit.  
9 And I may have missed. Are you Girmachew or Mr.  
10 Collatte (phonetic)?

11 MR. AYELE: Girmachew.

12 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Girmachew.

13 MR. AYELE: Third there.

14 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Okay. Okay, I  
15 want to make sure I call you by your name, --

16 MR. AYELE: Yes, sir.

17 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Mr. Girmachew.  
18 Thank you for taking the time really to share  
19 with us how you feel about a number of different  
20 issues.

21 It's important for us to have that  
22 open communication where we hear how you feel

1 about things. And I think this is a step in the  
2 right direction.

3 Let me clarify a couple of things for  
4 the record. And then we'll go into some  
5 specifics.

6 Drivers don't pay 25 cents fee to the  
7 Department of For-Hire Vehicles. No driver pays  
8 that. That is a fee that riders pay.

9 For some interesting reason drivers  
10 think they pay that fee. No. You don't pay the  
11 passenger surcharge. Riders pay that.

12 When the previous rate structure that  
13 was in effect was implemented, drivers actually  
14 got an extra 25 cents on top of the flag drop.  
15 So drivers are getting 25 cents per trip.

16 Passengers are paying 25 cents. That  
17 goes into the passenger surcharge. So that's  
18 something I want to make sure is corrected for  
19 the record.

20 Secondly, the information session held  
21 up on the grant was not 4/20. It's 4/21. I  
22 received a message from my staff to put the

1 correct date out.

2           There's a set of opportunities  
3 available for drivers today to make money. One  
4 is what Mr. Schaeffer mentioned about the vehicle  
5 on demands program.

6           So yes, business is slow for taxis.  
7 But we've invested our grant funding to provide  
8 trips to the industry. Vehicle on demand, they  
9 are trips out there. Up to 50 thousand dollars  
10 in trips.

11           So, I ask, okay, you want business?  
12 That's one revenue stream. It requires you to be  
13 logged into the app so that when a passenger  
14 request a trip, you are more likely to get it.

15           Secondly, there is about 50 thousand  
16 dollars worth of trips also from the school  
17 transportation program. So that is yet another  
18 opportunity for people go get business.

19           There is also about 50 thousand  
20 dollars, and these number have to be checked on.  
21 Of trips from the non-emergency medical  
22 transportation.

1           So again, drivers will have to make  
2 themselves available to leverage these  
3 opportunities. Then there is the shared rides  
4 program which drivers can participate in once  
5 they convert to the digital taxi solution.

6           So the Department will continue  
7 efforts to bring more trips not only to taxis,  
8 but into the vehicle for-hire ecosystem in  
9 general. But, we need drivers to step up and  
10 take advantage of those opportunities.

11           When it comes to hardship assistance,  
12 we evaluate different ways that we can help. We  
13 think we're already helping by bringing trips  
14 into the industry.

15           There maybe more creative ways. And  
16 we'll make sure that an appointment is scheduled  
17 so that we can hear specific ideas that you have  
18 so that we can continue to help those who remain  
19 committed to providing service.

20           Is there anything else that you think  
21 we should do differently?

22           MR. AYELE: Well, I was thinking since

1 this is kind of general meeting, --

2 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Yes, yes, yes?

3 MR. AYELE: If there would be a  
4 possibility that we can, like I had -- because we  
5 requested in my statement, if we could have sort  
6 of special time, you know down.

7 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Okay.

8 MR. AYELE: Only for our talk that we  
9 can go over and discuss and maybe find, you  
10 never, never know a better way that we can be  
11 assisted. That our hardship instead of becoming  
12 not annoyed, you know.

13 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Okay.

14 MR. AYELE: Something possible might  
15 come up with it if we, you know, possibly have a  
16 meeting with you or with your colleagues, you  
17 know.

18 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Let me get --

19 MR. AYELE: I know -- I know you said  
20 the fund is special -- specifically for electric  
21 and X,Y,Z, the five things that you mentioned.

22 But, we -- me and my coworkers, we're

1 optimistic that there would be a way to go around  
2 it. You know, to assist us or to come up with a  
3 better outcome to help us.

4 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Okay.

5 MR. AYELE: You know, tackle our issue  
6 and our question.

7 DIRECTOR CHRAPPAH: Okay. Well said.  
8 I think we can work to get him an appointment.  
9 That shouldn't be a problem.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Any other  
11 comments? Mr. Girmachew, thank you very much.

12 So, the Director has concurred that  
13 we'll set up a meeting.

14 MR. AYELE: Yes. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: And I do note that  
16 you're part of Dawit's group. So, that is good.

17 So I would assume that you all will be  
18 speaking also on behalf of about the 65 people  
19 that you have that you're representing.

20 So, thank you very much.

21 MR. AYELE: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you. Is

1 there anybody else?

2 (No response)

3 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Any final comments  
4 from the Advisory Members?

5 (No response)

6 CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: No? So, I would  
7 just wrap up and say that we've -- the quality of  
8 the presentations were very good.

9 Thank you very much for everybody  
10 preparing your written statements. This is very  
11 helpful in us understanding exactly what you're  
12 presenting.

13 There were a couple of requests for  
14 meetings. And I think everybody agrees that Mr.  
15 Chrappah and myself will work together to set up  
16 those meetings.

17 And then there are a couple of follow  
18 up issues that are in here as well. And I guess  
19 if there are no other concerns, you know, I hope  
20 everybody feels that what you presented and what  
21 you asked, you know, we got it. We heard it. We  
22 understand it. And we're going to follow up on

1 it.

2 And Dawit, I mean, I know you. I see  
3 you all the time. So, you know, I'll make sure  
4 that everything you've asked is followed up on.

5 Just for the record everybody, I drink  
6 coffee at a certain 7-Eleven. And he's there  
7 every morning. We drink coffee together at the  
8 7-Eleven.

9 So, if I don't do what he asks me to  
10 do, I've got to hear it in the morning for  
11 coffee. And that's not a good thing.

12 But anyway, on that note, this meeting  
13 is adjourned. Thank you for coming.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
15 went off the record at 2:29 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Council Meeting

Before: DC Dept. of For-Hire Vehicles

Date: 06-22-17

Place: Washington, DC

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.



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