

Airport Strike!

No more “front of the line”; Drivers and Single Owners Protected

By SARAH SAEZ

In an effort to bring more hybrid vehicles into the fleet the San Diego Regional Airport Authority (AA) partnered with Mossy Toyota and the California Center of Sustainable energy to offer owners incentives to buy hybrid cars, one of which was that all hybrid vehicles be allowed to cut the line in front of non-hybrid drivers. The airport is mandated to have 100% of their fleet be hybrid cars by 2017 but was not planning on mandating the purchase of the hybrid vehicles themselves.



Taxi drivers already face a very difficult economic situation given the current state of our regional economy. If the 45 to 66 hybrid cabs were allowed to cut to the front of the line at the best times of the day, it would result in United Taxi Workers of San Diego (UTWSD) members and other airport drivers seeing a very significant reduction in their fares and therefore their livelihood.



Airport drivers demand fair treatment, regardless of what kind of car they drive

Regardless of this the AA staff devised an incentive program to reach that goal incrementally without input from drivers. After a few days of drivers experiencing extreme losses in fares to hybrid vehicles airport drivers went on a temporary strike that ended in the privileges being temporarily halted.

As a result, the AA reps called for a meeting. On Jan 6th, 200 drivers signed and delivered a petition asking the AA to stop this policy altogether by offering non-hybrid owners and drivers some kind counter-measure. The Airport staff “promised” that their proposal for a replacement incentive would be presented to the Board on Feb. 9th stopping front of the line privileges indefinitely. Three weeks later AA staff gave 24 hour notice of a last minute meeting on February 3rd where the AA staff did a complete turn around and announced to the drivers that

their proposal was not only rejected but was not going to be presented or considered as an alternative.

The AA staff when asked confirmed that, for the airport drivers who don’t drive hybrid cars, their interests were not relevant or considered in formulating their proposal to the Airport Authority Board, and that not only would hybrid drivers get to cut the line once a day but also that the incentive would be extended 6 more months to make up for the suspension period.

On February 9th drivers, owners and worker advocates came out to tell the Airport Board where they stood on the anti-worker front of

this issue

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

What a way to start up this year! Our two drivers’ representatives were seated on the Taxi Advisory Committee (TAC) on March 16, 2012, and UTWSD set up a TAC Representative support team to facilitate anything they need to increase advocacy. As we mentioned before, we need the drivers to be front and center at the table to support and advise your representatives. Participate

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President's Message
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by coming to the meetings. Follow our website (www.utwsd.org) to keep up to date on upcoming meetings.

One major recent issue that drivers brought to the office was insurance coverage. When the taxi industry switched to Align insurance, more than 100 drivers lost their ability to work because of "points" from tickets and/or accidents. Drivers with two, small not-at-fault fender benders were ineligible for coverage. One problem was the dispatcher deliberately gave drivers' identity and information about cell phone tickets without their consent. Secondly, police officers' pattern of excessive ticketing has been a continual issue and has led to 100 plus drivers losing their jobs. And about the new insurance company, you can keep your license and learn the new point system at our office. About the police issue, we had a good meeting with the Harbor police, and SDPD has expressed willingness to work with us. But we need the drivers to help us detect patterns of over ticketing. Bring your traffic tickets from the last 12 months today!

- Drop your tickets of at our office Mon-Thurs between the hours of 10. Am- 4pm.
- Fax us your tickets at (619) 713-5374
- Scan and Email us your tickets at info@utwsd.org

Once we receive all the evidence we need, we will call a meeting with SDPD and all drivers to address these issues. Get involved and help us to achieve these goals!

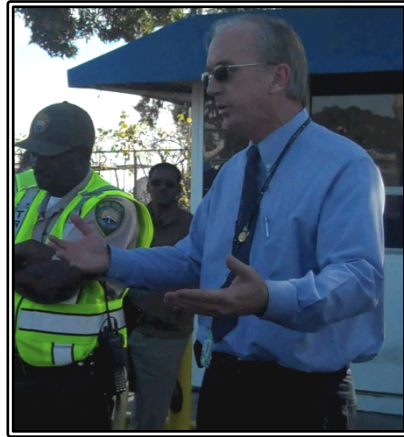
We are not alone. We have rights!

-Mikail Hussein, President

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the line privileges. UTWSD representatives including newly elected Taxicab Advisory Board member Hussein Nuur, Organizer Sarah Saez, President Mikail Hussein and other UTWSD drivers stood up to talk about the need for drivers voices to be heard especially regarding recommendations that the lease drivers strongly reject.



Airport representatives negotiate with drivers

"It's not fair to punish the leased drivers for something they can't control. We ask this board that the front of the line privileges not be allowed at all because of drivers lack of control over what cars they lease from permit holders", said Mikail Hussein. Mikail who helped found the United Taxi workers in 2009 went on to ensure the board that the United Taxi Workers would continue their mission of enhancing the taxi industry for the better. "We need to be treated as industry partners and we look forward to being recognized as such in future airport meetings."

Peter Zschiesche of the Employee Rights Center who has partnered with the United Taxi Workers since 2010 went on to speak on the fact that these incentives not only take away drivers money but also the resulting psychological effects of front of the line privileges. Mr. Zschiesche asked the board to imagine they were waiting in a long line in the grocery store or a restaurant and someone came and cut them in line and the sense of unfairness this would make them feel. "I know that every one of you if you experienced that your first gut reaction would be, why does that person get to go to the front of the line and me and my family has to wait? So the psychology

of this is not good. And I think all of you, if you honestly admitted it, you know the psychology of granting some people to go to the front of the line for things people don't even have control over doesn't work to well. I'm going to ask you to

redesign your incentive program and if you're going to give away someone's money, give away your own money, give away the trip fees, whatever it is you got in your pocket but when you take away somebody else's opportunity to make a living by getting a fare at the airport I think that's patently unfair."

