GOVERNMENT OF the DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DEPARTMENT OF FOR-HIRE VEHICLES

FOR-HIRE VEHICLE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

THURSDAY,
JUNE 21, 2018

The Advisory Council met in Suite 2032, 2235 Shannon Place, S.E., Washington, D.C. at 10:00 a.m., LINWOOD JOLLY, Chairperson, presiding.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

LINWOOD JOLLY, Chairperson

ERNEST CHRAPPAH, Director

JEFFREY SCHAEFFER

DOTTI LOVE WADE

DAWIT DAGNEW

STAFF PRESENT:

JUANDA MIXON, Secretary to the Council
(10:19 a.m.)

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Good morning. The time is 10:19. This is the For-Hire Vehicle Advisory Council meeting. We are at 2235 Shannon Place, Southeast, in hearing room 2032.

(I. Call to Order)

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: I would like to now call this meeting to order with a moment of silence for those who are not here anymore.

(II. Moment of Silence)

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you.

(III. Preliminary Matters)

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Ms. Mixon, would you please take the roll?

MS. MIXON: Jason Arvanites?

(No response.)

MS. MIXON: Ernest Chrappah?

MR. CHRAPPAH: Present.

MS. MIXON: Dagnew, Dawit?

MR. DAGNEW: Present.

MS. MIXON: Elliott Ferguson?
(No response.)

MS. MIXON: Erik Moses?

(No response.)

MS. MIXON: Evian Patterson?

(No response.)

MS. MIXON: Jeffrey Schaeffer?

MR. SCHAEFFER: Present.

MS. MIXON: Anthony Thomas?

(No response.)

MS. MIXON: Dotti Wade?

(No response.)

MS. MIXON: Anthony Wash?

(No response.)

MS. MIXON: Linwood Jolly?

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Present. And, for the record, Dotti Wade just walked in.

MS. MIXON: Okay. And I will go back through the roll call.

Dotti Love Wade?

MS. WADE: Present.

MS. MIXON: So, Chair Jolly, we have five present.
CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Okay. Thank you.

Good morning. And I would like to thank everybody for coming out today.

(IV. Action Items)

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Today's title -- well, today's agenda is "Streamlining and Innovation for Title 31." This has been something that has been discussed for at least the three to four years that I have been involved previously with the Taxicab Commission and now with the Department of For-Hire Vehicles.

We do have some people coming to testify, and they are not here. One is here, but I think there may be one other coming. I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity today since we are small in numbers in terms of those testifying to just get a snapshot of where we have been and what we as advisors hope to achieve. We had a great call yesterday, but we also had the benefit of people that have been involved with this issue much longer than myself.

So what I would like to do is just
start on my left. And I am going to ask Jeff Schaeffer to kick this off because he has been involved in this for a while. And, Jeff, you know, just give us a couple -- well, give us an overview of how you see opportunities for us to really streamline Title 31 and how you see it benefitting the industry.

And then I would like to ask my other advisors to chime in. And then I would like to finally close up with a wrap-up from Director Chrappah, who always does a good job of bringing this thing home.

So let's start with you.

MR. SCHAEFFER: Thank you very much.

I think that is a great opportunity to revise Title 31. Taxis have been overregulated. There is a lot of rules that are archaic and really don't make any sense at this stage. You know, we have had dynamic pricing to be a little competitive, shared riding, but we need to do more in Title 31. So I have asked the taxi operators through DCTOA to come in and present.
Some of the things they discussed was maybe having the age limitation 10 years, instead of 8; possibly extending the face card for the drivers to 3 years. They talked a lot about staying at the 12 percent wheelchair accessibility. But there has got to be more that we can do just to decrease expenses and increase ridership and attempt to make taxis relevant.

Anthony Dash should be here in a minute. He will give a presentation at the end for DCTOA.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Ms. Wade, do you want to slide down? You had some good comments speaking on our call, too. I am just interested in hearing your perspective on where you see this going.

MS. WADE: Good morning, all. As I looked at the -- well, at first, as I have been a part of the Taxi Commission, who worked very diligently to address the fines issues, the technology issues, even as we did that, we knew that it was piecemeal at the best to at least
address the immediate concerns. So the rewrite
of 31 would absolutely make all of the users, all
of the stakeholders, especially our drivers, make
operating their business so much easier and more
effective and more community-oriented. When I
come, I look from the perspective of the
community, not only the user but the impact that
the taxis and the other for-hire vehicles have on
our neighborhoods, on our commercial areas, on
traffic in general.

So as we look at these titles, the
revisions to these titles, we are going to be
looking at ways to help the community as well as
help the drivers. So we are looking in that
direction because voices are almost screaming at
us now about the proliferation of Ubers and
vehicles for hire, all of them, taxis included,
who idle in front of major hotels and shopping
districts outside of the taxi stands.

So we are looking at a number of
issues, but, most especially, we are looking to
help you, the drivers, have a better experience
across the board.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you.

And I will just share from my perspective, I have spoken to a lot of taxi drivers over the last few months about this. And some, a majority of them, were independent drivers. Some rented with some of the bigger companies. I think, in general, all of them are interested in, one, bringing the cost of business down. And, Jeff, you mentioned that, but I think there is also a balance with bringing the cost of business down and some kind of innovation to still make it worthwhile to drive a taxi.

