10/15/2025 STT Taxi Association Town Hall Meeting

Legislature USVI

October 15, 2025 · 2.6 hours · gov

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`0:00:00` Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. let me be clear as a government we have work to do yes you deserve a modernized taxicab commission

`0:02:18` the roads and infrastructure you deserve consistent and more representation we can achieve it all step by step through partnership and communication we will modernize this industry and elevate it to where it truly belongs so as we begin tonight's discussion let's keep our minds open our tone respectful and our focus forward together we can drive this industry and our territory into a stronger brighter future again i am senator avery louis chairman of the government operation veterans affair and consumer protection and i welcome you And now, I'll ask my colleagues to introduce themselves, starting from my left, far left, and walking away down to my far right.

`0:03:23` good evening everyone and thank you for taking the time out to be here tonight my name is senator clifford joseph the chairman of the committee of homeland security justice and Public Safety. I'm here tonight to listen to the concern of the individuals who are the hard-working ambassadors at the Virginia. Good evening everyone. My name is Dwayne DeGraff, Minority Leader, 36th Legislature. Good evening everyone. My name is Novel E. Francis Jr. I'm the Chair of the Budget Appropriations and Finance Committee and I look forward to our discussion and this evening thank you for being here and thank you for all that you do again tourism represent 50 to 60 percent of our gdp so certainly we want to continue to preserve that and as the chair of budget appropriations of finance i'm interested to ensure that we continue to bring in revenues uh to this government to divert now thank you very much good evening kenneth gittins st corey district vice president 36 legislator good evening everybody i want to thank you all for being here tonight for sure um my father was a lifelong taxi driver he raised just about eight of us primarily from income derived from the taxi business i mean my brothers would tell you four day morning anybody know what for the morning is that's from like three or five

`0:05:09` o'clock my brother's out there washing my father's rambler every single morning every single morning i got to where i was the youngest back then so i didn't know so again an appreciation and an understanding about the pride that he took in

the work that he did it's important work the taxi industry isn't just a gig it is a profession that is really the gateway to our territory without this industry without the men and women in this crowd here today our tourism industry would fold so i want you to really understand the role that you play uh in keeping this industry life you know it is it is just a critical role but my concern is that we need to grow we need to develop we cannot operate a 2025 taxi industry with a 1970s mindset and i'm trying to share that there i'm saying that we have to evolve we have to develop we have to grow if we want to remain competitive as a tourism destination we have to face reality now as senators we are the subject matter experts you are the subject matter experts that is what you do so we need to listen to you we need to respond to you your needs your concern that is what this is about this evening you know this is probably the most i'm going to speak today i'm going to be listening to you

0:07:01 hearing what your needs are what your concerns are and responding from a policymaker perspective that's our role that is our role so i want to thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule it says that this is important for you you know so nothing but respect thank you very much ladies and gentlemen i am the senate president of the 36th legislature thank you for that reminder yes and thank you um for the mic president patter and a pleasant good evening to all the listening audience, all of the stakeholders that are gathered with us here today.

0:07:48 The taxi industry, with the numbers, is very important to Virgin Islands. We have over 800,000, close to 900,000, airline passengers that visit the Virgin Islands, and particularly on St. Thomas. So this industry is an industry that has been traditionally dominated by locals, and of course it's one of my goals to ensure that the taxi industry remains dominated by the locals. But however, change has to come, particularly with our residents, the cruise ship passengers, you know that we're getting the larger ships.

0:08:37 We fought that battle for the taxi drivers to maintain the 27-seat safaris because we thought it was only fair, and that was thanks to all of my colleagues in the 35th Legislature. However, there's still motions to create a lift or an Uber or some different type of ride-sharing. I am against it. however we have to be more accommodating to some of the passengers and it includes increasing the number of taxi drivers that also accepts different forms of payments we're all aware as virgin islanders if you fly now and you go land in miami you can get a uber or a lyft or whatever and they're not going to take your cash some of them are going to take your credit card or a debit card or something so we have to continue to be in line with the changes that are coming we also have a bill to um change the value of the taxi cab medallions because we know that's one of the areas where the taxi drivers have been hindered we think the price of the medallions is right now too low um you know we would like to raise raise that he and the chairman of this committee senator avery lewis we're working on that bill so there's some good things in store however i'm here mainly to listen and to learn and thank you very much i'm the chair of the health hospitals and human services committee and your humble servants and it's a really sake a blessing greetings and salutations everyone to all the taxi men and women all listening and viewing audience radio waves airwaves uh central staff everyone and my colleagues um my name is and i'm here to hear your specific concerns uh each island has their own specific challenges we conducted a town hall on the island of saint john last evening with some colleagues of mine and I'm sure I would venture to say that some of you may have seen the video somewhere on Facebook or something and are aware of some of the conversations that took place, but it doesn't necessarily mean that all of the same specific challenges that St. John experiences equates to St. Thomas or St. Croix for that fact. So that's why we hold these towns up townhouse to be able to hear your specific concerns and how we can meet you to resolve them. So thank you for taking the time out and being here with us i'm the chairman of the committee on culture youth agents sports

0:11:22 and parks thank you and good evening again a pleasant good evening the tone has changed and i am your humble servant and senator carla joseph i have had similar meetings in the 35th legislature with the tax industry uh operators some of you have been here and i just want to welcome you once again to the people's house or will be ugly if you all you all play a vital role economy bringing a significant amount of money you are the first and last that our visitors to our shores even in our march that we have as the virgin ellen's march says something tremendously important that we hold out a welcome to one and all and all of you level of hospitality you hold all that wealth come our visitors to our shores and i just want to say thank you for that i have family members who are taxi up operators like you. I have classmates who are taxi operators like you. I have friends who are taxi operators like you. And I have brothers and sisters in my churches who are taxi operators like you. So we want to be able to work with you because taxi industry, when we look around, you represent a diverse group of people who look similar to us and you are part of what is known, I'm taking something from a gentleman, he normally says this, as generational wealth. You're passing down a business to your children, to your

0:13:26 descendants and their descendants. So we want to ensure that that business still operates and is still thriving. So I'm here to continue the conversation. We did make some amendments to the taxi cab, we have reduced, I'm looking at, hopefully, increasing the taxi cab budget. Hopefully, I'm hopeful so that they can expand the services. I want to take the opportunity

right this minute to really congratulate the acting Executive Director of the Taxi Cab commission miss smith this is the first time in years that they've had i mean i came in and it was not happening um in 2021 years that they have seen a graduated class of taxi operators we just give her a round of applause as well as the board because i know i had a number of young people who were insistently calling me regarding those classes and i'm glad she and happy she made it happen in conjunction with the university of virgin islands and the department of tourism so i'm here to listen i also serve as the chairwoman of the committee on rules and judiciary and i look forward to our conversation this evening thank you so kindly Thank you, colleagues. Before we go into any more introductions, I just have to say publicly, I want to thank the Vice President who started this round of meetings in St. Floyd. And that went very well. And then the Chairman of, I don't want to say Sport Park, the at-large

0:15:24 Senator, Senator Angel Bulquez, for his meeting in St. John last night. It went very well. we had we gleaned a lot of information a lot of things were said we have our homework and that's one thing all my colleagues say after the meeting even before you know we have some work to do before i delve into the next section i have to say publicly and i know my colleagues won join me and this is that we can before we i don't know how long ago it happened i want to say more and 20 years ago before the navy called on the virgin island um and we had a navy ship in there iwo jima and i have to publicly thank the document i know So, I know that St. Thomas Taxi, Krongbe, was very integral in it, but I believe all of you had a part in it.

0:16:34 And even when I meet the sailors, they were so happy to know that they had that ground transportation, and they felt safe. You all did a yeoman's job, and I really have to say thank you. And I don't know how true it is, but my little body pins me, and I heard that they're coming back. You know, thanks to some of the good service you all gave, they're coming back for more. with the same ship but they're coming back okay a little bobby don't show tomorrow so i mean you know um i thank you all and again so moving right along emails were sent out invitations were sent out this was public i know in this room we have different associations we have independent taxi drivers so i mean i'm just asking if you're gonna say who you are where you representing it'll be a great if you don't want to you know pressure but it'll be nice to know who all is who all is in the room sorry good afternoon to everybody boy this is one of the best time i could see i see all the drivers here all the way who's different association my name is pascal simon junior supervisor management for best taxi good evening everyone good evening thanks for putting this meeting together my name is ivan nicholas and i represent the vi taxi association based at the western resort very proud to be at the western good evening everyone my name is louise hanley i'm representing vi taxi association sitting over at the western resort thank you

0:18:28 good evening my name is you know me as my race i work at a taxi now for 25 years and i'm based on the western taxis then I really got some bashful people what good evening my name is tyrone paul president of police taxi service blighting terminal good evening good evening steve gardner representing vi taxi association as the office manager Good evening to all. My name is Emerson Knight, Vice President of V.I.T.A.C.I.

0:19:32 Hi. Sorry about that. Good evening. My name is Maisie Mohammed. I'm part of V.I.T.A.C.I. I'll be representing V.I.T.A.C.I. and also more of the drivers. us i'm basically international because we provide service to everybody thank you mr mohammed good evening my name is lester carey i'm one of the current graduates of the class that currently went through with miss director miss melissa smith and i represent myself right now, open to 20 acres, so.

0:20:23 All right, we thank you for that. Well, I want to recognize one of my colleagues, Senator Marvin Blighton. Good evening, everyone. Senator Marvin Blighton. Happy to see you guys this evening. I look forward to have a robust discussion in terms of your interest, in terms of business, and I look forward to us having a meaningful solution moving forward. Thank you so much.

0:21:01 All right. I think there's somebody else on this side. Mike, over here. Good evening. Good evening. My name is Lionel Waro. I belong to St. Thomas Taxi, but I am here as an independent taxi as well, because I believe that taxi people are the drivers of the Virgin Islands and going forward into a new economy. We strive for a place that we see in our mind that's above and beyond what's here on the ground.

0:21:49 So, my name is Warrill, St. Amostakse. Thank you, Mr. Warrill. Let me put it out, that's my brother. And in the room with us, we shared this room tonight with some of our stakeholders, our key people. We have Department of Terrorism, IC Port Authority, IC Taxicab Commission, and ALC in the house. So, Veterans Affairs in the back, but I'm not going to take his hair tonight. I have a...

