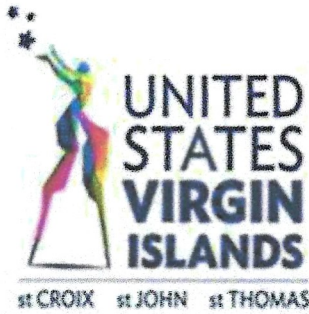




**GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM**

October 24, 2025

The Honorable Senator Avery Lewis

Thirty-Six (36th) Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Capitol Building
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00802

Re: Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection

Dear Senator Lewis:

Please find the Department of Tourism's testimony herein for the meeting of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands' Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs and Consumer Protections, at 11:00 am on October 27, 2025 at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall on the island of St. Thomas.

Sincerely,

for Kaji C. Armstrong
Jennifer Matarangas-King
Commissioner Nominee
USVI Department of Tourism



**UNITED STATES
VIRGIN ISLANDS**
st CROIX st JOHN st THOMAS

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U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Tourism
P.O. Box 6400
St. Thomas, USVI 00804

October 24, 2025

The Honorable Senator Avery Lewis

Thirty-Six (36th) Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Capitol Building

St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 00802

Re: Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection

Greetings, Honorable Senator Avery L. Lewis, Chairman of the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection, all Senators, and legislative staff, as well as the present, viewing, and listening audience. I am Elizabeth Hansen Watley, Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Tourism. Today, I will be testifying on behalf of Commissioner Nominee Jennifer Matarangas-King, who is unable to attend today's hearing and sends her thanks to you for extending an invitation to testify on Bill No. 36-0148: An act amending title 3 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 16, section 274 by mandating that the Virgin Islands Taxicab Commission implement an electronic payment system.

Modernizing how visitors and residents pay for transportation is not just a convenience; it is crucial to our ability to keep the Virgin Islands competitive as a global destination. Across the Caribbean and worldwide, travelers are increasingly expecting and anticipating seamless, cashless transactions, a trend supported by a recent study conducted by international credit card company MasterCard, which revealed that over 90% of leisure travelers prefer destinations that offer contactless or mobile payment options.

Tourism drives nearly 60% of the U.S. Virgin Islands' economy welcoming more than 2.6 million visitors in 2024, and while we're proud to deliver a world-class visitor experience, many travelers still express frustration over the limited credit and digital payment options available in our taxi services.



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Implementing an electric payment system will:

1. Enhance the visitor experience by aligning with international standards for travel convenience.
2. Improve safety and transparency for both riders and drivers by reducing the need for cash.
3. Support data-driven management within the Taxicab Commission through more accurate trip and revenue tracking.

And finally,

4. Encourage local participation in the growing digital economy, strengthening the overall business environment.

Destinations such as Puerto Rico, The Bahamas, and Barbados have already begun rolling out digital taxi payment systems, achieving significant success. This has improved consumer satisfaction, increased compliance, and enhanced transparency in tax revenue.

As tourism experts, the Department of Tourism supports the elevation of the local taxi industry, as it plays a crucial role in daily transportation across the territory and directly impacts the visitor experience.

Considering the broader industry context and the importance of integrating electronic and mobile payment options in U.S. Virgin Islands taxis, we recommend conducting an expert assessment to ensure correct implementation concerning the imposition.

Thank you for your time, and on behalf of the Department of Tourism, we stand ready to provide support.