I do notice that a lot of drivers that I talk to are concerned about the aging of vehicles, as you mentioned, Jeff, and they are concerned about renewing face cards every two years. But I think overall they are just concerned about the owners' process on taxi drivers to even -- even if we were to extend face card renewal to three years, all of the other steps they have to go through, they still have to
go to MPD and get a background check. You know, there are a lot of different places that they have to go to gather the information.

And, you know, part of looking at innovation is, you know, how do we even streamline some of those activities even more, but there still is a balance there because the Department of For-Hire Vehicles still needs that information. And it is critical for a regulated industry like taxis. But overall, I would say that it just presents us a great opportunity to revisit. I think the -- Title 31 is how many hundred pages right now?

MS. WADE: Two. It was four.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: It was four. Down to two? Boy, if we could get it down to, you know -- somebody told me -- and I am not going to name the company, but it is one of the other companies. Theirs is like five pages.

Anyway, Advisor Dawit and then --

MR. DAGNEW: Good morning. This is a very interesting issue. I mean, the last time
when this Title 31 was visited was when, in fact, it was a commission, Taxicab Commission.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Move your microphone.

MR. DAGNEW: Oh, sorry. So since we have been For-Hire, now it is a lot of outdated rules in this 31. We want them all to remove. For example, I was just mentioning the other day for the chairman seat covers, cat seat covers. That needs to be removed. We are not having that for 1991 vehicles anymore.

So the other thing is residential restrictions. Some people have to only live in immediate metro area to drive in D.C. when, in fact, Uber users can come from Delaware. In fact, I have a gentleman here to testify for that particular reason, been driving a taxi for 40 years. He lives outside of the metro area. And he still cannot renew his face. And he has to restrict it to live in metro area. So that gives us one more thing to remove some restrictions or outdated rules to be removed from the face.
The other thing is, what are we limiting regulations only for taxis, which is only 6 percent in the industry? Why don't we regulate everybody if we have to regulate? It is a lot of regulations. This is a competition. Only consider taxi a uniform division of for-hire vehicle. So if we have to regulate, we have to regulate everybody. And if there need to be added regulations, they need to be added. If there are some to be removed, we have to remove them. Thank you.

MR. CHRAPPAH: Thank you, Advisor Dawit. When it comes to the subject of Title 31 rewrite, revision, or streamlining for innovation, I feel quite strongly about that subject. If you look at the last 10 years and you focus on the last 3 years, in particular, it is clear that the way people move around has changed. We call it the evolution of the ride. We have gone from just having a few thousand for-
hire vehicles to now more than 100,000 for-hire vehicles, all the way up to 180,000 vehicles. What the real number is, nobody really knows for sure because of data-sharing issues. But what is clear is that we have increased congestion on the roads because there are a lot of cars on there.

What is also clear with the evolution of the ride is that consumers have a lot more options today, whether it is a cab, a limo, Uber, Lyft, Via, a bike, dockless, or a scooter. There are a lot more ways people can move around a city. Yet, we have thousands of residents who are not able to participate in the for-hire ecosystem the way they would like to because of transportation barriers. Some is directly related to income. Some is directly related to a disability. Some is directly related to not having a smartphone or a credit card or a bank account. And as a city that is booming, we have to do something about it.

And within our purview is for-hire vehicles. So it presents an opportunity for us
to leverage what we have to help solve challenges that big cities face. And this is not an exception.

What we have been successful in doing is reducing the operating costs for drivers through the digital platform, the DTS. We have also been successful in creating pilot transportation programs to make the journey more accessible and affordable for people. Some of these programs you know intimately well, whether that is Transport DC for people with disabilities or nonemergency medical transportation or rides so veterans could get to employment or medical centers or even neighborhood drive service, medical transit programs for seniors and elderly.

But we have to do more, and we have to take direct aim at what one could argue ties our hands behind our back. And that is the nature of how Title 31 is written to conform with laws that have been passed by City Council.

So as we look at streamlining Title 31, I think we should look at it in terms of a
blank slate. Our first step was to condense it and make it transparent and available for the public to comment on. While the public formulates their ideas and proposals, we should also be thinking about basically taking like a sledgehammer to the whole infrastructure and think about the future of the driver. The future of the driver is a driver who is certified once or licensed once by the department and they can move between a cab, a private vehicle, a limousine. It shouldn't matter. Consumers don't care too much how many certifications a particular driver has. They just want a safe and affordable ride. So we should have that in the back of our head.

We should also be thinking about the company structure. As a for-hire vehicle company, you should not be restricted to one channel. If a company wants to get into the private business, the public for-hire business, the regulatory structure should accommodate and encourage that so that we have meaningful
competition. And when it comes to the rider, we should be thinking about consumer protection first and make that paramount so that if I take a ride in a private vehicle and I have a complaint, I should be able to talk to somebody about it. If I take a ride in a public for-hire vehicle, a cab, or a limo and it is not resolved to my satisfaction by the company, I should be able to go above the company to the regulator to address the concerns. That is the framework that I think will put us in a position where our regulations can adapt and bendable and responsive to market conditions, rather than always playing catch-up.

And I am definitely excited to be working with you all and the industry at large to help move the city forth.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Okay. All right. Thank you.