0:22:26 Good evening, everyone. My name is Ava Penn. I am the director of financial affairs and the active company manager at the Virgin Islands Port Authority. I just wanted to say that, like President Cutter, my father was also a taxi driver, and he was one of the first dollar runs before the term was coined. He did a run from Red Hook to Market Square for a dollar. And his name was Wallace Penn. So I don't know if you guys probably weren't born. So I, growing up, was often riding a

safari between Red Hook and Market Square.

0:23:14 So the taxi industry is very dear to my heart. Today, hardly anyone pays with cash. So we also need to adapt to the industry so that it can be profitable for everybody. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Good evening, everyone. My name is Alan E. Henneman. I'm the Assistant Commissioner of Tourism. I'm here to support my Assistant Commissioner on St. Croix, Elizabeth Hanson-Watley, today as she sits as the President of the Taxi Commission. It's been said, first line of defense, the faces at the airport, and your taxi driver. Being in the industry for all these years, all of the media that i worked with said to us on creative stories based on their stories and memories shared with the drivers they went to beautiful places but who made the experience is the drivers and because we are now going into 2026 where we have increased airlift increased increased cruise numbers coming into the territory it's imperative that we work together to maintain the front line is as strong as the back line. Thank you.

0:24:42 Good evening everyone. My name is Joseph Cranston Jr. I'm the Marine Manager for the Virgin Announce Port Authority, St. Thomas, St. John District. Good evening. My name is Horace Graham. I'm the Assistant Commissioner, Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, and I'm here to engage and to listen to the conversations that we have about the future and continuing of the vibrant taxi industry in the United States.

0:25:34 Good evening, everyone. I'm Melissa Smith, Acting Executive Director with the Taxicab commission i want to thank senator avery lewis for the opportunity to be here today and speak with you to answer your questions and i also want to thank uh senator joseph for her very kind words i am so excited to see all of you here this evening i see best taxi vi taxi um st thomas taxi our independent operators and some of our graduates i'm really proud of all of you and i appreciate you being here today and i'm here to support you as well thank you good evening all my name is elizabeth henson whatley i'm your assistant commissioner territorially and I'm also your chairperson at the Taxicab Commission Board and I am so proud to be here and see that you are I know you guys not so much really want to hear from you and this is about you this evening and I'm just joyous that we're able to have this setting where all the players are in the room so that we could come up with a plan that makes sense and like i said in the prior meetings that we had it is always important for the frontline workers you guys that are on the ground to be able to tell us because you are the people that are on the front lines what needs to be done how we can improve and we're here for support you know a lot of times people look at taxicab commission as just regulatory and oh we got to jump down and do all of this with taxi drivers we're here to support taxi drivers and

0:27:32 make sure that your industry continues to evolve and improve so one of the things that we want to do is create more connectivity in the community you're seeing my face you know you're hearing the name you see in the face also our acting executive director and we want to be able to in real time hear from you be able to be accessible to you and make sure that when you bring us any kind of issue that's going on that we can respond and i'm happy that our senators here are willing to support us in getting more funding so that we could serve you better but i am not going to java you know all night i want to hear from you all and so i'm just appreciative to be right here and hear from taxi drivers and i appreciate everything that you do i know it's not an easy job and i know that there are a lot of things on social media that you have to contend with and so i always have to give kudos to taxi drivers because i don't think you credit um and and it is very important you know people always point out when you do a mistake or something that happens but they don't ever tell you when you're doing good and so i think that's very important to say i have to agree with the senators when they said you guys did a phenomenal job when it came to um our neighborhood coming into the territory um they had very good reviews about our taxi drivers so big up yourself that's all i have to say and i look forward to hearing how we can improve our support to you thank you so much thank you i think we have some more solutions and not yet uh just carry harrigan tax manager just ask me questions and chime in when i hear something not being said correctly or just not correcting anyone but just to elaborate on some of the

0:29:32 subjects for the subject matter yes thank you now that we know everyone and with one happy family because one before i get into the next portion with this which is we're going to discuss this a little bit briefly myself and my colleagues some of the highlighters when we attended 2025 ctrade uh which is one of the largest the largest for me um global conference with all the industry stakeholders and where we find the latest of technology and everything there food and beverage everything is there so i encourage you as different associations um to set a representative see what's going on talk to the industry players let your name out there be established i mean when you go there other countries are doing it why not the virgin island people let me tell you something and we're going to be proud that they said tonight in the caribbean if virginal isn't just this we're the premier the calling on us so we have to keep this product going we have to improve on it what authority they're doing their best down there they're making improvements on our airports and even our uh our ports or seaports they've been up at the west indian company same thing with the authority again in st john it's a rough time we're gonna get through this because at the end of the day product is going to be viable for all of us. Next year, we have a

total of 761 cruise calls on the Virgin Island.

0:31:12 362 at Waiko, 113 at St. Croix, 286 at Columbia and St. John. 80 of that, 286 is going to St. John. So it's improving. People want to come to the Virgin Island. When we go to Sea Trade, you're talking about experiences memories hospitality how we treat the people i'm i going to pause now and let my colleagues them chime in which one i mean i didn't attend secret um this year but clearly i echo everything that uh senator every was just mentioned i think you know my big thing is as an industry we need to grow we need to evolve and i think that we need to have a level of collaboration between the subject matter experts who are you in this audience and the policy makers so that we can get it right and that's really big you know my big um but i you know i just really want to do let's talk and i want to really hear from you i want to hear what you deal with on a daily basis what we can do from a policy standpoint to make your lives better more profitable and ultimately it benefits this territory so i think the real key here the secret sauce to our success is really uh taxi drivers i look forward to hearing from you uh yes um and just to give you some statistics that the citizen tourism commissioner was talking about the virgin islands is actually the third most popular port in the caribbean uh the bahamas is first because you all mexico is second and where it's third we get about in 24 1.7 million passengers and if you multiply that by the forehead fee of close to 18 dollars you know it's millions of dollars that the virgin islands government received revenue so this is obviously

0:33:28 a very important area to the entire virgin islands cruise passenger tourism Thank you. I wanted to go back to the comment that Senator Avery-Lewis made about C-Trade, and I wanted to add to it. C-Trade is a cruise line global conference that attracts cruise lines from the pacific the mediterranean the atlantic and atlantic and one of the things that we discussed yesterday which i want to sort of bring out to the forefront here is to encourage uh you to attend conferences such as this if not trade itself uh to be able to network and collaborate and sort of build relationships directly um with those cruise liners because currently i'm i'm assuming that most of you that do any um business with the cruise lines have to go through some sort of poor operation and in those cases you will receive a certain percentage of of whatever that is um for the tour or excursion that you offer so um one of the things that i believe my colleagues are going to chime down on a little bit later is the fact that many other taxi associations and other Caribbean nations attend C-Trade and unfortunately we do not have any representation at C-Trade and I believe it's important for us to begin our efforts in trying to attend C-Trade or other global C-Conferences or C-Conferences to network and build relationships for the taxi association.

0:35:21 Similar to last evening airing in St. John, we did talk about C-Trade and the importance of getting our taxi men and women involved in the conference. C-Trade is not just about traveling and people to come on board and learning from industry representatives one of the other components of the sea trade is the food and beverage i have attended sea trade for the past few years i always go outside of the conference to the food and beverage area which is located off to another site so this isn't just about you coming there but also for you to be ambassadors in that realm and to showcase the best that our virgin islands have to offer uh last evening and i'll do this evening again too i shared the dates uh based on google and most of us trust Google, the dates for the Sea Trade Cruise Global, which is going to be held in Miami in 2026, I want you to see these dates, is April 13th through the 16th of April. Sometimes that coincides with our St. Thomas Carnival, but it is a time for you to invest, a time you to invest, I have to say it again, invest in yourselves, our community, and the generations to

0:37:11 come here in the Virgin Islands, because we want to stay on top of this industry. We want to stay on top of this tourism industry that we all depend on. And I'm looking forward to the conversation, So I'll stop at that. So good evening once again. So besides visitors, transportation, one of the things that we're also concerned about is dependable transportation for our local residents. And we haven't heard much about that just yet, but that is a true concern as well, 12, especially in the district in which I hail from.

0:38:00 In the town hall meeting that we had when we asked how many of you actually provide service on the road east to west, after 6 p.m., we only had about three hands that went up. So that is a concern. So while we're here discussing our transportation industry, let's not just think solely on visitors, but think on our people as well.

0:38:31 You don't know, you know, when your taxiderm breaks down and you need one of your buddies to come and get you. But as we were discussing these numbers, while we were in St. John, and we heard 300 plus, to Crong Bay, 200 plus to Crong Bay, 300 plus to Waiko, 113 to St. Croix, and 80 to St. John. That's almost 850 ships to the territory. And like we were explaining to one of the drivers yesterday, although you hear only 80 and St. John, think about it. The other two hundred and something from Crown Bay and the three something from Waiko, they all aren't going to stay on St. Thomas. It's a boat ride to St. John. Ain't like trying to come to St. Croix for $400. Imagine almost cheaper to go to Miami round trip than to come between the islands. That is a problem and hopefully uh we can address that soon but it's like what is it the chicken before the egg or the egg before the chicken whatever the case may be the thing is is we need to get some hotels built on st croix that's one of the key things that's going to really encourage the airlines to come here

it's very embarrassing to see and i'm not ashamed to say it publicly because it have happened where you had a flight coming to st croix there wasn't like couldn't leave in a place with the people to go they sat there in the airport and then was even told you can't stay in the airport where you gonna go you know so we have some infrastructure issues that we need

0:40:24 to deal with but in meeting at the you heard a lot about ctrade we had some very very good meetings up there with cruise line executives and mainly uh royal caribbean who is showing a real interest in originality and st thomas and what we gleaned from them because we were asking them we want to know what your data is saying and remember they get all their feedback from who the passengers and that's what we wanted to know and the people really love virgin islands they want to come back to the virgin island we have some stuff that we need to to clean up as well some of the things that we gleaned from there was uh the visitor volume and scheduling particularly uh traffic days coordination with the port authority staggered pick up and drop off times to ease congestion one One of the good things that I like in the St. Thomas-St. John district is that a lot of you that stood up and said the organization that you're representing, you actually have a designated area where you're dispatched from. We need to see a lot more of these organizations across the territory.

