

ITEM #6

BOARD REPORT
CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Date: June 18, 2025

To: Board of Taxicab Commissioners

From: Laura Rubio-Cornejo, General Manager 

Subject: **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)**

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board:

1. **FIND** that on May 12, 2025, the Department investigated Girum Andarge Bekele (Bekele) due to a discourtesy complaint submitted by an Authorized Taxi Supervision (ATS) employee. After reviewing the incident, L. A. Taxi Co-Operative, Inc (Yellow Cab) management placed the driver out of service on May 12, 2025, and remained out of service since. The investigation revealed that on May 11, 2025, BEKELE violated Taxi Rule 825 (Major discourtesy).
2. **FIND** that the Department's investigation determined Bekele violated Taxi Rules 852(e) (Comply with ATS directive), 835 (Request cash payment), 825 (Major discourtesy), and 809(a) - (drive in safe/careful/prudent manner).
3. **FIND** Bekele was issued Hearing Notice 59160 on May 14, 2025. On May 27, 2025, a hearing was held and Bekele was found guilty of all charges. He was informed that he would be appearing before the Board regarding the possible revocation of his permit.
4. **INFORM** Bekele that he is permanently revoked from possessing a Los Angeles City taxicab driver permit due to the violations he has committed.

INITIATED BY

On May 27, 2025, Bekele, Permit 633545, appealed the Department's decision to recommend the revocation of his taxicab driver's permit. Bekele submitted a "Request for Hearing Before the Board of Taxicab Commissioners" appeal form (Attachment 1) pursuant to Taxicab Rule Book Section 900, Rule 905.

DISCUSSION

The Department issued Bekele his initial taxicab driver permit on August 12, 2024. The taxicab driver permit is valid for Yellow Cab company and will expire on August 12, 2025. This is Bekele's first taxicab driver permit to operate within the City of Los Angeles.

On May 12, 2025, ATS informed the Department that a complaint was submitted against Bekele for an incident that occurred on May 11, 2025, between Bekele and an ATS employee. Investigative staff obtained and reviewed video footage from both the complainant and Yellow Cab. The video corroborated the allegations against Bekele. In the video, Bekele is seen being aggressive towards the ATS employee. Bekele yells and uses profanity towards the ATS employee. Bekele, with an open palm, strikes the ATS employee's left hand to prevent them from recording. Additionally, you can hear Bekele request cash or Zelle payment to an unknown passenger before the ATS employee intervenes. On May 12, 2025, Bekele was placed out of service by Yellow Cab management and will remain out of service pending the outcome of the appeal process.

On May 14, 2025, the complainant notified Investigative staff that a police report was filed with the Los Angeles Airport Police Department, case number 25-077437. Investigative staff met with Bekele at the Yellow Cab office, where he was interviewed regarding the allegations made against him. Bekele made several statements that confirmed his actions on the day of the incident. He admitted to being aggressive towards the ATS employee because of the manner he was being spoken to. Additionally, he stated he consistently requests cash or Zelle payments from passengers because of ongoing issues with his vehicle's tablet. When asked if the tablet is always malfunctioning and whether he reports these issues, Bekele indicated that he reported the problem on several occasions. To verify Bekele's claim, Investigative staff asked Yellow Cab IT personnel to confirm Bekele's statement. Yellow Cab IT indicated that Bekele was instructed to contact them once he was inside of his vehicle, but Bekele did not follow up as instructed. Bekele was issued a Hearing Notice 59160. On May 27, 2025, Bekele was found guilty of violating Taxi Rules 825, 852(e), 835, and 809(a).

CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence gathered, the Department recommends that Bekele's LADOT driver permit be permanently revoked and be denied from holding any future City of Los Angeles driver or attendant permit.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

Taxicab Rule 809. A driver shall at all times drive or park the taxicab: (a). In a safe, careful and prudent manner.

Taxicab Rule 825. A driver shall provide prompt, efficient service and be courteous at all times to the general public, other City-permitted taxicab drivers, and to City Investigators/officers. Minor discourtesies may be forgiven. Unwanted conversation, verbal abuse and/or profanity shall be punished accordingly. Discriminatory based discourtesies shall result in permit revocation. The citing Investigator/officer shall provide a supplemental written report of the incident including the names, addresses and/or telephone numbers of all witnesses. Drivers whose permits are revoked for

discrimination shall submit evidence of enrollment and passing of a recognized class in Anti-discrimination training when applying for a new driver permit. If verbal abuse and/or profanity escalates into physical abuse, threatened or otherwise, or to throwing objects, such discourtesies shall be punished accordingly.

Taxicab Rule 835. The Driver shall not require a cash payment for any trip.

Taxicab Rule 852. A driver shall immediately comply with all lawful requests, orders and directives issued by any of the following properly identified persons:

(e). Any Agent or Employee of the Taxicab Services Company.

Taxicab Rule 905. Appeal of Department Assessed Penalties - Driver and Taxicab Services Company Violations: A driver or Taxicab Services Company may appeal the decision of the Department by filing with the Department an Appeal Request Form within ten working days of the Department hearing. Such Appeal Form shall present the basis for protesting the decision of the Department.

SEC. 71.07. THE BOARD'S POWER TO REVOKE OR SUSPEND DRIVER, ATTENDANT, OR VEHICLE PERMITS. (Title and Section Amended by Ord. No. 165,491, Eff. 3/19/90.)

The Board shall have the power after public hearing to deny, revoke, suspend or cancel any driver, attendant, or vehicle permit for which this article makes provision. The exercise of such power, except in an emergency situation involving public health and safety, shall be subject to the affected permittee having been given adequate notice of the hearing, the proposed action, the reasons thereof, a copy of the charges upon which the action is based, and the permittee shall have the right to respond, either orally or in writing.

SEC. 71.08. GROUNDS FOR DENIAL, REVOCATION, SUSPENSION OR CANCELLATION OF PERMIT. (Amended by Ord. No. 150,456, Eff. 12/30/77)

The following shall constitute grounds for denial, revocation, suspension or cancellation of any driver, attendant, or vehicle permit for which this article makes provision: **(First para. amended by Ord. No. 165,491, Eff. 3/19/90.)**

- (a) Arrest for the commission of any crime while driving a vehicle defined in Section 71.00 or any crime involving moral turpitude;
- (b) Violation of any rule or regulation of the Board, any section of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, Los Angeles Administrative Code and other ordinances of the City, any rule or regulation of the Department of Airports, and any section of a State Statute or Administrative Code, relating to the operation of a vehicle defined in Sec. 71.00 and for which a permit is required under this article.

Attachments

- 1. Appeal form
- 2. Investigation Report for Hearing notice 59160
- 3. Complainant statement
- 4. Driver statement

Evidence

- 1. Video footage (thumb drive)

Denied: <u>6/18/2025</u>
Board of Taxicab Commissioners

Commission Executive Assistant