So, Ms. Mixon, we are now at the public comment period. And you can call our witnesses here to testify. I know we don't have anybody signed in, but, you know, since we are
few in numbers, we can take a little time and
have a back-and-forth dialogue. So you can start
with the first person.

MS. MIXON: Okay, sir. I see your
hand raised. If you can approach the podium,
please? If you would write your name and sign
in? Then also, if you would say and spell your
name for the Court Reporter? And then you may
start.

(V. Public Comment Period)

MR. BARAH: Yes, ma'am. My name is
Zackarias Barah. I have been driving taxi almost
about 40 years, 37 years, since 1979. This is
the worst time that we have a taxicab as a
taxicab industry. And everybody is quitting
driving cab. So many people are quitting because
they cannot go forward. They cannot even afford
to pay their rent or anything. So we are in big
trouble.

The taxicab industry is falling apart.
We cannot just say it is doing good, it is doing
better. No. The taxicab industry is falling
apart. And soon I think we will see everybody
will be gone because there is nothing he can do.
We are not helping him. And I don't know what
the industry -- what the hack office is doing to
help us, but it is falling apart. Trust me. I
have been doing this for a long time. This is
threatening my life. I cannot make any more
living. That is why I came here today to testify
and if anybody can hear me.

So let's start with our income has
been reduced 75 percent of our income. Seventy-
five percent of our income is gone. We cannot
work. Lined up in the hotel, 75 percent of the
public would telephone. We are there lined up,
10, 5 cabs. They don't give a damn. So we are
in trouble.

And at the same time, the app is
there. It is there. You can see it, but it is
not working. Why? It could have helped us a lot
if the app was working. When we worked the
residential neighborhood, they could have called
us on an app, and we could have earned some
money. But the app doesn't function. You gave them certain cab companies to do it, and they are not doing it. So the hack office should have taken that apart, taken that. And they have to take that responsibility, I guess. Otherwise, what do they use? I can see everything is there, but it is not functioning. It could have helped us a lot. So this is one, number two.

Number three, the $200-$250 tax imposed on us, this is a lot of money because the cab companies, the cab drivers, they are not making any money. We have to pay $250 tax. And at the same time, we have to pay $1 because we live outside the city. I don't know whether this as a law, it is lawful because if you live outside in Virginia, you are working in D.C., so you have to pay $100? I don't know if it helps anyone if we go to court.

So many people, they work for the District of Columbia, they live outside the city. But they don't get charged anything more than or they have less opportunities in the city. But
because we live in Maryland and Virginia, we have
to pay $100 more. And we cannot own any taxicab
because we live outside Maryland and Virginia.
But they also live in the city. They can own a
taxicab, another taxicab. Why is this lawful? I
don't think it is lawful.

So these are some of them. And
restricted about the residence, where you live,
the so-called metropolitan area, it was done in
the 1940s and 1930s. And they have never looked
at it. Nobody has looked at it. This is like
Prince George's or Montgomery County in this
neighborhood. If you don't live in that
neighborhood, you cannot drive taxi in D.C. Why
is this law there? You can live anywhere in DMV,
and you can drive here. Why is this law they
have never visited? So some of us, it is very
hard to live outside the metropolitan area. If
you live outside the metropolitan area, you
cannot drive here. And you make a living for
seven years in taxicab here, and there is no
other job you can do, especially at my age, once
you get to my age. Nobody will have me.

So this law should be -- I was expecting you guys to bring the Title 31 here and to give it to us so we could have that, some of them, because we can hardly remember it, the Title 31, because it is a lot of laws. So this one has to be looked at, 1940s, 1930s law. I think it is a fairly old law.

Loitering tickets. Loitering tickets. We used to get 25, loitering. Now we could get $25. You get next 50. You get next 100. You get next 200. Why is this law like that? It is lawful to be doubled and tripled? And so whenever somebody gave you loitering, you get $200. If you don't pay it in a few days, $400. This is a burden on the taxicab. Why do we do this?

We had given the hack office 25 cents every 3. And I think we had given a lot of money to the hack office. And I don't think overall given this much money to you, but we are giving the hack office a lot of money, about 25 cents.
And because of that, I think I can see a lot of
hack officers hired every year.

At the same time, the hacker license
renewal used to be less money. It used to be $50
or $75. I don't remember. But now we have to
pay $250 for this hack license, to renew it. Why
is it so much money and with a stamp for the --
just to put the stamp for the renewal of tag.
You charge us $50. What for? Just to put the
stamp, we get a $50 charge? Is this real? Why
is that imposed, $50, just to put the stamp? I
mean, we didn't say a word because you told us to
give, to pay, and we pay for the stamp, just
that, $50. For what?

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: So I have got
about six concerns. Do you have a few more
because then I want to get into some dialogue so
we could get some answers on a few of these
things?

MR. BARAH: I am almost finished. I
am almost finished.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Okay.
MR. BARAH: Almost finished. Almost finished.

You raised a good question about the year of the cars.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: The aging of the vehicles.

MR. BARAH: Revisited. And I have a MetroAccess. I think I talked to -- your name again? Mr. --

PARTICIPANT: The director?

