

**BOARD OF TAXICAB
COMMISSIONERS**

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**CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA**



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MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

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GENERAL MANAGER

ITEM #3

**BOARD OF TAXICAB COMMISSIONERS
BOARD MEETING**

MINUTES

**Wednesday, June 18, 2025
10:00 AM**

CONVENED

The Board of Taxicab Commissioners convened a regular meeting on Wednesday, June 18, 2025 at 10:35 AM in Los Angeles, CA.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

Item No. 1 – Welcome

Vice President Chase called the meeting to order and welcomed all those present noting that those wishing to testify before the Board must fill out a speaker's form and give it to the Commission Executive Assistant. She informed the audience that if anyone is a registered lobbyist, City ordinance requires that it should be indicated on the speaker's form. She also reminded everyone to speak into the microphone and to silence cell phones.

Item No. 2 – Roll Call

Present: Commissioners Nicole Chase, Mary Rosas, and Antonio Zepeda; Deputy City Attorneys (DCA) Michael Nagle and Kevin Dufner

Absent: Commissioner Andre Colaiace and Commercial Rideshare and Mobility Administrator Jarvis Murray

Item No. 3 – Minutes

Commissioner Rosas moved, seconded by Commissioner Zepeda to approve the Minutes of May 15, 2025. Unanimously APPROVED.

Item No. 4 – Communications

None

Item No. 5 – Commission Business

Commissioner Chase re-requested the information on the practices and policies with regards to the City of LA contract, history of issues, and communication outreach made to the PORT that was discussed at the last Board meeting be agendized on the next Board meeting.

EAA Jasmin acknowledged the request and stated that it will be agendaized for the next Board meeting.

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL COMMENT

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ACTION ITEM

Item No. 6 – Appeal of Girum Andarge Bekele Concerning the Department’s May 27, 2025, Decision to Recommend Permanent Revocation of His Taxicab Driver Permit for Violating Taxicab Rule Book Section 800, Rules 809(a), 825, 835, and 852(e)

Alejandro Juan, Transportation Investigator, presented the report.

Questions and answers were provided.

- Commissioner Chase asked what prompted ATS to get involved.
- Investigator Juan explained that the ATS employee was the complainant and described what an ATS employee does, and the specific incident that occurred and offered to show the video footage.
- For visualization, Commissioner Chase asked to clarify where the ATS employee physically stands.
- Investigator Juan discussed how an ATS employee sometimes opens the door for the passenger when they are not busy.
- Commissioner Chase asked if the cab driver usually step out of the cab.
- Investigator Juan confirmed that some do to help with luggage and some don’t.
- Commissioner Zepeda asked if there is a prior relationship between the ATS employee and the person (appellant).
- Investigator Juan confirmed that he is not aware of a prior relationship.
- Investigator Juan showed the video footage.
- Investigator Juan reported that the ATS employee filed a police report with LAX PD, the case is still pending, and since the incident, the driver is no longer employed with the company.
- Appellant Bekele (Appellant) was present with a translator and addressed the Board.
- Sara Dagmawi (Translator) was present and translated for the appellant.
- The appellant spoke.
- Translator: he wants to apologize for his behavior displayed at the video and explained the reason for his behavior, was frustrated and under a lot of pressure.
- DCA Dufner stated that everything the translator and the appellant is saying would need to be heard. He added that he inquired with the Department staff and was informed they were not asked to arrange for any translation services in this case. He asked the translator how she came today.
- Translator responded that she was asked by the appellant to translate for him.
- DCA Dufner asked if he is a friend or an acquaintance.
- Translator stated that he is her uncle.
- Commissioner Chase reiterated what was written in the report about a problem with the machine, the appellant reported it, and was asked to report it when he gets back to his cab the next day so they could fix it, but it did not happen.
- Translator translated Commissioner Chase’s statement to the appellant.

- Appellant responded.
- Translator: he worked all day Friday, the tablets stopped Friday night, he was told to wait Saturday and because his airport day was Sunday, so he waited Saturday and Sunday in the evening, he went there not to miss his airport day because that is the day they make the most money.
- Commissioner Chase expressed her concerns on the physical engagement displayed by the appellant to the ATS officer shown in the video, and stated that it was absolutely unacceptable.
- DCA Dufner inquired as to Mr. Bekele's ability to understand English and if he truly needs a translator; and explained the need to break up statements more frequently to allow the translator the opportunity to translate.
- Commissioner Rosas commented how it seemed like the appellant could understand and speak English based on the video and felt there is no need to pause and bring a translator in.
- DCA Dufner explained how a translator is used in a setting like this and asked the appellant if he was able to understand what the Commissioner said.
- Appellant confirmed that some he understands, some he does not understand, and because of that he brought someone who understand.
- DCA Dufner explained what has to happen (he asked the translator to translate to the appellant); he was informed by Department staff that Mr. Bekele did not request any translation services at the time of the initial review, and that they were not aware a translator was going to show up at the meeting. Under these circumstances, DCA Dufner clarified how the translation should be done to ensure Mr. Bekele understands and has the opportunity to respond to everything taking place.
- Commissioner Rosas asked Mr. Bekele if he understood that he had the opportunity to request for a translator.
- Translator: translated Commissioner Rosas's question to the appellant.
- Appellant responded.
- Translator: he did not know he had to request ahead of time.
- Investigator Juan confirmed that the appellant was advised to bring an attorney if he needed one, and he asked the appellant during the initial interview if he understood everything he was told.
- Translator: translated Investigator Juan's statement to the appellant.
- Commissioner Chase asked if the conversation regarding legal representation and translator was recorded or documented.
- Translator: translated Commissioner Chase's question to the appellant.
- Investigator Juan stated that when he interviewed the appellant he just asked verbally and did not record in actual paper or audio device.
- Translator: translated Investigator Juan's statement.
- Appellant: provided a statement.
- Translator: nothing was mentioned to him about an attorney or a translator; they wrote him a ticket and was asked to go to the office and that was the last conversation; when he came he was told it was something simple and was not aware of this set up.
- DCA Dufner asked the appellant if he would like an extension of this hearing in order to get an attorney.
- Translator: translated DCA Dufner's question.
- Appellant: responded.
- Translator: he cannot afford to have an attorney.
- DCA Dufner asked the appellant if he would like to proceed as is today.
- Translator: translated DCA Dufner's question.
- Appellant: responded.
- Translator: "yes", he wants to proceed.