0:41:49 Organized. Dressed. I love the dress that I'm seeing here. Those of you in your blue shorts, those of you in your yellow shorts, last night I saw a lot of red shirts. I mostly didn't recognize my buddy over there. He said, he's in his red uniform today. But when you stood up and say your name, I know exactly who it was. But also they're looking at traffic management and routing, and I'm maintaining my notes, what we took from them. I just tried to cut out a lot. They're talking about the traffic flow plans for high-volume days and coordination with the Cardinalis Police Department. Last night we had representatives from the VIPB there. They spoke about alternative route to avoid.

0:42:40 Customer service standards was a big one. Refresher training and professionalism and hospitality. safety, clear communication practices, greetings, bracing, and directions as to where people want to go. Safety is also at the top of the list. Everybody wants to make sure that the passengers are safe. We want to make sure that not only our visitors but our residents are safe as well. And under the safety aspect, we spoke about vehicle safety checks and inspection. This is where we need to be working with the Taxi Cab Commission to ensure that they're able to hire the number of inspectors or taxi enforcement officers that they will need to help in this event.

0:43:30 Proper signage in the downtown area, designating loans, etc. This is where we will be working closely with the Department of Public Works, Public Health protocols and emergency procedure and contact information and sharing that will be done through our department of health pricing transparency is definitely a problem enforcement of published taxi rates you can't have one set charging uh twenty dollars and somebody is coming in $45 and somebody is coming $60 a head. We need to reestablish a clear rate chart across the board. Of course, it will be different by district, but for St. Thomas St. John, you should have this.

0:44:27 Then technology and integration, you heard about us moving into technology, encouraging digital payment options uh how many of you travel everybody in here travel right how many of you just get a regular taxi most more than likely most of you when you get to the airport you jump in an uber or some kind of car service or something and even if you don't and you get into the regular yellow cab you have an option of paying cash or you utilize your car.

0:45:05 So let's not run from the technology. We need to also look at the use of dispatch apps or right coordination platforms, address infrastructure needs, establishing taxi stands and that's mainly in the island district of St. Croix, improved signage, even have restrooms not only for passengers but also for the drivers. And lastly environmental and cultural awareness where we're talking about educating visitors on island customs, our etiquette and our local highlights and definitely with regards to the environmental issue the anti-litter campaigns so that we can keep the place clean so that they can always want to come back when these cruise ship passengers uh leave as well we want them leaving with something good that they can remember in their mind that the next time they travel back to our territory then come in by about the plane so that they can stay here overnight again i just want to thank you guys and ladies i'm so happy to see so many uh female taxi drivers in here tonight as on st croix i think we only had two or one and then last night i only i only had two so i'm happy to see so many females and what we need to start working towards is getting more young people involved in this industry again thank you all so much and of course while there have been a lot of positive during the feedback sessions there have also been some challenges or some negatives and i have the awesome responsibility of sharing with you now some of those challenges and negatives that have been discussed during the feedback process of course they talk about decorum

0:47:03 instances where taxi drivers are having confrontation among themselves in front of the passengers that is a problem again you have to be able to reserve those type of commentary until it may be outside of the presence of the passengers and resolve your issues behind closed doors you can't be in the dirty laundry in front of the passengers reflect negatively And

that, again, is the industry. Organization is key. They look for organization. And I know we heard about independent here, but it's critical that you fall under someone of the umbrellas because, again, it's key to be informed and be organized.

0:47:49 So that is something that you need to consider. And under those organization, of course, because you have instances where they're gypsy cabs. And those gypsy cabs, again, present negatives because they're not falling under any umbrella and really don't have the directions of the organization to ensure that they're following protocol policies, rules, and regulations. In respect, the Virgin Islands is rich in culture and history. When you're having these discussions about the history of the Virgin Islands, we want you to be correct in what you're saying. I don't want you to talk about things that you don't know, and that's why it's important to attend the training because, again, there's misinformation. A lot of times, individuals do research to the district that they're coming, and when you tell them something totally different, you leave them a little bit befuddled and they don't understand what's going on and, you know, some challenges. Again, you don't want to be bad-talking the islands. Stay positive.

0:49:01 Stay on program. If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything. Don't bad-talk the islands. Don't just bad-talk one district from the next district, one island over the next island. That's very important because, again, this information is shared, is documented, is reported back to the industry and then we get the feedback i must say that most of it have been negative positive extremely positive but again these negatives are also mentioned we're in a fight here in the caribbean because all of the caribbean they have come and learned our industry and have mastered it so they've been very competitive it's important that we're able to shine and continue to grow this industry so that we continue to be the gem of the caribbean that we continue to describe all right and i'll be the premier and the leader so we have to do our own introspection and make sure that we're writing or whatever we're doing wrong also that again at the we could really continue to shine here in the caribbean we are putting a lot as a government and providing the resources monies in all various facilities um you know various ports so that we can continue to grow the industry from that perspective but it's very important our ambassadors do the tax drivers also play your part to make sure that we're moving this industry far thank you very much yes uh thank you you know everything my colleagues have said it we don't need to repeat but unity the organization of the taxi industry it's an industry it's not just because all of us need to be under an umbrella as an independent

0:50:58 senator i think you should have independent taxi drivers but when you talk about unity everything my colleagues say stand respect for each other respect for the islands respect for each organization in this industry this industry can survive this long because we don't have a good product we have a good product but it's easy to call down us i don't like these people i don't like that people we don't have some of these things we up on the side because it's so funny i live out of my life so in this room i wanted all this in the room so you know and when when you look around and you see the industry i don't want to be the oldest definitely one of the old but when you industry and you hear individuals who speak at the parents were in this industry and now we look at the industry to see the young faces if they didn't have a couple of these young faces in here the average age in here is 50 years old but because of the young blood we have in here shows again this is how you're going to build back the industry we don't get done without unity we gotta work together because one thing that wasn't said on ctrade i made sure i sat with you my cushion colleagues because st croix needs to be given some love and brought up as a part of the industry say john needs to be a part of the industry so let's not grab everything for ourselves and then walk away keep an open mind if somebody says something you don't like let's try to find an equal medium and fix it too much it's so easy to cost somebody off and turn your head let's walk on the unity that's what i took from the entire conversations

0:53:05 i see trade unity thank you good night again i ain't got much to say because i wanted to hear from your side i think this my colleagues and myself we had a lot to say and it's time for us to hear from the audience because your reason for being here is the reason for we being here to listen to what you have to say i i must sit back and listen because we can't fix problems unless we hear problems so i'm listening to some of the problems that they explained that associations have but now i want to hear what association fee that's missing good evening everyone um i want to be short less than 60 seconds i want to say number one based on what all my colleagues stated i agree with all of them but i want to add into a branding that's very important i see many of you in your uniforms i see some of you with your name tags that's critical you know why what my colleagues spoke of in terms of attacking different islands and territories in terms of even promoting other island destinations even though you're here working in this territory israel and when you have your name tag and report back you will know who and then the station president can leave with an individual i think that's important that's very important secondly um you guys are ambassadors for our territory and we appreciate you and we support you in that endeavor and i must say um this territory this um industry is close to me because my dad's been on taxi drive all his life basically so i kind of understand the industry i worked with him many times so i look forward to seeing what we can do to improve things in the industry and i have some suggestions also having moved forward with some of the comments i

heard

0:54:57 earlier thank you so much thank you thank you thank you colleagues for your input i think we are really covered a lot and we could get down to the crux of the meeting which is the open discussion that's what we're here for to hear from you and we have all the stakeholders here that we can provide answers and if we don't have answers we go go back and we come back and we have keep working at it till we bring some solutions i know why you want to hear from everybody yes this is a town hall meeting they say enough sanitarium okay just loosen up and yes respectfully but one thing i i'll say though just to repeat we may think that they ain't listening but they do be listening the tourists and even the residents you know i'm going to put in the big plug for the residents now because some night before was um lucky street and i had a lot of tour is there bingo night me i couldn't see you know you know i do that for spike to open this next spot if we get in the right platform if you look up their phone and order taxi i do that for spike but then here we go open the floor to all you recall me Okay, good evening, senators, distinguished administrative leaders from the various government departments and agencies that are represented here this evening, members of the various taxi associations and organizations if this is on facebook which by the way this is how i know about it because i happened to the one in st john last night and i said i had to be here this evening i am rashida francis and we're not an active taxi operator my family owns a medallion

0:57:24 my father has retired from operating his 25 to 30 years. Yet what I am advocating for tonight or some of what I am advocating for tonight still exists from the first time I remember hearing my father double say cussing and fussing in our living room as a little girl about and I told them damn dollar man. Yes, though it may not look that way, I am old enough to know that the first damn man was shouting, country for a dollar, country for a dollar. I was in 10 years at Charlotte and Mali High School.

0:58:12 And then we were hesitant to jump in the van because we were not . And the vehicle at that time was not marked. Just a little history from whence I came. In keeping brief, here are my talking points, suggestions, and recommendations. First, I wanna talk about the overall safety of both passengers and taxi drivers. In my opinion and my belief, both are equal in seriousness. My father started as a firefighter. I remember when Dow brought this bill to the Senate to advocate and strengthen things for taxi drivers. When my father decided to go full-time as a taxi driver the main concern in our house was he was going to return home safe every evening the same way police officers and him as a firefighter we worried because there was a point in time in my life when taxi drivers were being attacked and some of them what we used to call being gun booty okay so when we're saying that taxi drivers can't be found after five maybe some of the younger ones will take the risk but the older ones this is their history and things that have have not changed to where they are comfortable that if they are to encounter an issue. There is someone that they can call on. I heard last night in the town hall in St. John that there was reference about someone feeling that they were called the n-word and what transpired. I didn't see it. However, it reminds us that when Potter was our lieutenant governor, he had to

1:00:19 make a public statement at that time there was an individual flying some type of swastika flag in our waters and we couldn't figure out as a people what side who was right who was wrong he had to make a public declaration that that flag is not flown in our waters that is parody to how that individual felt when he believed he was calling inward our country is in arms and racially motivated We cannot continue to think that our taxi men, people dealing in this tourism industry, our churches and alike are separate and apart from what is going on in the United States.