MR. BARAH: Yes. When he was here before, when he was assisting, we talked to him about MetroAccess. The handicapped vehicles in D.C. that we have, the taxicab, we should have some business from the MetroAccess. If we have some portion of that, we could have made a lot of money. And a lot of cab drivers would have bought that handicapped vehicle. So he promised us at that time he will talk to that and he might do it, but it never happened.

So I thank you for listening to me.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Okay. So thank
you. So, look, I think at this point, I have got
about eight concerns that you voiced. A lot of
them have been dealt with before. But let me
have the director just respond to you because a
lot of what you have said, I know more than about
half of them, have been dealt with. So let me
let him give you a quick update on a lot of that.

MR. CHRAPPAH: Thank you, really, for
taking the time to share how you feel about the
industry. The sentiment you raised is not
foreign to us, and we have heard that from
different drivers at different points in time.
And we have addressed it. However, what keeps
coming up is, at least what I am seeing is, a
lack of information. And we will do everything
we can through public meetings of this nature to
point people in the right direction.

Let's start with the Title 31. Title
31 is available online. If you go to our
website, you click on "Drivers and Companies" or
there is a "Search" box. Just type "Title 31."
It will come up, and you will see all of the
content. The proposed regulation or the notice
of proposed regulation is also on our website for
printing. If that doesn't work, you could stop
by our Client Services Center, and they will do
their best to give you extracts of it or give you
the link directly so that you could print it on
your own.

You mentioned that the drivers give
the department 25 cents. No, they don't.
Passengers pay 25 cents per trip. In fact,
drivers get 25 cents added to the flag drop, and
it has been there since taxis went through the
modernization process, so drivers having
collected 25 cents extra into their pocket to
help them adapt to change. So that is something
that we want to be very factual about.

When it comes to the revenue
contribution, private sedans and black cars
contribute way more than taxis to the consumer
service fund. So, for example, in fiscal year
'17, private sedans contributed about $4.53
million and taxis only $3.1. That trend will
continue based on the volume of rise that we have seen. So from a pure revenue-generation standpoint, the private sedan businesses and black cars or, as people call it, ride-sharing companies, or TNCs, out-contribute taxis. And that is indicative of the decline in the taxi industry.

When it comes to MetroAccess business, the opportunity is available for any driver who will complete disability-sensitivity training and how to assist passengers in a wheelchair. We provide disability-sensitivity training at no cost to any licensed driver. It is online. And, in fact, it will be a required course for a driver to renew their face ID.

If you are interested in participating in the para-transit business, we have providers who are certified that will send dispatch or trips to drivers. And if you need help in that, you can contact our Client Services, and they will put you in touch with any of the companies so that you can get that volume of business. We
do roughly about $4 million in business for that.
So for drivers who want to earn money, here is an
opportunity.

And that is not the only opportunity
that is available. There are opportunities for
drivers to take veterans to doctors'
appointments, employment locations for a fee that
is not -- sorry. When I say, "a fee," I mean for
a revenue opportunity, that is not something to
turn a blind eye on. It is quite significant.

You had also talked about tickets and
why do tickets double or something like that. We
adopted a warning-first enforcement policy for
issues that are not major. As a result of that
policy, the number of tickets that have been
issued has dramatically declined. And the
statistics are available on our website.

Loitering is a problem for the city in
general, not only for the environment because,
you know, you have like greenhouse gas emissions
but also the flow of traffic. So our position on
loitering is that we will give you a verbal
warning. We will give you a written warning. So that is two strikes. The third time, then, we will give you the ticket that is applicable. If you violate it continuously, which would mean like the fourth time, of course, the ticket has to double because it means the message is not getting there. So that is why you see cases where the ticket for loitering doubles. It doubles for people who have had multiple cracks at the apple and they still don't change their behavior.

MS. WADE: Excuse me. May I interrupt on that one?

MR. CHRAPPAH: Yes, sure.

MS. WADE: Again, speaking on behalf of our community -- I am going to hope I can speak loud enough for you to hear.

I have been with the Metropolitan Police Department as well as this vehicle for-hire. The Metropolitan Police Department has a zero tolerance for loitering. While this body may give you a warning and a ticket, MPD will
give you a ticket. And a repeat will get you a
double citation. So I am just warning you that
this idling of vehicles is so severe that MPD is
looking to take severe action. And I would just
admonish all of the people who do -- I understand
the competitive nature of the for-hire vehicles
industry. I absolutely see it, know it
firsthand, but I am telling you the impact it is
having on businesses and communities and the
environment is significant. So if you complain
about a ticket doubling after a warning or two,
MPD will be watching, and they will absolutely
ticket you and run you away and look out for you
to return for a stricter enforcement.

I am just putting that you because,
having met with them, I know this is their zero-
tolerance policy. And it is my responsibility as
an advisor to this body to make this body aware
and to make the public aware and our stakeholders
aware that this is a major issue. And I am glad
you did bring that up because it gave me the
opportunity to address that very serious issue.
So this body uses deterrence, but the city does not. Okay? Thank you.

MR. DAGNEW: Could I add a little bit on this question? You can address it more. Any idea or any plan to increase the taxi lines across the city, now we have -- most of the time, we have -- public buildings we don't have. Hotels are the most we have. So is there any plan for museums to add taxi lines around museums, shops, and so on?