- DCA Dufner asked the appellant if he is comfortable proceeding today with his niece as a translator, and if he feels that she has the ability to effectively translate for him.
- Translator: translated DCA Dufner's question.
- Appellant: responded.
- Translator: "yes".
- Investigator Juan shared that when the appellant was called about this process on Friday, June 13th, he was informed that if he needs to bring a lawyer it would be on his own, and he was told over the phone and email.
- Translator: translated Investigator Juan's statement.
- Appellant: responded.
- Translator: last Friday, they (referring to staff) called him to make sure he is coming or not coming, and he replied that he did not see the text; the person on the phone said that if you come there is a possibility of getting your license back, encourage you to come.
- For clarification, Commissioner Chase stated that it was her understanding that the opportunity to have legal representation and/or an interpreter was documented via email.
- Translator: translated Commissioner Chase's statement.
- Appellant: responded.
- Translator: they sent him a legal paper via email, a lot of page on it, he did not read it line by line whether the attorney or translator was on that paper and that was the only email he got and even if they told him, he can not afford an attorney.
- Commissioner Zepeda re-stated his question to the appellant and asked if he was okay with the translation he is receiving today for us to move forward.
- Translator: translated Commissioner Zepeda's question.
- Appellant: responded.
- Translator: he is comfortable and even if he reschedule, he does not have the money to hire an attorney.
- Commissioner Zepeda rephrased his question and asked if he is comfortable in understanding the language with the translator or if we need a professional translator so that he understands everything we are saying.
- Translator: translated Commissioner Zepeda's question.
- Appellant: responded.
- Translator: he is comfortable proceeding.
- Commissioner Chase asked Mr. Bekele how long he has been a taxicab driver.
- Translator: translated Commissioner Chase's question.
- Appellant: since last September.
- DCA Dufner made a request regarding Commissioner Chase's concerns about the physical component of the incident that was shown in the video, and believed that the statement did not have an opportunity to be translated, and asked if the appellant would like to say anything regarding the physical component.
- Translator: translated DCA Dufner's request.
- Appellant: responded.
- Translator: since last Friday, he was worried about paying his bills, paying the taxi payment they pay every week, under pressure of making money, this is not how he conducts business, and sincerely apologize for what happened that day.
- Commissioner Zepeda commented how Appellant Bekele's body spoke in the video and asked if there was anything he learned from this process.
- Translator: translated Commissioner Zepeda's question.
- Appellant: responded.

- Translator: he learned a lot from the situation because even if he has a lot of pressure at home and his personal life, it is better to take time away and think and calm himself up, and he is raising kids and this is not the example he needed.

Commissioner Chase moved, seconded by Commissioner Zepeda to accept the Department's recommendation for the permanent revocation of Mr. Bekele's taxicab driver permit.

Commissioner Chase moved, seconded by Commissioner Zepeda to enter into Executive Session.
Unanimously APPROVED.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Item No. 7 – Appeal of Robert Eugene II Boyd Concerning the Department's Decision to Cancel the Taxicab Driver Application, Pursuant to Taxicab Rule Book Section 600, Rules 607 and 615

Pearl Pantoja, Transportation Investigator, presented the report.

Appellant Boyd was present and addressed the Board.

Questions, answers, and comments were provided.

Commissioner Chase moved, seconded by Commissioner Zepeda to move forward with the application for an interim license for 90 days with the condition to come back to the Board with the documentation of letters of recommendation.


Commissioner Chase moved, seconded by Commissioner Zepeda to close the Executive Session.
Unanimously APPROVE.

DCA Dufner briefly recounted that during the Executive Session, the appeal was granted with some additional conditions.

ADJOURNMENT – PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54956.7

With no further business before the Board of Taxicab Commissioners, Commissioner Chase moved, seconded by Commissioner Zepeda to adjourn the meeting. Unanimously APPROVED.

The meeting adjourned at 11:42 AM.

Approved: <u>7/17/2025</u>
Board of Taxicab Commissioners

Commission Executive Assistant