1:01:04 You cannot just say, err on the side of turning a blind eye. You cannot just say, well, they come off a plane, they come off a cruise ship. That means they don't have a gun. That don't mean they don't have ammunition. No, it is the driver and the passenger. When you are faced with those things, your instinct is what kicks in. We have to focus on safety. And when I heard at certain parts of St. John, you can't even get service to this day in 2025. No, no, because you can't call for help. I'll end with that. Moving on, because I am very, I've been fighting this from, my father used to make me write his letters when he was a part of the Taxi Association, so this is why I'm still passionate today, okay? All right, moving on. There also needs to be serious discussion, and if needed, legislation on the ramifications of assaulting a driver. Especially those that are racially motivated and have an available place where incidences can be mitigated in real time, in the moment. Yes, we have the police, but I may not be able to get to the police if this thing is taking place in my van. And I'll tell you, my dad used to just drive people straight to the station, but back then they had a location in four winds i grew up in hidden valley that's no longer there and in the daytime it is hard to get parking and pull up here at the alexander farrelly complex

1:02:52 area to troubleshoot a situation and it gets more difficult at night okay keep that in mind all right next so I want saying this and I'm taking my time because I'm tired of the narrative that taxis don't pick up locals we do have taxis that pick up locals I will get to that later but the taxis that you all are referring to or that are referred to because I ain't pointing out nobody here we're talking about those are the taxi association at the end of the day this is their business if they don't feel safe enough or that they need the money enough whatever their reason is to not pick them up a local we need to find out

from them the why and solve that problem instead of continuously trying to force a circle into a square okay next the updating of technology I am of the opinion that all vehicles that are transporting passengers, not just how we define tourists, but passengers, should be required to have some type, and they're not associated with Vitran. let me say that part, should be required to have some type of GPS technology installed on their vehicles and or use some type of application to track and record their trips. This allows passengers to pay for their trips, pay for their bags, put in their origin, put in their destination, and know what the cost is up front.

1:04:38 In my opinion, it is tacky in 2025 to continue to ask people to post a sign in a van and on a safari. When it gets wet, that is a problem. Also, these signs are being made in English. We have people coming from all over the world. We also have locals that do not speak English but have to traverse these islands. need to be able to know the cost. All dollars are the same. I don't pay yen for my trip but the tourists pay US dollar. We all have the same currency. I also feel having this type of technologies put safety measures in for the driver. Put a safety tool in. I drove for Uber. I drove for Lyft. There is a safety feature there that tie to customer support. If something is happening in the middle of my trip, I push that and I can talk to someone immediately. So can the passenger. I have also used Uber where my driver was doing 90 miles an hour. I'm not going to argue with him. I told Uber. Uber had him pull off.

1:05:56 And because of the GPS tracking, it was no debate. They could see his speed. Okay. We continue to put the onus on the driver and it's not being solved it hasn't been solved since my dad was driving and i'm not telling you that my dad was always right i'm just saying it's time to stop beating a dead horse and try a new approach okay next i'm trying to move on but i really come here with this thing and what did all people say in my crack okay the way we define taurus and and i want to say this sincerely because i do not believe that this is anybody intent to be insulting okay i really believe that this is systemic And I also believe that when things began, it had a rationale.

1:06:58 But now we in 2025, we have to ask ourselves what is the motivation behind what it is we're trying to do. Here's what I'm thinking. I would like to see the dialogue be more inclusive of all passengers, including those who access the territory using other means outside of a cruise ship. For instance, if my aunt comes from Anguilla or Aruba to visit the VI, aren't they tourists until they specify otherwise? When I moved home back in 2008, after being away to college and things, got my master's, back then, the individuals used to come from the BVI to access Kmart and the mall and all those things.

1:07:50 And they used to use taxis to transport all the goods that they bought to take them back. But the way we define tourists, they wouldn't be considered, but they're spending money. OK? Next, I believe that our local definition may be rooted in bias and some discriminatory thinking. I'm not trying to debate or belittle anyone, because again, I believe this is systemic.

1:08:26 We look unconsciously at skin color, flight number, point of origin, and speech dialect to determine who we define as tourists. But again, I saw a young lady had a show with a Sabantan and he came because they were the promoters, they worked with tourism to make sure that he got bigged up. But we have a large population from his very island that travel here all the time. If a young couple coming from Dominica, the bats will ever want to come here for their, anniversary are they not tourists we have to change the way we think and this thing about a tourist coming um we the dollar needing the coming once doesn't have an impact that's not true because it's how much time the dollar circulates so when they spend with a local business that local business owner is the person that is driving the economics and we want the dollar to circulate as many times as possible so if they go to vendors plaza they drop the money there they pay the taxi they drop the money there but then those two people gonna pay wapa they're gonna buy food they're gonna pay via they're gonna buy clothes and they're too gonna take a trip hopefully to miami to go wherever or go back home that's what we want so the mindset i just want us to look at that and it's an internal question before it could become a legislative question

1:10:16 or a community question okay dollar taxis let me say this this i use dollar taxis very often and i use vitran today i took a dollar taxi from hidden valley to red hook because i was going to the vet with my dog an emergency on my way back and i have a little yorkie so i could have in my purse right um a tourist caucasian group came to me and the ladies who come to me she felt safe and she say miss i don't feel safe going with that taxi driver because it's unmarked what do you think now i was red hook i said well if you don't feel safe i agree with you even though she was with her partner and someone else because she told me the guy was her husband i said you all don't feel safe you see that guy over there in the red shirt he's a marked taxi and they have a whole taxi stand there go and tell them where you're going and they will put you in a marker and you will feel more safe and she called her husband she said the lady said she don't feel safe I don't feel safe let's go tell them let's go okay so even me I'm not a taxi operator but I have a responsibility to make sure that people are safe but I also understand what she was saying because when i travel to other places as a young woman i have the same concern tourist passengers are getting savvy the dollar taxi need to be up to the same standard and requirement as these beautiful individuals you know how you you um praise them for their dress we got dollar taxi coming out looking like they just roll out of bed and now they're doing is rolling the window down halfway

1:12:10 to get your money and give you a change and at one point i saw on social media a big announcement dollar taxi going up to three dollars who regulate that what input you have you understand so all of them need to come under the taxi commission we have to get away that taxi come from this thinking a taxi commission only regulates these beautiful people no if they're not under vitran they need to be under the commission and i want to go a step further because i don't want to take up all everybody's time the same way i as a business owner i am a consultant but i have to get approval from the fire department environmental health um irb before i could get to dcla persons that are operating passenger vehicles regardless of how you define yourself need to have some type of clearance mandated through the Taxi Commission, through the BMV, and through IRB, before they can get any certificate license from DCLA. It makes sure that monies come back so that these individuals don't come in front and say, we need money, we need, but we have in DCLA collected money for fines and fees and other things we have to close these gaps within the government and if it cannot be regulated that way then i suggest that the dollar vans go under vitran and be made to become subcontractors of vitran and have the vitran decal because we have people there they don't speak english i'm not picking on them they don't know our roads we're renaming our roads they're not been made to take classes at least us we could say oh i want to go down by the old u.s so somebody from here will know where that is but now that they're renaming the roads everybody that operate in a passenger vehicle need to take these classes and become familiar with our

1:14:19 communities you can't just be dropping people off where you think you got to know where our communities of our roads name you have to have that it starts there it's not just all the virgin islands history that is a part of the history moving on and this really is the last point okay we have children and seniors using these dollar vans i heard us talking about data from sea trade about the tourist experience and that is good and my heart is pleased that we are used that these things are data driven but we need the data from locals as to what the experience is because i know that there have been people ejected out of dollar vans because of the speed and the rate they're going it is embarrassing to see dollar vans be trying to beat out vitran from the Brightron bus stop and my question about do y'all help to pay to maintain that bus stop i'm not saying don't access it but you can create an accident the way you all are carrying on and driving but yet when it's a tourist day you hear people complain that they can't get access to the same dalavan so we got to look at these things also i used to volunteer with family resource center years ago and i remember clear cases of young children young people being taken now for the beating part thinking they're going in a dollar taxi to go home and that didn't did there was other things happening before they made it home we don't have a school bus system

1:16:10 that can accommodate all of our children so we have to put things in place that these children are safe in these vehicles everyone that transport passengers should be again made to clear themselves through dcla like i i said before i mean through taxi commission bmv also uber require and lift requires background checks okay they run your license and then they do a background check on you also you have so many customer complaints before they shut you down so yes there's a pros to it but if we are talking about going to using apps and things like that i believe that moving forward everyone that is carrying passengers need to have a background check in closing my dad just made 80 in September. And my brother has inherited his medallion. Let's find a way for him to come home safely every, when he decides to start driving a taxi. Let's find a way for him to come home safely every evening, just as my dad was able to do. Thank you for the time. Thank you, thank you.

1:17:45 I'll stage your name one more time. Oh, Rashida Francis. Thank you. Next. Well, I don't know, one second before we go to next. I don't know if the LCA or anybody over there wanted to respond or anything? Yeah, absolutely. I just want to thank Ms. Francis because I think she mentioned a lot of things that have been on our hearts collectively absolutely she need a round of applause because i think you hit it right on the head and i appreciate you speaking from your heart but these are things that we talk about and we go in a car and we say man we need to do this and that but we never come in a room together and really have that hard discussion and to me The way we're going to improve is to be honest about the things we need to improve on.

1:18:46 And the things that we do well, we own it, you know, and be proud of it. So I appreciate everything that you said. And one thing I would say, boy, I hope the taxi driver is paying attention because Ms. Francis says she's a consultant. So I'm going to give her a little plug because you're going on. And I appreciate you. But one of the things she made so much points, and again, I wanted you all to be able to speak, but I would say this. Safety is a very big concern, and we know we talk about enforcement, but here it is again. We talk about being a collective, working together, because we have VIPD, we have Taxi Commission, we have DLCA, we have you all in the room as well.