MR. CHRAPPAH: Yes. And I am going to address Dawit's question. And I will continue addressing the points you raised.

When it comes to taxi lines, we are taking a holistic approach working with the District Department of Transportation to steady pickup and drop-off areas, trips that are done by taxis, trips that are done by other for-hire vehicles so that we can rationalize where the stands will be.

So currently additional stands have been deployed. They are working on a list of
about 155. And once it is completed, we are
going to post it on our website.

    We are also engaging with private
sector partners, like Union Station, and private
property owners so that they can make reasonable
accommodations within their properties for for-
hire vehicles. We think that would not only
improve the flow of people from one point of the
city to another point of the city but would also
provide respite for drivers when they get tired.
So that is something that we are quite excited
about.

    Coming back to some of the issues the
gentleman raised earlier. One particular point
which I would like to address as per the Title 31
rewrite is the domicile requirements. To give
you some background, it comes from the law. And
our regulations conform to it. There is
something called MSA, which means a multi-state
area: D.C., Maryland, Virginia. And the
boundaries of where drivers can live if they want
to work in the taxi industry has been defined in
that.

However, if we move to an environment where a driver gets licensed to drive a private car, a taxi, a limousine, that would raise an opportunity for those who want to live a little bit further out and still work in the city to be able to do that. However, today there is a solution in place. But I think people just ignore it or, for some reason, they are just not attracted to it. We have something called the independent vehicle business registration or license. That will basically allow you to own your own vehicle.

There are a few drivers who have gone through that process. They work with our Client Services Center. The manager, Kim Davis, is sitting right there. She can tell you all about it.

So if you live somewhere and you are a cab driver and you want to own your own business, there is absolutely no reason why you shouldn't go through the process. Again, lack of
information, lack of interest, or a combination of the two.

Paying $100 for out-of-state, sure.

I mean, governments have a cost of serving the public. And they can charge reasonable fees for that. So while I am sympathetic to the decline in the taxi industry, I also see the need for government to recoup its costs for doing business. And that is reflected in a policy of charging $50 for client service representatives to review documents that some people submit fraudulently, to review applications, to coach drivers, and to spend time with them in going through the application process, and for us to maintain computer systems. That puts all of that together.

So it is not $50 to get a stamp. If it is $50 to get a stamp, we wouldn't even ask you to come here in the first place. So we have to sort of like, you know, call a spade a spade in that vein.

However, we have also rolled out
online applications to reduce our cost of doing business, make it easier for drivers and companies to transact with us. So I would encourage you to take a look at the online portal so that you don't even have to show up here. I think there is an opportunity cost for you to come here. That is basically a fare that you have probably missed on. As much as we love the driver community, we would rather they go online to transact with us and come here for complex transactions. So when it comes to vehicle renewals, I see no reason why people would not go online.

And, finally, the idea of the department taking over the app, we have been down that road. And we have been very clear from a policy standpoint that we will not compete with people we regulate. However, we will provide software to make it easier for drivers to get dispatch or trips as long as the payment goes through somebody else, instead of us. So if you still feel strongly about the department taking
over the app, I think we can spend some time outside of this forum to discuss actions that would help achieve the same objective without the department formally managing a dispatch app because there are so many of them out there. There is Uber Taxi. There is Genesis Impact. There is Yellow App. There are so many of them out there. There are so many apps. So the department managing an app is not a winning strategy. However, the department is very interested in ensuring that drivers who are out there on digital meters will have an opportunity to receive dispatch requests and hails on their meters.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Mr. Zackarias, thank you for coming. And we appreciate you being part of today's testimony. Ms. Mixon, you can call the next person to testify.

MS. MIXON: Okay. Do we have another person who would like to testify? Please raise your hand. All right, sir. And, again, if you
could put your name down and sign? Then right before you speak, say your name and spell it for the Court Reporter?

MR. DASH: Good morning, everyone. My name is Anthony Dash. It is A-n-t-h-o-n-y D-a-s-
h.

I currently have the pleasure of chairing the DCTOA. We represent a large majority of taxicab companies. This level of participation is unique. And we are passionate about the issues which affect drivers; companies; the public; and, of course, government.

I was happy to have the chance to speak to you today about five key issues. They are WAV compliance; 10 years for taxicabs; 3 years for face IDs, instead of two; 4, to develop a meaningful and robust working group to create a master plan, if you will; and, lastly, what can we do for you.

So on WAV compliance going to 20 percent, as you all know, D.C. has a mandate to go from 12 percent WAV compliance to 20 by year's
end. Now, speaking with many stakeholders and
decision-makers, I understand the Council, DFHV,
City Council all support keeping WAV compliance
to 12 percent, which means amending legislation.
We have spoken directly with City Council. We
have petitioned and wrote countless letters.
Sadly, we have no results as of today. We humbly
ask you, the Advisory Council, to assist our
group with achieving a stay at 12 percent.

Second is 10 years for taxicabs.
Again, as everyone probably knows by now, DFHV
has set a limit at of 10 years for private for-
hire vehicles and 7 for taxis. Based on previous
stats, taxi represents about 5 percent of the
total for-hire industry here in the District.
That means there is one standard for 95 percent
of the for-hire industry, and for the other 5
percent of the industry, there is a different
standard. I ask for your support to advocate
meaningfully to revise Title 31 such that all
for-hire vehicles have a 10-year age limit. We
believe the support is there. However, we need
your advocacy to make it happen.