San Diego Labor Council CEO, Lorena Gonzalez was also in attendance to advocate on behalf of airport taxi drivers and all drivers who because of their independent contractor status are unable to join unions or collectively bargain. Regardless of union status Lorena said, "workers none the less deserve the right to make a living for their families and deserve the right to be treated equally. And under this incentive program, as well intentioned as it might be, you're putting a huge barrier between those drivers who at this time because of availability and cost do not have their own medallion."

After multiple speakers the board then weighed in on the front of the line privileges. While board members Jim Panknin and Paul Robinson were in favor of continuing the front of the line privileges, a majority of the



Drivers return to work after successful work stoppage

ADVOCATE SPOTLIGHT

board members were not. Boardmember Tom Smisek was met with a round of applause after saying, "Listening to the testimony today I'm convinced that we should not have front of the line privileges." His reasoning was that as a board they rely on their staff and the collaboration of all those involved in order to come up an incentive that is

by Boardmember Cox who said he does not believe the front of the line privileges played a large roll in the incentive to buy the hybrid vehicle in the first place.

And in an important victory for taxi drivers the board voted to not reinstate the front of the line privileges. Thank you to the board members



Alor Calderón

United Taxi Workers of San Diego is very proud to recognize Alor Calderón for his dedication and advocacy for San Diego's taxi drivers.

Alor F. Calderon is the Program Director of the Employee Rights Center (ERC) in San Diego, California. Through its Wage and Hour and Immigration Programs, the Center's staff advocates for and represents hundreds of low-income workers before administrative forums. Alor's focus at the ERC, since 2003, has been to connect these administrative activities with the Center's Education and Organizing Programs. The ERC's programmatic philosophy centers on the idea that education and advocacy for low-income workers requires a commitment to long-term dialogue and worker leadership development. For that reason, the ERC works closely with advocacy, religious, grassroots and labor organizations throughout the state. For instance, the ERC works closely with **Proyecto de Casas Saludables** and **United Taxi Workers of San Diego** by

advocating for or representing its members in administrative forums, while at the same time providing educational workshops (i.e. "know your rights" discussions) and leadership development. In relation to leadership development, the ERC staff works directly with these organization's staff in implementing their short and long term goals.

Alor has received training from U.C. Berkeley's Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP), UCLA's Labor Occupational Safety Health Program (LOSH), the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC), American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), and National Conflict Resolution Center (NCRC).

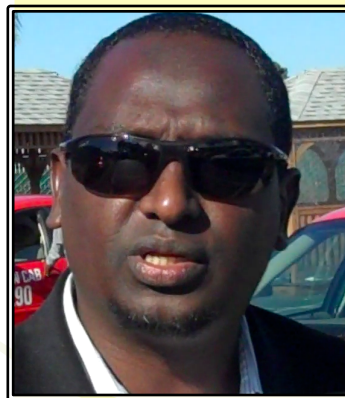
It is a true honor to have Alor work alongside taxi drivers in our efforts to bring about a better taxi industry.



Hybrid taxis wait in line for the first time

most fair. In this case he did not feel that was accomplished and that drivers should not be paying the price for this incentive. Mr. Smisek was not alone. Boardmember Hubbs and others agreed that the incentive should be monetized and the cost should not be passed onto the drivers. Board member Tony Young also made it a point to ask how a front of the line privilege would incentivize owners to buy when they receive a flat lease fee regardless of how much the drivers make. This was supported

who voted in support of this initiative and all the drivers and advocates who came out in support!



Mikail supports the striking drivers

Upcoming Events

UTWSD Monthly Meetings

SDPD Multicultural Storefront
5349 University Ave. Ste 110
San Diego, CA 92105

May 29 – Monthly Meeting.
3:00p.

Jul 16 – Monthly Meeting.
3:00p.

UTWSD Information Sessions

UTWSD Main Office
7364 El Cajon Blvd. Ste 108
San Diego, CA 92115

**April 23 – Information
Session.** 3:00p.

**July 18 – Information
Session.** 3:00p.

Taxicab Advisory Committee
1255 Imperial Ave,
10th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

Meeting Dates for 2012:

- Friday, September 21, 9am
- Friday, December 14, 9am

Metropolitan Transit System
1255 Imperial Ave,
Suite 1000
San Diego, CA 92101

Board Meeting Dates for 2012

- Thursday, April 19, 9am (Finance Wkshp)
- Thursday, May 17, 9am (Finance Wkshp)
- Thursday, June 21, 9am
- Thursday, July 19, 9am
- Thursday, August 16, 9am
- Thursday, September 20, 9am
- Thursday, November 15, 9am
- Thursday, December 13, 9am



Mission:

The mission of UTWSD is to unify taxicab workers, to improve working conditions through direct advocacy and empowerment, to increase education and civic participation by taxi drivers and their families, and to improve professional transportation services for San Diego communities and visitors.

Vision:

We envision a driver-led taxi industry that provides exceptional, efficient, and safe service for residents and visitors, and that meets the comprehensive and diverse needs of taxi drivers and their families. We envision a professional working environment free from humiliation, intimidation, discrimination, and exploitation. We envision UTWSD providing strong and representative leadership in this healthy, productive, and inclusive taxi industry.

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