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## **Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission**

### **TESTIMONY**

**Bill No 36-0045**

**June 8, 2026**

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Greetings, Honorable Senator Novelle E. Francis, Chairman of the Committee on Finance, Senator Angel Bolques, sponsor of Bill No. 36-0045, esteemed Senators, legislative staff, and members of the viewing and listening public. I am Ms. Melissa I. Smith, Acting Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission (VITCC).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Bill No. 36-0045, which seeks appropriate \$400,000 from the Tourism Advertising Revolving Fund to support critical technological upgrades for the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission. This investment represents a necessary step toward modernizing our operations and strengthening our ability to effectively regulate the taxi industry throughout the Territory.

The Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission was established under Title 20, Chapter 37 of the Virgin Islands Code with a clear mandate to regulate and oversee the taxi industry, ensuring safety, fairness, and accountability. However, despite its significant responsibility, the Commission continues to operate within a largely manual, paper-based framework that limits efficiency, delays service delivery, and restricts oversight capabilities.

This bill presents a transformative opportunity to bring the Commission into alignment with modern administrative and regulatory practices. Through automation and digital integration, we can significantly improve internal workflows, enhance public service delivery, and strengthen regulatory enforcement.

Modernization will enable the Commission to:

- Digitize licensing and regulatory processes for taxi drivers and vehicles.
- Streamline fare monitoring and enforcement systems.
- Improve investigative and compliance tracking capabilities.
- Enhance transparency and accountability through real-time data access.

We envision a system where taxi operators can apply for licenses online, upload documentation securely, receive automated renewal notifications, and track application status in real time. Additionally, a centralized case management system would allow complaints to be filed digitally, evidence to be securely submitted, and hearings to be conducted virtually when necessary—expediting resolution processes while ensuring fairness and accessibility.

A modernized system will also support integration with key government agencies, including the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), Internal Revenue Bureau (IRB), Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD), Department of Finance (DOF), Department of Property and Procurement (DPP), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Bureau of Information Technology (BIT). This integration will enable real-time verification of tax clearances, licensing, and compliance data, significantly reducing administrative delays.

Moreover, automation will provide valuable data analytics that can support planning and collaboration with stakeholders such as the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Bureau of Economic Research (BER). This will strengthen decision-making and enhance the Territory's transportation infrastructure in support of our growing tourism industry.

### **Justification for Funding Allocation**

The requested \$400,000 appropriation is a strategic investment that will provide the following key benefits:

#### ***Operational Efficiency and Transparency***

- Transitioning to digital records will reduce administrative errors, eliminate redundancies, and improve data accuracy.
- Real-time access to information will improve responsiveness and regulatory oversight.

#### ***Collaboration with the Bureau of Information Technology (BIT)***

- BIT will provide technical guidance to ensure secure, scalable, and compliant systems.
- Cybersecurity measures will protect sensitive data and ensure adherence to government standards.

#### ***Enhanced Customer Experience for Taxi Operators***

- Operators will benefit from faster, more accessible licensing services.
- Streamlined renewal processes will reduce wait times and administrative burden.

### **Data-Driven Planning and Oversight**

- Digital tools will allow tracking of medallions, vehicle registrations, business licenses, and compliance metrics.
- Improved reporting capabilities will support executive decision-making and policy development.

### ***Fiscal Responsibility and Accountability***

The Commission is committed to ensuring that all allocated funds are used responsibly and transparently.

- A detailed expenditure plan will be developed in alignment with BIT recommendations.
- All procurement processes will comply with the Virgin Islands Procurement Code and DPP guidelines.
- Competitive bidding processes (RFPs/IFBs) will ensure fairness and cost-effectiveness.
- Contracts will include performance benchmarks and delivery timelines.

### ***Monitoring and Oversight***

- Comprehensive financial records will be maintained and reported to the Legislature.
- An internal audit trail will track all expenditures.
- Regular progress reports will be shared with stakeholders and oversight bodies.

### ***Transparency and Stakeholder Engagement***

- The Commission will provide regular updates on implementation progress.
- Taxi operators and the public will be kept informed and invited to provide feedback.

### ***Alignment with Audit Findings and Corrective Action***

This investment directly supports the Commission's response to recent audit findings and will strengthen our ability to implement sustained corrective actions. Specifically, the proposed automation and system upgrades will:

- Address deficiencies in record-keeping by establishing a centralized, verifiable digital database.
- Strengthen internal controls through automated workflows, approvals, and audit trails.
- Improve compliance monitoring and enforcement through real-time tracking and reporting.
- Enhance accountability by ensuring that all transactions and regulatory actions are properly documented and easily retrievable.
- Support adherence to SOPPs, ERP practices, and verification protocols now being implemented.

While the Commission has already taken proactive steps—including onboarding new staff, improving internal procedures, and reinforcing compliance standards—these efforts must be supported by modern technological infrastructure to ensure long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

This investment is not merely a technological enhancement—it is a critical component of the Commission’s broader commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

***Closing***

Thank you for allowing The Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission to restate its commitment to building a modern, efficient, and transparent regulatory agency. Automation is no longer optional—it is essential to meeting the demands of a growing tourism industry, responding effectively to audit recommendations, and providing high-quality service to the public.

We respectfully urge your support of Bill No. 36-0045 as a meaningful investment in the future of transportation in the Virgin Islands and a necessary step in strengthening institutional accountability.

Thank you again for your time, your leadership, and your consideration.