Thirdly, we ask three years for face ID renewals. Currently, there are many fees associated with just being a taxi driver. There are also a lot of newer fees which drivers have had to endure, not DFHV-related. Overall, due to the cost and loss of income, it is becoming harder for drivers to continue driving a taxi. We would like to help encourage the drivers to stay in the taxi and provide world-class service. We need our experienced drivers to keep driving, not to give up due to costs of renewing your credentials. We ask that you support our endeavor and that we change face IDs from being valid for 2 years and make them 3 years. A simple change such as this one would greatly help our drivers by bringing down costs and making it easier to stay a taxi driver.

Fourthly, we ask that we establish a working group to create a master plan. I propose that we better organize ourselves by coming together and plan the future of taxi. Just as
cities have master plans for different segments of the city, I believe that we could accomplish more and achieve better outcomes of taxi by establishing a working group amongst ourselves and creating a master plan we all advocate for. The results would be a better working relationship with government and industry stakeholders. With better planning, we as an industry can prepare and better adapt to future changes. Ultimately, coordination will result in better service being rendered to the public.

Lastly, what can we do for you?

Overall, we would like to work with you as a department at a higher level. I didn't only come here today to ask but also to give. What are some of the suggestions we can do to help with the issues that you see today?

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you, Mr. Dash. And thank you for coming today. I have a few comments on what you said.

I think the consensus here is that
everybody is generally interested in looking at
10 years for vehicles and 3 years for face ID. I
think your idea about a working group is good.
And you asked what you could do for us. I think
at some point, when we do plan a working group
like that, I think we have to come up with a
singular message for Department of For-Hire
Vehicles and we have to advocate that message.

There is still a lot of
misunderstanding in the executive and in the
Council building. And it is easier not to have
the hard discussions and just say, you know,
"Everybody is fine," you know, "I don't see
anybody on television yelling and screaming about
taxi and Uber and Lyft," but, you know, we do
have to get to a point where we are advocating
for these things. And I think that this Advisory
Council can develop more of a role in that
because we have a little more latitude to say
things that are a little more uncomfortable to
the executive and to the Council with regards to
legislation that I know personally is just
sitting there. And it is legislation that could enable a lot more innovation here to do a lot of things you want to do.

So I will personally follow up with you on that, and I have had some conversations with the director about all of these things you shared with us today.

So I will start on my left with Advisor Wade, if you have some comments, and then right on down.

MS. WADE: Okay. Yes. So I also understand the desire to reduce your costs of doing business within the District. And I understand your concerns about the fees, but it is also important that you understand how your money is being spent that you do use in fees. All of the technology updates that this body provides cost to do. And, even if the District funds us to do that, where do those funds come from? It comes from taxes. So those people who live outside of the District, earn income within the District do not pay taxes to the District.
But you use the streets. You use all of the facilities. The lights have to be maintained, all of the public services. Streets have to be cleaned. Roads have to be kept. Taxi stands have to be determined. All of this costs money. And if we don't get the money from you, who come in and use it, through our fees and other local taxes, then how do we help pay for the services that you get? So that is one of the reasons for the fees. It is not just because we want to put a stamp on a piece of paper.

When I was in private industry years ago, I had the responsibility of getting visas for international workers. The District charged 50 cents to put a seal on a document. I then had to take it to the State Department. And to put a seal on that same document, they charged $15. To take it to that embassy, they charged $45, same seal, same purpose. But they had to pay for their expenses. So the purpose of the fees is not punishment, and they are not ill-thought-out.

We tried to do as best we could to
reduce unnecessary fees and unnecessary fines. And we are going to do that continuously, even through the revisions of Title 31.

So I thought it would be important for that point to be made that we don't just assess fees, but there is a purpose for those fees. And I think that was the main thing that I wanted to talk about. Some of the other issues I would like to discuss with my fellow Council members before I bring it to the public. Thank you.

MR. SCHAEFFER: Thank you very much. I think everything has been covered. Anthony, we had talked before. Thank you for the presentation and bringing everything in.

The only thing that wasn't touched was about the app, everyone asking for the app. I just want to make -- the app was out there for a long time, and very few people used the app. So I guess, Anthony, on your question that you ended up with, what can you do, I guess as company owners, we need to reach out to our drivers and let them know the opportunities that are there.
The other gentleman was talking about -- he called it MetroAccess. He was referring to Transport DC, I believe. And there is an opportunity for him to work Transport DC. You know, there are plenty of trips available for someone willing to do it, especially with a wheelchair-accessible vehicle. So we just have to as fleet owners get the opportunities and the word out to the drivers in a better forum and get some of the information they are getting that is not accurate and clarified at the same time.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Advisor Dawit, why don't you go? And then we will have the director do the final wrap-up on this.

MR. DAGNEW: I also want to thank Mr. Dash for bringing these issues before us, and I am so thankful again to bringing these particular three years for ID renewal. That prompted my answer -- my answer to some questions was drivers, the $250 that they are paying for renewal. If that $250 covered for 3 years, that
would be a good idea. And that could be a little
reduction for the cost of doing business. That
is one thing.