1:19:35 and you had some very good suggestions about having a tracker system um you said gps and all of that stuff but um i'd like to invite you to have a discussion along with myself an executive director and assistant commissioner graham because i think you have some very valid points and you know we can make ourselves available but i i absolutely applaud you because i mean you see see the sentiment in the room and everybody seems to be in agreement that safety is

is not just a big concern it's a necessity to address and we have we you know we often put the earnest on the driver you know you all have to fix it you all got dressed this way you gotta do this you get but safety it is almost something that you cannot function if you don't feel safe and I and i kind of agree many drivers have come to us and tell us they don't drive past 5 30 because they're concerned for the safety you know and it's a community problem it's not just a taxi driver problem i remember when the bread truck used to go around and blow the hand and you run out for bread you can't see the bread truck anymore and some things we take for granted you know and you guys are such a a regular commodity for us that sometimes we don't think about stuff like that the safety and and also do you brought up the concern in saint john where they said they there was no connectivity in certain areas that's a big deal and i agree i don't want to be no me i ain't a taxi driver and i panicking if i can't call and say i need help you know so we have to remember taxi drivers ain't superman and you ain't got no superpowers and so we have to be

1:21:27 concerned about your safety and so i applaud you again and i'm gonna be quiet now because i know you all have a lot thank you very much thank you next person senator you're rushing me no man good evening good evening everybody keith marshham i work for best taxi and run my own little thing peanut taxi my concern is vendors plaza saturday i mean i've seen it many times but saturday when they had a lot of rain and we had a shipping vendors plaza underwater that's a big safety issue and that's not the first thing happening years now i love the new stuff they put on it's very nice but please if you have to help us address that issue i don't know if any other drivers agree with me but vendors plaza underwater so i could i could take that one real quick i know they're trying to mitigate that problem when they that's in a plan to fix when they're doing the uh extension of the veteran drive project okay all of that area have to be most of the area is going to be digged up as well they could please do it when season half because we got fire ship in here and they want to walk down there and give us tickets and they have a big safari like for instance today i did at downtown i will pull up here to put out my passengers police behind you don't stop there but yet where is supposed to be designated to park it got seven private cars parked right there and the police behind me try and give me a ticket i can't put out my passengers and frustrating the passengers they're behind you with a little mini car heap of noise so i tell them well hey you don't got put tickets on the safari mind moving until i done so he leave me say oh it was this time i I say, ain't about this time. There's supposed to be a taxi stand,

1:23:16 but you've got seven private cars parked there. Up in 4th question, look nice now, but you're empty. Make them park up there. That's what they fix it for, right? We don't have no place to put off. Most of us drive safaris, big bus. When we pull up, we got to be rushing. And the same thing you are touching on with the electronic. I don't accept payments on my phone. I don't accept Venmo cards and all that stuff, right? But if I have 25 people on my safari, and it's 10, 12 different couples, and this person pay me $6, boom. I try to collect $6 from you, $6 from you, $12 from you. I can't do it in 10 seconds. So we need a little more space of the, we need a place to pull up, please. Thank you.

1:24:05 That's one of my little issues. Thank you very much. Other than that, thank you all very much. i'll see you after i have a question for you after okay yeah my phone number is still work thank you anyone else i mean good night again first of all the first thing i'm going to say senators are glad for this because it's really needed but my first my first congratulations is to the taxi commission over there the director i ain't meet you yet but hey boy yo but you know i'm gonna tell you what glad for you and i'm glad what you're doing this is the first time in donkey years that i could stand and say a taxi class has passed now they don't say what they want for me but i don't really care i come from a father that back in the 70s about 1970 four years old i with my father taxing i could tell you when the car i see them coming sebastian i come and i want to be my father that's the other tax when i'm going crazy cow and point catch up and egg i said daddy i gotta be crazy and that was my dream to become a taxi man and i watch today i come a taxi man and i watch my son and daughter when they were four five years old coming downtown with me i'm going to taxi i got son that could take up a map and do an island tour or show the passengers better than half of them right now and he coming to join your class coming up at the second class and

1:25:55 so happy in a way i generation to generation like double but you know but you know what's so good but this i can tell you this is to are you to the senators i which is the governor delegate everybody listening are you need to i don't give money to everybody but that young lady day send shane benjamin gun i'm gonna give her credit shane ain't get to complete the job me blaming the governor love the governor but that young lady here need a chance and she need are you support she can't do it without eye support i don't keep it real you don't have no inspector from before carnival so there's no law enforcement to stop them what driving any kind of car coming white coat dark even me before we get a chance me carry on Raymond to run that dark generation to generation a answer to nobody answer to the three of us that's opportunity not a lot of younger that's why have my son trying to come in like her brother my best friend Rinaldo is happy Rinaldo is happy for that father turning it over to him I used to come down from being a team job I be real when before I saw something I could be like horse and horse late but what try to to say is this. Just listen good. We be real. And listen good.

1:27:42 And this is real. Right now, right now, we are in a vorge of, and everybody can like a joke, we are in a vorge of a characteristic thing going to happen in St. Thomas unless she get help and get enforcement officers not next week, right away. Because listen to good. all of them i don't care what country they come from like she said they're jumping up putting on slippers down greenhouse in a raffle you're going taxing without plates or throwing and fat plate the death accident happened with an illegal taxi we had the legal one the government is going to get mashed up i'm telling you so i really after that you are this first help this young lady here this commissioner give her what she needs to have our face also it look mr harry i tired run behind them i can't ask waiko i can't ask jared because they are wow i be real man mr no i got man outside yoga parking gypsy outside you're going to send them in between delhi deck when we first take over waiko duck i went to the arab i mean to the indians and as he said he said use the first person in 30 years coming access what change could be you know they tell me they're tired of the drivers coming in the store asking they're shopping but asking for taxi and fighting when me kerry and raymond take over i come supervise on the ground my drivers can't go in if they're going there they're going for a month real talk inside it's for shopping like Mr. Samtake to say, showing what we are bought. You don't go in asking for taxi

1:29:46 and fighting where passengers are trying to shop. That's number one. No, come to the side now. This is good. I deserve this. Raising a taxi medallion. St. John, St. Croix, the numbers are three different prices. It needs to raise because you care a medallion my father back in them days buy a medallion for 25 dollars you go into a bank now and your model is probably worth 25 or more and they only give you 20 000. it needs to raise number two look me talking and saying but i tell everybody right now they wear the crucial billing i don't care what island you're from there is not enough taxis or cars to accommodate what is crucial bringing and no island we in new york you're bringing uber you're bringing right at that right right a share straight up we just get raised in tariff in over 25 years you're bringing uber and share ride share i mean you're paying one price for four people then you're killing the tariff you're killing the tariff and then guess what now hold on let me finish you're killing the tariff if you're allowed to come in your model then i will say son you got to go no so if you're going to do it the correct way now good man love judy whitley she had a plan at one time you want to bring in the uber Out of hell, right?

1:31:25 Bring them in and a medallion too. Bring them and a medallion too. Now, shut up, boy. Now, next thing. Now, this thing with limo. This thing out of control. Everybody going to the states, kind of like this and that. But when they come back now, they ain't going down by dlc or taxi commission they point it at the road they point out the old website and people taking the website they come and listen hey from the airport you are my limo you are my this and that two hundred dollars at the end of the year they paying that tax they paying the better slicing their money going home tax free and we who's legal what we again now this thing of like i said people operating without a license if i you go down in the daytime and see the type of session going down in front of greenhouse the session in red hook in the night time the session crumb and white coat that when they got shit i ain't taking no bread from nobody but there's a correct way to do it now for me the test is taking land but she needs more help make little less to help with more money tourism and limo tests happen faster straight up next thing now the most important part before finish right these roads these roads when you buy these new safari and i thank you once again

1:33:26 for giving the drivers that saying before look they got 2 000 and you want this and that I applied the legislature for passing the bill that they could go and buy a new front to look good to update. That is the best thing I ever do. But last and most, listen to me, and I'm going to end the story here. You see how we taxi drivers? We need to stop fighting one another. I remember this years ago. I ain't about this much, I ain't know. Legislature was giving the taxi man a problem. them but every taxi man and association get together pack up in the parking lot put two private car march government hill and in less than two hours we get what we want we're going to union are we making the same dollar stop fighting one another we get a tariff raise i understand things hard in the states but what you ask the legislature to get tariff rates 35 40 for island tour are you still doing 25 when you go to the gas station you can buy a tire they will tell you hey i'll give you a break maybe you buy four tires i'll give you extra ah you wake up smell the coffee see what's going on best taxi vi tax independent i don't care what it is you see that man the red hook where he is where the president we got he good love him a lot yeah he used to disagree hate one another but i with everything is i don't want to read the show because i didn't get too much politics i i valve too deep we need to stop fighting one another but last thing taxi board president you don't know me much your aunt rita that was my cousin father was my uncle when your mother was your mother say i meet pascal she tell you and the board needs more taxi man than people on the board that don't know the industry because when you don't know the industry you make wrong decisions

1:35:47 uh commissioner no not the commissioner director hell of a good job keep it up and i will support your hundreds senators good night and thank you and i hope you really listen to what i say but especially what double data say thank you mr pascal i i think you set up yourself good enough no you have contacts but uh you i i like your points as well but there's one thing um i have a question since you you spoke about the some of the conflicts and tough wars in in certain areas

amongst taxi drivers and even those who are not established taxi drivers the established taxi organizations here how many of you have exists existing uh franchise agreement so like at the port authority uh they will have franchise agreement with which which taxi uh they should have one at waiko etc so you're with va taxi where's your franchise agreement with the airport and any place else okay so you so VA taxi have an established one with Port Authority and East taxi with Blighton terminal okay so I mean Blighton terminal will be port authority too correct okay so what i'm gonna ask you all to do though is just make sure that your franchise agreements are up to date because i was looking at a couple of them and i i see some that that seems to be expired so just just look at it and that should also help

1:37:49 you with some of the conflict that you're talking about in certain areas but if you see something that's wrong i still encourage you to report it what dl ciega police the vipd dp narga police as long as it's against as long as it's against the law you need to report it so then report it even through the uh commission the taxi commission office and we will talk with them so that they can make sure that they have a direct communication that if they need that assistance from vipd or one of the other law enforcement agencies that they can get that assistance because even the port authority have their offices as well thank you for that taxical commission in biana taxical commission so they don't come so remember when you guys need to Remember when you call 9-1-1? No, 9-1-1 is an emergency number.

