

October 23, 2025

Honorable Novelle E. Francis, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance
36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall
Capitol Building
Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00804

Good day, Honorable Chairman Novelle E. Francis, Jr., members of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, and the listening audience.

The St. John Taxi Services Corporation commends the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission for its ongoing efforts to modernize and strengthen the territory's transportation sector. We recognize that innovation plays a vital role in improving service quality, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction. Implementing tools such as GPS-based dispatch systems, mobile payment options, and digital recordkeeping can greatly enhance transparency and accountability across the industry.

While we support the overall objective of Bill 36-0045, we respectfully request that the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission consider several important factors to ensure that this transition is practical, equitable, and sustainable for all operators:

1. Affordability and Financial Impact

Many taxi operators are independent small business owners who may not have the immediate capacity to absorb the cost of new devices, software, or subscription fees. A phased implementation schedule or financial assistance program would help ease this burden and promote broader compliance. Ongoing costs, including software subscriptions, hardware maintenance, and system upgrades, should also be considered.

2. Infrastructure Readiness

Cellular and network reliability—particularly on St. John and in other rural areas—remains inconsistent. A successful rollout will require stable and reliable connectivity to prevent service disruptions. Contingency plans should be established to maintain service in the event of technology failures or network outages.

3. Data Privacy and Control

Clear policies must be established regarding how data—such as driver information, trip records, and customer details—will be collected, stored, and accessed. Operators should

retain reasonable control over their operational data, consistent with privacy and security standards.

4. Local Involvement and Training

Any vendor selected to implement these technological upgrades should work collaboratively with the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission to ensure that training, technical support, and maintenance resources are accessible within the territory. Training programs should accommodate operators of varying technical literacy, including those less familiar with smartphones or digital tools.

5. System Compatibility and Fair Access

New technology should integrate smoothly with existing systems to minimize operational disruptions. Additionally, all operators—regardless of location—should have equitable access, ensuring rural areas and smaller islands like St. John are not disadvantaged.

6. System Performance and Responsibility

Clear expectations should be established for system performance, including reliability, uptime, and reporting accuracy. Transparency and accountability measures will help both operators and regulators evaluate whether the upgrades are achieving their intended outcomes.

In closing, the St. John Taxi Services Corporation supports the goals of Bill 36-0045, promoting technological advancement that enhances public service, industry accountability, and customer confidence. We respectfully urge the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission to adopt an inclusive, phased approach that ensures all local operators are properly equipped, informed, and financially supported during this transition.

Thank you, Honorable Chairman Francis, and members of the Committee, for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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