The second thing, I would second Jeff
with the app. If this app would have been
working properly, I think that would be a good
addition for business for drivers. Yes, the
department is not going to do anything about this
app because it regulates. Everybody doesn't want
to get into the business of doing business with
the people that it regulates. True. But can we
as a regulator help some technological companies
who can come and consolidate?

I mean, these four or five companies
who are working with this app, I think there is
some misconception in there. I think we need
somebody who could take over the entire app
business and consolidate and directly deal with
the drivers.

Yellow Cab has it on. Capital Cab has
it on. All of those five companies have their
own apps, as opposed to having one. This is only
aid to 5,000 cabs on the street. Can we consolidate all in one app? Is there any way the department can help do that? That would be a great deal, Director. Can we say something about that?

MR. CHRAPPAH: Yes. When it comes to the consolidation, what the department can do is provide a piece of technology called application program interface, APIs. That would help some app connect to all of the for-hire vehicles. And that is a proposal that will be consistent with our mission in that we are not going to advocate for one for-hire vehicle over another. We would like to see consumer choice.

The body we have here as an Advisory Council has different representatives to bring different perspectives. So that is great. From a department standpoint, though, we would like to see all taxis on one platform, all private vehicles on the same platform, all limos on the same platform, so that we can get closer to this idea of transportation as a service or mobility
as a service where you see everything at one place and you, the consumer, decides. So philosophically I want to just make sure for the record folks know where at least the department is coming from.

To get there, there are steps we can take. One step would be making sure that at least all taxis can be accessible from a single platform. That would be some measure of progress. And we will look into ways to make that happen, particularly since the department has provided a digital meter pretty much for free to the industry. So we will see what options are available and how we can leverage data integration, have APIs to support any company that wants to send dispatch requests to all drivers. In doing so, we will also pay attention to DTS providers. Since they collect the surcharge, we want to make sure that they have a role to play in the payment and the collection of passenger surcharge to the city as well.

And, Mr. Dash, thanks for the
presentation. I was a bit taken aback because
typically we don't hear from people in terms of,
you know, what can they do. It is almost always
the takers, not givers. So I had to make sure
what I heard was actually what was said.

So there are a few areas off the top
that I think could be helpful. And one is
customer education. We would like companies and
fleet owners to take greater ownership about
educating consumers about what their options are;
secondly, greater ownership in managing drivers
in their particular fleet. That oversight should
not be left only to the department. We have a
very decentralized approach to regulations. So
we have regulations for companies, regulations
for drivers. We like companies and fleet owners
to pay attention to the requirements that are on
drivers and requirements that are on companies so
that they can manage that relationship. That is
something that we have seen on the platform
economy, the economy side, the ride-sharing side,
where they take an active interest in managing
the driver relationship, but, as you know, I leave that to the government. That will make the government too big. And that is not going to be effective.

So if, for example, a driver consistently receives complaints from passengers, obviously there are repercussions from a regulatory standpoint. At some point, a company has got to say, "No. Driver, you are harming my reputation. You are harming public interest. And I don't want you to be affiliated with my company anymore." So companies should adopt policies that are consistent with the regulation and allows them to manage the relationship with drivers. So that is an area I would like to see some improvement on.

And when it comes to the 10-year age limit for cars, I am not opposed to that at all. I think there is an opportunity to implement it the right way so that we don't end up with the hoopties and the junk cars that tarnished the reputation of our D.C. taxis that the agency and
the public and the advisory body have worked so hard to redeem. The average car you see on the road now is so fresh and so clean. With this summer heat, when you get into a car that is fully air conditioned, credit card works, digital payment works, and with a group of friends, you choose to share a ride, it is much more fun. So we definitely don't want to leave any window of opportunity for the industry to head down South. So figuring out exactly how to implement the 10 years is something that we can work together with the public to achieve.

And for the 3-year face ID, I would even go as far as saying give people 10-year face ID. Give them a lifetime of a face ID. However, there have to be checkpoints, and there has to be a framework where companies are also monitoring the vehicle drivers so that somebody who has a perpetual license to drive, if they don't behave appropriately, well, you yank their privilege. That way the markets self-correct. So three years, yes. I don't have any problem with that.
I would rather see perpetual driving privileges with companies playing an active role in suspending drivers. And then the regulator can focus on due process to ensure that companies don't take advantage of drivers and drivers don't also take advantage of a very decentralized system.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Ms. Mixon, you can find out if there are any more. I don't think we have any more at this point.

MS. MIXON: Anyone else like to testify today? Please raise your hand.

(No response.)

MS. MIXON: Chair Jolly, no one else.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: So let me just wrap up and say that --

MR. DAGNEW: Chairman Jolly?

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Sure. Go ahead.

MR. DAGNEW: I wish I can raise this question once for the director or even Mr. Dash. One thing we haven't paid attention is the cruise
light compliance.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: The what?

MR. DAGNEW: This cruise light has --

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Oh, cruise light.

MR. DAGNEW: Yes. Cruise light has
been a problem between drivers and passengers.
There are some companies who use -- this cruise
light automatically shuts off when the meter goes
on. For the most part, most drivers, including,
I think, Bay Cab, have to use manual. I think we
are in a technological age now I don't think we
need the manual thing with the digital we should
be using.