1:38:55 So if it's not an emergency, maybe I could see them telling you that. So that's why I'm suggesting if it's something pertaining to the taxi drivers that you see is not going properly, contact the commission office and hopefully we can get them hooked up with the police department or one of the other law enforcement agencies. and if it's something under any one of the ports they can also have that agreement with the port police as well okay but somebody need to address it all right i once again i'd like to say director you did a good job i've been encountered with you twice and the last one was jesus christ help us but you're good okay keep up the good work senators please thank you for the budget what she needs so she could get the job done because she's doing a great job the young lady was talking about dollar taxi see that every taxi whether it's a dollar camera taxi man all of us are gonna get every year we gotta get our police record our driving record and most of all our tax clearance letter so no matter how much you say taxi man don't pay taxes we might not pay all we're paying something one good thing tonight we're getting some honesty my boy okay we're getting some honesty out there no no me i don't have my taxes because i don't do excursions so everything for me not coming My statement was to what was said in the Tonghalin St. John last night that there are I think limousines or fee-for-hire is the title, vehicle for hire, that are getting licenses through dcla and then they're charging them fines and i think they also mentioned that the the person that

1:41:02 owns the right chain st croix confessed that he's trying to be open and honest and he is paying fines to dcla so my thing is that can solve part of the problem of them needing money because i am not necessarily um trying to protect or circumvent the role of this the legislature but you can't get grape wine from a rock the money has to come from some way you cannot be in dcl and i'm not saying they are doing it i'm just commenting on what was said if dcla is collecting these fees then a portion of the money i would think as an everyday person would go back to the taxi commission first of all i know a lot of taxi drivers my father was 120 bucks on the business to me and i carry it out now but i know a couple of taxi drivers in there for years a vehicle for hire whether it's limousine or taxi used to be on the taxicab commission so since when that change the bullet who changed it so is you to blame then not you caution only about the legislature okay oh okay don't worry that's something that we're revisiting because it should be uh it should include limousines as well that's a vehicle for hire yeah i mean but it do cause a problem we just we we were waiting to to comment so we might be all over the place right now but i know that you brought up about um coverage from vipd so i just wanted to make you aware that we collectively the board and the executive director had discussions with vipd to make sure that we have the added

1:42:57 support um in the absence of the uh officers on the taxi commission and they did reach out to the office today and they um assigned some officers to give us some support in the interim of bringing on um taxi commission officers i wanted you to be aware of that and um the executive director could give a little more information about how you could get some response if you have a emergency or some kind of concern so i just wanted to share that um especially responding to miss francis's concerns regarding safety uh the virgin the taxi cab commission has been in communications and in a collaborative effort with the department of tourism and vipd as well and our idea was to launch a safe ride campaign and it was in keeping with the idea that tourists and residents alike would be able to recognize a safe ride or authorized taxi operator and vehicles so that we could at least ensure that so we want to play our part we have put the ideas on the table we have a draft campaign flyer and notification already um completed we're just working with in agree in agreements with also vipd we know they're short staff so they're a little slower in response but we are working in collaboration with them we are also going to be working with their pio to have announcements throughout the territory and specifically targeted at our tourism package and market and we are truly concerned about the residents as well we're aware of the concerns in the greenhouse area the campaign targets hot spots

1:44:56 hot spots throughout the territory to include red hook with our eastern team weico greenhouse the taxi the taxi stand concerns in the vendor plaza areas we've actually had conversations with vipd and the officers came by to clarify the language regarding who actually enforces the taxi stands that is actually the taxi stand parking areas that was the specific concern concern from best taxi peanuts as we know him so in that regard uh vipd it's actually enforced by the vipd the commissioner the commissioner has the right to designate those stands solely for taxi taxi drivers and to actually enforce it it typically is dependent upon the amount of visitors we have in the territory at a specific time we are going to readdress that with um the commissioner of vipd and hopefully make that as an annual standing enforcement not just seasonal so we are working on several things for the community thank you thank you and just just for clarification because i know you made a comment about the board i don't choose the board members however currently we have um The majority of board members are taxi operators right now. I'm assigned from the tourism department, and we also have a designee from DLCA. But besides that, everybody else is a taxi operator. Okay, but the appointment to the board comes from the governor.

1:46:57 Okay? Yes, you have to. Thank you. so thank you I think that moments like these actually allow sort of leaders to emerge and really appreciate your voice and clarifying some of the points and raising some of the issues I just want to express I heard it stated about fees that were being or fines that were being charged the DLC actually works in collaboration with the Taxi Cab Commission I know that there's a concern about the availability of officers but in the past the officers would contact the LCA when they made observations of violations that they felt filed under our jurisdiction and we would then take up the challenge of either issuing a citation and then following up at appropriate hearings to be able to once they have because they would get due process so they would have hearings and then we would enforce those um those fines but there's no fines collected for violations of taxi um concerns those would fall on the dlca so as you rightly said somebody some in some individuals were granted technology license to develop applications and in that they were advised that they could not operate and so if they decided to operate we have in the past granted or issued citations but those weren't vehicle for hire citations were operating outside the scope of their license which is clearly within the dlc framework our goal was to try to encourage the technology advancement throughout the industry and on many occasions when those individuals who

1:48:52 approached us about the concept of ride share what we did is we said contact the taxi organizations contact and talk i actually worked together with um some of these individuals to work with taxi operators and taxi associations to have those conversations and provide the technology that would allow them to uh see their heels wherever they were throughout the islands to implement that kind of technology and that's what we're doing we're not in the business of stopping people from cup from operating we're looking for broader and more active entrepreneurs within the market and that i'm going to tell you is a positive things these are local virgin islanders who are interested in bringing their knowledge back to the u.s virgin island so that we can be a better and more efficient uh business climate so thank you very much i appreciate your sentiments This is the last quick comment, and we actually advertised for our three enforcement officers for the territory, and we're hoping to onboard additional officers as funding becomes available.

1:50:01 Just real quickly, I heard on more than one occasion that there's funding that's requested for the Toxic Commission. I want to say that they're properly funded at this time. the additional money that they've requested is for software upgrades and for some other ancillary stuff that they wanted to do. But right now they have positions available. What we need to do is encourage our community members to really join the Taxi Commission and law enforcement, go through the peace officer's training. But there is positions that's available, and they do have funding to accommodate those.

1:50:35 Who's next over here? Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Mazin Mohamed. i represent vi taxi and myself now you said changes we need to make changes yes changes is good and also changes is bad now if you like look what's really going on by the cruise ship by the airport majority of those tourists are not going towards the taxi driver yes we're getting a lot of tourists. But if you look at a water taxi, they're taking a big portion. If you look at a sky ride, they're taking the next big portion. And you're looking at the limo services, you go down to the airport, you get all kind of limo services like red hospitality, which we know is underneath the West End, but we're running under. It's always a loophole. They're picking up most of the passengers from the airport and don't need a taxi license okay so one guy can own close to a hundred cars and pay drivers 10 to 15 dollars an hour which a taxi one medallia is one car now to us that's not fair you know you're saying you want to bring uber but where's the job so uber because most of them are going on water taxi most of them are going on sky ride and most of them are going with limos or other type of excursion you keep taking taking from the taxi right now you have airbnbs that have rentals i mean car rentals but don't have to apply a business license because they are airbnb so they're pocketing that money tax-free you have car rentals we are competing now that is competing with taxi driver where we cheap cheap cheap prices

1:52:41 now the thing about taxi drivers yes we do need to update a little few things but as a government and the senators we do need to update in the system itself because you have a lot of tourists here come down they have Zelle right who Everybody knows Zelle. But we cannot get Zelle because you need a stateside checking account. Why do we need a stateside checking account if we are U.S. Virgin Islands? Now, we have Venmo. I work with Venmo.

1:53:18 I work with PayPal. But most of these tourists coming down with Apple Pay or Zelle. But that's not our fault. Overhead is not up to date to that. And that's what we need to fix first. before you fix the taxi drivers and i had a whole paper but then i threw it out you know i say you and i forgot the main thing miss smith the director best director there is i mean how many taxi drivers saying good thing about that young lady things is moving not If they lose a key, it's shut down for three days just to get a maintenance guy, okay?

1:54:01 With Ms. Smith, things is moving, the younger generation is coming in, and that's the thing we got to look for too, the younger generation. Taxi business is the only business that some of these children, when they finish high school, can't afford college. This is the only business that they could come into and be their own boss, not go working for somebody underneath Uber to take a percent from their hard work. You know, that's not fair to them.

1:54:42 We have to look for the future of our children's children. That's why I say good things. I mean, some things are good, but some things are bad, too. Not all changes are good. We need to stop looking at the states because the states have millions of people. This island is only 32 square miles. You imagine you put Uber, look at the traffic now. With Uber, it's going to be worse. The crime rate is going to raise. And who's going to take the responsibility of that crime rate? Any one of the senators? No. So I had a tourist come to me. She told me, you know what she told me? You know what I love about this island? I don't want to knock Puerto Rico.

1:55:29 But knock Puerto Rico. Because they come down to the island because it's so simple. It's so nice. They don't see them skyscrapers. You know, they see how we know each other as a family. I know majority of people. The one reason Pascal loses his voice is keep shouting. you know that's the beauty of the taxi business but when you come out uber driver it's just an app to sign in you don't know the drivers but taxi drivers we have to go class with each other we have to take a test with each other we have to make presentations don't know how to deal with the tourists uber don't provide none of that and you i have an arm with the list of stuff what is going on with these limo drivers you have regulation for limo drivers am i correct you have a supposed to be a dive a diver no it's not supposed to um no i mean like they're supposed to be in the a vehicle that is supposed to have something, a divider. Yes, a divider is supposed to have a bar, is supposed to have a TV and captain chairs. Am I correct? None of them vehicles have captain chairs, okay? All of them, it's just like taxi. They just put one simple TV, no bar. I have a cooler, that's my bar. I don't have a sink with that. That's my, I put some ice, that's my bar. And you know what? Underneath that one license, I could have 10 vehicles. That is not right. You're killing the whole system. Yes, the medallia do need a raise because it'd been the same price for so long. But my father, he was a school bus driver

1:57:28 and then he started selling clothes house to house. They used to call him Johnny, and then became a taxi. You know what I mean? Yeah, Johnny the Taxi. Me, I went into taxi business at first. I'd be like, man, I'm going to walk up to nobody and say, taxi, taxi. But then, when you get to do it, and you get to meet these, you know, people like Knight, Pascal, Kerry, everybody in the room, Miss Smith, and the senators, but also the tourists. when you get to talk to them know about them get the feedback you know that's the thing about st thomas taxi and that's what the tourists like about us uber you're not gonna get that same quality no you're not gonna get that sharing quality because you know what he's just doing it for the job in and out he'll be as friendly oh you i mean you watch tic tac you see how them Uber driver to treat them people. And that's what we don't want here. And that's what the tourists don't want. If you speak to them tourists, that's what they don't want. And by you bringing Uber, you're taking away. You keep taking away from the taxis. We don't have the water taxi. We don't have the sky ride.

