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MTS also waiving fee for taxicab owners to reinstate permits

San Diego- On Wednesday, June 17, the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System Taxicab Administration approved new safety protocols due to COVID-19 for all taxicabs.

“MTS administers the region’s largest taxicab system for the cities of Chula Vista, El Cajon, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, National City, Poway, San Diego and Santee”, said Sharon Cooney, MTS chief executive officer. “There are more than 850 taxis in our jurisdiction and, as the economy opens up and people begin to utilize their services again, this is an important step to improve the safety of drivers and their passengers.”

The five new safety measures are in line with County of San Diego Health Orders, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sanitary recommendations for Rideshare, Taxi, Limo, and other Passengers and Drivers of For-Hire Vehicles, and COVID-19 related measures implemented by other for-hire and TNC (rideshare) industries.

Taxicabs, Jitney, Low-Speed, Charter and Nonemergency Medical (NEM) Transport Vehicles will need to be in compliance with the safety protocols. MTS will begin enforcement on June 27, giving drivers 10 days to comply.

Driver Temperature/Symptom Screening – Drivers must take their temperature and/or self-screen for symptoms at the beginning of a shift. Drivers must not work if a temperature reading is 100 degrees or more, or symptoms of COVID-19.

Face Coverings – Drivers and passengers must wear face coverings.

Cleaning Measures – Drivers must clean and disinfect inside and outside rear door handles, as well as seat belts, immediately after the conclusion of each trip.

Front Passenger Seat – No passengers will be allowed to sit in the front passenger seat of a Taxicab or Nonemergency Medical Transport Vehicle unless a partition is used between the front driver and front passenger seat.

Posting of COVID-19 Plan – Each vehicle must clearly display in the passenger compartment a description of the safety measures implemented.

Although these are the minimum requirements, some for-hire vehicles will be implementing additional safety measures in response to COVID-19, such as: partitions between Front and Rear Passenger Seats; drivers use of hand sanitizer and/or wipes after handling of passenger’s luggage and/or handling of cash or credit cards; and that windows be open to allow for ventilation

if acceptable by passengers.

A 10-day period, beginning June 17, 2020, and ending on June 27, 2020, will be given allowing permit holders to comply with these measures. MTS will not be enforcing any measures until June 27, 2020, but the County of San Diego Health Order and Safe Reopening Plan already mandates compliance with many of the above measures.

Due to COVID-19 public health emergency, many taxicabs have surrendered their permits and ceased operating due to decline in business. Taxicab medallion owners who wish to reinstate their permits can request MTS to do so for free, at any time, if they can pass a vehicle inspection and provide proof of insurance. MTS, which issues taxi medallions for nine of the county's cities, is assisting taxicab drivers during the pandemic by also deferring \$400 of the usual \$600 regulatory fee from the original deadline of June 8 to September 1.

MTS continues to operate about 95 bus routes and three Trolley lines. Frequencies and spans have been modified due to COVID-19. Updated schedules can be accessed on the MTS website. MTS asks that that people wear face coverings and practice physical distancing at all times.

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