What are the requirements for these
five companies before getting a D.C. license?
Aren't they suppose to have a regulation or at
least a minimum standard to do this? I think I
want to ask Mr. Dash. What happened to Bay Cab
is what happened for most cab companies. The
cruise light does not go off when the meter goes
on. What is their plan? I think manually
working is not an appropriate way to work. They
have to have a standard that needs to be held responsible to do that cruise light that goes automatic. Drivers are not supposed to be the ones who are supposed to be bearing this responsibilities. They are paying these companies to do the right business, and they are not doing.

MR. CHRAPPAH: Let me take that one. Essentially, Bay Cab will have to speak for itself, but, at least from where we sit from the department's standpoint, our requirement is that there has to be a mechanism for controlling the dome light. It is consistent with our public policy approach of giving choice and not being overly prescriptive in an environment where is innovation. So today there are Bluetooth adapters that can automatically control the legacy dome light and the new cruising light. There is a switch also and -- what is the name? -- seat sensors that also control the dome light. So that is an indication of the range of options that is out there.
Enforcement staff have been vigilant in terms of driver education as well. And as the DTS renewal is coming up, we would not entertain any renewals that don't bring a better approach to the dome light issue. That alone wouldn't be the basis for the agency's decision, but in totality, we would be looking for improvement in the way people behave and an improvement in the way technology is deployed because the technology is out there. There are so many options out there.

We expect any DTS who files for renewal to show a concrete plan on how to work with drivers to achieve 100 percent compliance. But the part that I don't get and I wouldn't try to solve is that no level of automation is going to take care of the walls problems. So today if I need to turn left, I turn on my traffic indicator signal so that I turn left. The car doesn't turn left automatically, and the light doesn't come on. It is very similar to the cruising light, dome light, and the meter.
When a fare gets into the vehicle, a passenger gets into the vehicle, you know you have got to press "Hired" for the meter. So why can't you just turn off the dome light? So no excuse can be given to the idea that "I forgot." Well, you didn't forget to collect the fare. You didn't forget to press meter "Hired." So that is a rally of what we are living with. However, given our experience with that, we have raised the standards.

MR. DAGNEW: Right. That is what I am asking.

MR. CHRAPPAH: And we are saying, "Okay. Now a machine is going to do it for you, and you will pay a price for it." And the market will determine what is a reasonable fee.

MR. DAGNEW: Gentleman, again, I am here with the -- my company auditor is here. I just want to praise him. Jeff is here. His company is doing exactly what it is asked to do. Why not as it is going to do it, I mean, there is one standard. Meter on, cruise light should go
off. There should not be more than one particular driver has to touch before he has taken his fare.

MR. CHRAPPAH: Absolutely.

MR. DAGNEW: That is all I am asking.

MR. CHRAPPAH: Yes, yes. The standard is there. It is engraved in ink in regulation. And when compliance officers see drivers that are out of compliance, they get an NOI. Some of them received NOIs because videos were taken of them not being in compliance. Some have been counseled. And that effort will continue because we are dealing with humans here.

At some point, somebody will tell you, "Well, I don't have enough juice on my tablet. That is why it is not going to that dome light" or "I forgot." Oh. "The switch is not working," so many excuses. We are at a point where we will have zero tolerance, not only on the drivers' side but on DTS providers' when it comes time for renewal, which I believe is around the corner. It should be in about 9 or 10 days from now.
July 1st is the deadline. So for DTS who may be watching online or who pay attention to these transcripts, we are waiting for renewal applications and just be --

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Thank you.
Did you have anything to add to that?

MR. SCHAEFFER: No. No.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: So, look, I want to thank everybody for coming today. I want to end on a good note. So during the week -- and Advisor Dawit probably knows this best because he sees me a lot during the week. I probably come into contact with anywhere from 20 to 30 taxi drivers during a week. And this is consistent because I drink at a 7-11, where everybody hangs out. You know this. I would say that when I first joined the Taxicab Commission, one of the big complaints was the experience here in the building at the Department of For-Hire Vehicles. And all the taxi drivers say, "Man, every time I go down there, you know, there are just tons of complaints."
Half of them are weeded out because people just, as you said, were misinformed. But over the past few months, I must say, it is pleasing to get a lot of positive comments about what goes on here. So I thought we would end today on a good note by thanking the professional staff of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles that is always here to support us. And you guys are here to support us today because we only had two witnesses, and we took our advisor capacities and turned ourselves into public witnesses so we could read all of this testimony into the record.

But, Director Chrappah, your staff is doing a wonderful job. And it is known out in the streets. And I have noticed a change in the last three and a half, almost four years, Advisor Wade, since we showed up.

MS. WADE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: Yes. I have noticed a change, and there is a lot of positive feedback. So I wanted to thank you today and end by giving you a round of applause. And we can
read that into the record.

(Applause.)

CHAIRPERSON JOLLY: And, finally, if there are no further comments, we are adjourned. And it is 11:27. Thank you.

(Whereupon, at 11:27 A.m., the meeting was adjourned.)
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In the matter of: Advisory Council Meeting

Before: DC Department of For-Hire Vehicles

Date: 06-21-18

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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Court Reporter