1:58:48 We don't have these car rental. We don't have the Jeep, the Jeep tours. We don't have these Airbnb that renting cars. No Airbnb calls taxis now. Now you can rent an Airbnb and get a car rental right there, tax-free. They don't need no business license. They don't need no car rental license, nothing like that. And then you have these gypsies all over. The people who really argue this is gypsies with the taxis because you have no police officer to enforce it. The Taxi Commission really need more police officers, like what Pascal said, as tomorrow. Because these gypsies don't care. In front, I'm standing by the greenhouse. I'm a taxi driver. He's gonna tell people, taxi. This one lady came to a gypsy, and I watching it from far. She's a local, she wanted to go mahogany run. You know what the gypsy, and he got a small minivan.

2:00:00 You know what he told the lady? That's a taxi driver. I told him, you serious? I had to take her because as a taxi driver, I'm obligated. These limos, they don't take no locals. They only take in tourists. These gypsies only taking tourists. We as taxi drivers are obligated to take all. But you don't look at the limos, you don't talk about the limos, you don't talk about the gypsies because they don't have no license. They don't care. So that's what we need to think about.

2:00:40 Keep St. Thomas local. Keep authorities, stop looking at states. We need to stop that. That's millions of people, man. This population is wild. I don't know if, I know last time I know it was 55,000. I don't know if it raised to 65. Then we went up 10 more, 20 more thousand. No wonder the fuller prices went up. You understand? Dharma, if we bring over, it's gonna be cars, chaos, traffic, we need to be rushed with the decision we make. I mean, look at these gambling machines. we said the gambling machine is a good idea invested in an island one person can run a hundred machines a hundred machines so how many jobs can he employ from that only one person to collect the ticket and be the bartender now if we i think and trust me the machines put down a lot of family. Them gambling machines destroyed the island. A lot of people lose their houses, lose everything. Yeah, he is one of them. Now, I mean, I even tell people, instead of those machines, we should have opened a casino. Yes, it's bad just as the machines, but you would have created more jobs you wouldn't need bartenders you don't need waitresses you don't need scrappy you wouldn't need dealers you know these machines don't create jobs it destroy jobs destroy people lives all right yes i really appreciate the passion i try and get to everybody because i

2:02:34 have a heart okay no problem okay we have i have a hard stuff at it so i'm trying to get to everybody so we at least the senators will respond or the people in you know okay well thank you everyone for listening yeah and mr knight thank you very much for your points yes thank you thank you mr chair and it's so nice to hear that miss melissa smith the new executive director is being big up i want to um follow up on a question for mr pascal and mr aaron um one sec okay can everyone please put your phones and uh right okay thanks okay um you mentioned the tours i remember when i was a night auditor at frenchman's reef um tropic tours a guy patrick was running it used to do a big operation um true tourism are we still promoting those where you get the vouchers for the hotel guests or is the individual taxi associations that does that and then the other question uh for mr pascal and also mr muhammad um basically the proposal is i have the bill for the taxi medallions it's somewhere um probably to 75 to maybe 105 000 can i see a show of hands of the taxi drivers who are actually in favor because it's it's being pushed right now um the banks are telling us it's bill number 36-0108 yes the the bill is right now at 75 000 but i'm in discussion with the chair and some of the banks where it should be even more and we just want to make sure that what we're doing is what is supported

2:04:27 by the industry i was i see someone i raised in my hand for this taxi medallion to go up to seven you know why 75 000 these days jesus christ i thank god my father was able to give me a medallion and my father give me another medallion that's crazy price 75 000 which young man are they gonna be able to buy a medallion for 75 000 come on man man i stop it that's ridiculous seventy five thousand dollars man pascal you talking foolishness but seventy five thousand dollars we won't be respectful we're going to be respectful we're going to be respectful We're going to be respectful.

2:05:22 Please, let's be respectful. Please, I beg in. Thank you, Mr. Petty. Hi, good evening. My name is Jermaine Petty. I am under the flag of VI Taxi, as well as being independent as well. To my friend Aaron, I'm going to tell you, $75,000 is chump change. I pay for one of those vans out there, $78,000. Okay? $78,000. You go to the bank, you make a business plan, and you finance it through the bank.

2:05:54 The bank makes money. Senators, we need a Lemon Law for the commercial industry. We don't have no protection, because as we drive those vehicles off those lots, we take exactly what we got, and we're in trouble. We need help, because the dealership, we need help. we need um guys out there that knows how to repair these vehicles they're bringing these vehicles in and the minute we try to bring a vehicle from china or try to bring a vehicle from foreign they block us my one of my friends in vehicle gets stuck in tatola because custom wouldn't let them allow to come in here from china area so i'm just saying help us in that department along with roads so recently i'm senator novel francis jr and myself at a real in-depth meeting with dlc and i would like mr graham just to expound and i just answer you why we have in store because we had an issue to where individuals were carrying their vehicles whether it's a bus or a car to these dealerships because one person really owned all of these dealerships and they wasn't getting no you know for months the dealer have your car and you are rent a car and all kind of things so things like that we will exchange a conversation with but i'll allow mr graham just to to respond and thank you very much okay i just want to finish really quickly really quickly um follows my thought um the raise of the medallion i want to really get to a hundred grand sounds great it sounds great because i'm gonna tell you we are ambassadors of these islands we gotta stop thinking like a third world country this is a fish in a pan we are we're frying right now And if we're going to eat, let's eat good. Let's eat good.

2:07:45 Because when we come out and we dress, we dress presentable. We represent presentable. And when we leave them, we leave them presentable. Okay? We are ambassadors. All right? So I lose my thought on certain points. I really wanted to get across. That's a lot of deals. Ms. Francis touched base on a lot. Thank you. mr graham please testing all right very very um the excellent uh statement and i think um a very informative one uh individuals many individuals don't really realize that the lemon law really doesn't apply to commercial vehicles government-owned vehicles etc it is for you as a as as a regular consumer making a purchase of a vehicle with regular usage it would apply there would be if if there is a will

to make that modification and some studies that could go into understanding the different uses of the vehicle and i think that that's where i think the concern was that commercial vehicles are used differently and um but i'm not making an excuse for it i just we as an executive what we do is the law exists in a particular way and we um we enforce it so just as if you were a business making a complaint against another business the dlca wouldn't entertain your your complaint because we don't deal with business to business that would be something that you'd have to take to court um and so senators if if there is a will to address the the lemon law in that way then perhaps there could be some some um work there

2:09:45 uh good evening again emerson knight vi taxi vice president i heard a couple of things tonight that i want to touch on and the first thing is um i heard somebody said that they don't have no taxi that pick up at um at night and i know the fact that my drivers uh picks up one two all the way down to four o'clock at night because i have a radio sometimes i take in my house and i hear my drivers on the road sometimes i'm wondering why they don't go home we also have although we have based at the airport we have different places that we have drivers like over haven site we have some drivers at um yet haven we have drivers at blue beds we have drivers in the country we have at red hook and sapphire so usually when somebody calls in about five minutes usually a taxi is there to pick them up so i don't i can't talk about the other associations but i know my drivers pick up people all through the night especially one of my favorite drivers i'm wondering why she don't go home okay because uh she'd be on the road from six in the morning and sometime at 12 o'clock at night they're still here in esther so that i know i don't know what the other drivers i know what the associations but they probably should get involved in it to try to help the locals and the tourists alike another thing um i think we should develop like an app whereas You know, all the associations get together.

2:11:39 And I hear the young lady there, I don't know what her name is, Frances? She made some very good points. And I want to piggyback on something she said about having this GPS chaka in vehicles. We could know where these vehicles are, especially at night. And if all of the associations could get together and have a chaka and have an app, whereas when somebody calling the closest person to the the um the job the location pick up no matter who association it is i think we association like pascal is a very good friend of mine not because he worked for best taxi carry in the back is a good body of mind okay we good and also this This thing about, oh, he worked for Best Taxi and I worked for VA Taxi, I don't get involved in that.

2:12:35 We are all the taxi drivers, and we all should work together to make the associations good and make the Virgin Islands great. Thanks. OK, good evening, everybody. Good evening. This is not my first rodeo. I think all of you all of them know me. Everybody know me. So first thing I want to address, Senator Gittins, you asked about franchise agreements. I don't know.

2:13:15 I know VI Taxi, AAA, ATS, Eastern Taxi. We are on port authority properties. And also down at Crong Bay. No, buses at Waiko, they are under Waiko. Those agreements was given out in 2012. That's when the miraculous sleeping with the limousine occurred. And that's what brought us to this point. But those agreements was for five years. We are on a month-to-month thing right now.

2:14:02 The last time I was speaking to the director about any agreements or anything, which and I went there to talk about having us being our thing. As you know, VI Taxi, Eastern Taxi, all of us, We've been through a lot of rodeos, and we have since hashed out a lot of different things that have been going on. VI Taxi, at one point, I know many of you may know, had took Eastern Taxi to court for infringement at their concession. It's been about 20 years going.

2:14:47 After that, they end up taking Eastern Taxi, Ritz-Carlton, Port Authority, the whole shabang they took to court. And that was a court case. At one point in time, the judge ruled that you must have a prepaid vulture. I'm going through some history, so here's your notes. must have a prepaid vulture to pick up at any port between uh it was not at any port between airport and red hook that was a judge ruling now i believe that ruling should be still stand but as it stands right now everything is free and open so anybody could come and pick up however they would choose. That's what's happening. So when I asked about it and I asked about things, the return to me was we must get ourselves ready and set up because these ports will be going up for bid. So I know in the future it used to be it go through the Senate and that's where we got the franchise agreements. I don't know what have changed since then. So I would implore you all to look into that and find out if we can get our franchise agreement back so we could know that we are on solid ground. That's why I wanted you to come back in because you asked the question and I wanted to explore that with you. But I do have other things I wanted to say, but you could respond and let me.

2:16:36 So I wasn't running away. I had to use the little boys. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Some of us have to do that. I know you're not running. But so I was doing some research, and like I said, Act 7452 speaks to the franchise agreement. And specifically, it did say that it's for five years initially. This franchise shall commence upon the first day of the month following the acceptance of this franchise and shall continue for a period of five years or until terminated by the Virgin Islands Port

Authority, which it wasn't terminated pursuant to this act, provided however that the franchise shall have the option to renew the franchise for an additional five-year period subject to the provisions of this act. So this tells me that Basically, from 2022, you're probably at the month-to-month.

2:17:33 But we're going to discuss it with the Port Authority to see what we need to do to update the law. OK, thank you very much. Now, a lot have been said. Ms. Double, you hit some nail in your hair. You hit them right on the head. But yeah, I have some question for DCLA. I got to get to the app, but I got some question for DCLA. DLCA.

2:18:07 DLCA. Because you could give DLCA the mic. I want to let it dialogue. With dialoguing, right? I want to let it dialogue because I really want to know, how does a Jeep obtain a license from the DLCA to operate Jeep tours? What kind of license is that? Because in my view, they are vehicles for hire. Excellent. Thank you for the question.

2:18:46 So in 2012, 2013, somewhere about there, there was a group, not a group, a series of operator out of the island of St. Croix. I believe their name was Tantantors. And they came. They were pressing, asking, well, should we get a license? We need to get a license to be, we kept sending them to the Taxi Cab Commission. They need to be licensed in order to provide the service. Their argument was that where they were providing these tours was off the beaten track and areas where individuals seeking to go would not get a taxi to take them to those areas. And it went on like that for several years, I think.

2:19:44 I came to understand recently in the conversation with the proprietor that he did get some sort of concession from the taxicab commission to be able to operate. But in the interim, our legal counsel and our department, we created a license category. What the law says is that where an action or a particular activity is not governed by another entity, then the DLCA is authorized to create that. What I realized and what we realized then was that the activity that they were intending to do, which was to create a space where, whether it's the cruise ships or people coming to see the island from different perspectives, and if they were to create a space where, If there was no opportunity to be licensed, then the alternative would be to just do it and do it without penalty, without a license. So we created several categories.

2:20:50 We said air. We had some for air. Sightseeing and scenic transportation, air. We also created one that's called sightseeing and scenic transportation, land. it was horse cart buggies and several other modes of transportation and we included in that jeeps as a way to say if you're taking someone someone out to an area for hiking and for off the beaten track then that would be the transportation modality um i'm not going to be i'm not going to act in a way that i'm oblivious to the fact that it seems that some of the activities seem to mirror perhaps mirror some of uh where some of our taxi operators may be traversing but the primary goal was to ensure that uh people who wanted to see uh areas that typically were not being um uh typically did not have access to that they had a means of of doing so and where the taxicab commission was not uh privy to or you know apt to issue a license for that particular purpose, we granted them the license under those terms. So that's essentially what it was.

2:22:03 So that's the authority under which we did it. OK, pertaining to Title 20 of the Virgin Islands Code, there are rules and regulations set forth for vehicles for hire. And there are stipulations there where any vehicle for hire should be registered to the taxicab commission. No, I'm only saying this because the taxicab commission keep coming to the senate for money to get officers and to conduct business for the whole industry. And my take is that all vehicles for hire should be under the preview of the taxicab commission so they could get funding. It is taking away funding from the Taxicab Commission with all of these licenses that are being issued through your department. And they are not going through the Taxicab Commission when the laws basically states it.

2:23:07 They are supposed to. And that covers the limousine also. Well, just one second, Mr. Really quickly, real quickly. One second. One second, please. Allow me to clarify something here. All funds collected by the government goes to the general fund. So what is a fine, a fee, a payment? It goes to the general fund. And when time comes, the legislature, we do a markup and disperse it. But they fund the taxicab, commission fund DLCA, fund the different agencies. So all funding, I don't care where it comes from, it goes in one account, the general fund.

2:23:45 Yeah, but the taxicab... No, no, no, I hear you because everybody keeps saying licensing... um can i just quickly clarify something senator um because you see the taxicab commission and i mean i served for many years probably better part of more than a decade as a taxicab commissioner and i would say that yes the taxicab the funding that the taxicab commission generates is funding that the taxicab commission keeps and so um unless there's unless there's legislation that will change that it's a special fund where the money is collected for the licensing and all the other things that done under the taxi commission it belongs to the taxicab commission now folks i am not in the business of uh preventing the taxicab commission from doing what it is that they need to do um actually we want to support that process in this opera this is an opportunity so that and we've we've had conversations that if and when those types of um activities are something that the taxicab commission accepts and recognizes and moves in that direction all those licenses uh can essentially be transferred

every time you stand and you speak about uh issues with limousine um there is no doubt that there's some elements of regulation that needs to be addressed but the reality is that these limousine service licenses were carved out specifically carved out the while you may read them on the title 20 in the um in in in the virginized code but they still are clearly indicated as a call out and what the language says notwithstanding any other regulation to the contrary,

2:25:35 limousines are not considered vehicles for hire. And the Virgin Islands, I googled all over, the Virgin Islands is the only place in the United States that says a limousine is not a vehicle for hire. So that, no, and I'm not disagreeing with you. So your argument as you raise it is really saying, uh and and and i think it was acknowledged by the senate right the law actually indicated and said hey it may appear that attacks that a limousine is a lim a vehicle for hire however based on what the language of the code says it is not to be considered a vehicle for hire so if that is changed then that would be um something that the taxicab commission then i'm sorry and if i could just interject briefly because I really want to get some critical information here because this is something that was raised at the town hall meeting held in 2023 as well and I'm glad that you're here Mr. Graham how much does a limo pay to register their their business how much do they Limousine license is $130 for the business. We used to issue them.

2:26:57 Hold on, hold on, hold on. We used to issue them. Go ahead. Go ahead. We used to issue them on a per vehicle basis. There was a legal challenge, and in that legal challenge, we were sort of restricted from doing so. So we issue it as the business. So the business gets a license. it's 130 dollars for the limousine service license uh in the process of clarifying that and working through some uh some challenges with some rules and those rules would seek to address this on a more comprehensive basis where it'll be uh more of a uh particular like a if you if you're a limousine service then you get a limousine service license and then there's a per vehicle um charge that we'll seek to re-implement along with other modifications okay thank you um and if you could give the mic now to miss smith how much is a taxi driver uh how much do they pay one in to get their medallions and business license how much is that added up to and maybe the taxi drivers may tell me that on their own mr but so so one per vehicle so they there's a little imbalance is that what we're hearing because this is is there a little imbalance in that because you have to pay per per vehicle okay there is a lot of imbalance senator because guess what first thing attack to be a taxi driver you have to go through a class how much do you pay for that how much how much do you pay for that the

2:28:56 class could run the class could run you in order to let me let me out and we dialogue in the class could run you between close to about $500 in all to get your to go to the class to get your uh certificate of to get your certificate of entitlement and to get your your badge and everything right that's one cast but also we are vehicles for hire so we are operating on a medallion a limousine does not operate on a medallion as it stands right now and that's what needs to come back the good senator is trying to talk about raising the taxi medallion but we have to get the limousines and a medallion first okay we and then we could fix when we get everything fixed and that's when we could talk about raising everything else so mr petty you're talking about raising up thing but no bank ain't giving nobody right now no 75 000 for no medallion not at the market so right now so the legislature the legislature made that law and an amendment and the legislative body can also reverse that okay OK, so thank you.

2:30:23 OK. Mr. Smith, you're going to get one question in, because we've got a hard stop at 8.30. OK, OK. Well, all I could say is that I like the turnout. Mr. Pascal, Mr. Arnting, what we need to do as taxi drivers is we need to form a federation amongst ourselves. And we could do all that the senators be saying. Because once we have a federation, we could delegate some. It don't have to be the leader. It could be any. Once we put our money together, and we go see trade.

2:31:01 And as far as apps and all of that, let me let you all know, I've been, I don't have talked about it up in St. John, because I go every place. All right. We are already, Eastern Taxi has already spent our money, and we have an app done put together for taxiing. So I could add any taxi driver onto this app, whether ViTaxi, Eastern, all of our drivers, any driver that is a licensed taxi operator will be able to go on this app. It's just like Uber.

2:31:42 has the pin anybody could click on it takes it takes the driver straight to your desk straight to the person you will be seeing them you will see the driver face before they reach to you you would see their tp number and everything once the person pay your money goes to you direct to your account okay so you i have i am on the ball so thank you very much but like i said earlier we have a hard stop at 8 30 and that that's it's 8 28 now and the senators will be here after you could ask any questions but first i'd just like to say thank you to everyone who came out tonight i think this was a much well dissolved and what needed um meeting one second one second just give me a chance just give me a chance and in both in all districts we're going to try to set up a task force to work along with you guys so tonight meeting does don't go in vain and it it does don't be a dead talk so we could continue this type of dialogue and make actions happen a lot of things was gleaned from these three meetings i thank my colleagues i thank you most of all for your information you're the people you're the frontline people giving us all the information i thank you and tonight before we leave i just pray to god that we all get home safely and thank you and please let's keep the line of communication going and we have i thank my staff i

thank central staff i thank security i thank everybody and most of all i thank god god for guiding us and protecting us this evening and may god bless these virgin islands before you leave we have refreshments and snacks outside please partake in it thank you Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you.

People named in this transcript

SUSPECTED, and a finding aid only. Names were matched by machine against the spellings used across all 426 of our transcripts, and the title is the one used in the room. Being named here is NOT evidence that a person attended or spoke · only that the name was said. Speech recognition mishears names, so a spelling may be wrong even where no alternative is offered.

3x **Senator Marvin A. Blighton**
heard in this transcript as: Marvin Blighton

2x **Senator Angel L. Bolques, Jr.**
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bulquez, Angel L. Bolques Jr.

2x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**
heard in this transcript as: Gittins

Bills and acts referred to

Matched by number against our own acts corpus. The number is what the recognition heard, so it may be wrong; where it resolved, the title is the one the Legislature gave the act.

Act 7452 — Act 7452 · An Act granting an Exclusive Franchise to the Virgin Islands Taxi Association, Inc., to operate all Public Taxicab Service from the Cyril E. King Airport on the Island of St. Thomas ---0

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Bill 36-0108

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