Memorandum
Taxi Upfront Fare Program

SFMTA

TO: San Francisco Taxi Industry Members and Interested Parties

THROUGH: Julie Kirschbaum, Director of Transportation

FROM: Kate Toran, Director of Taxis, Access & Mobility Services

DATE: July 1, 2025

SUBJECT: Taxi Upfront Fare Program

This memorandum establishes the Taxi Upfront Fare Program (Program), including Program rules and application process.

Introduction and Background

On September 7, 2021, the SFMTA Board amended Transportation Code, Division II, Article 1100, Section 1124 to authorize the Director of Transportation to establish a Taxi Upfront Fare Pilot program (Pilot) to test the concept of providing taxi customers with a flat rate fare estimate through a Taxi E-Hail application (App). Allowing the taxi industry to provide customers with an upfront fare may eliminate the price uncertainty and "meter anxiety" that some riders experience, enabling the taxi industry to evolve and offer services that align with current trends in the for-hire transportation industry. Providing an upfront fare also allows customers to price shop. The upfront fare offered to taxi customers through the Taxi E-Hail App is based on the estimated Taximeter and is intended to closely match the cost to the customer of a fare based on the Taximeter rate.

After SFMTA Board approval in September 2021 and during the development of Pilot program rules, taxi industry stakeholders requested that the SFMTA allow Taxi E-Hail App providers to dispatch trips that originate with third-party entities (i.e. entities that do not operate under permits issued by the SFMTA), which may offer upfront fares that are not based on Taximeter rates. This requested expansion of the Pilot program required an amendment to the Transportation Code, which was approved by the SFMTA Board on April 5, 2022.

The Taxi Upfront Fare Pilot application process launched on August 5, 2022, and service under the Pilot began on November 9, 2022. On September 19, 2023, the SFMTA Board approved the extension of the Taxi Upfront Fare Pilot to June 30, 2025, to allow more time for the service to operate and for staff to analyze and measure outcomes.

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On [May 20, 2025](), after a successful Pilot program, the SFMTA Board voted to make the Taxi Upfront Fare Program permanent, effective July 1, 2025.

The Taxi Upfront Fare Program allows two types of trips:

1. **Taxi Upfront Fare Trips** have the following characteristics:
   - ☐ Originate with a customer requesting a ride through a Taxi E-Hail App
   - ☐ Driver is dispatched by a Taxi E-Hail App
   - ☐ Ride is provided by a permitted San Francisco taxi driver in a permitted San Francisco taxi vehicle
   - ☐ Upfront fare is based on the estimated Taximeter amount

2. **Third-Party Trips** have the following characteristics:
   - ☐ Originate with a customer requesting a ride through a third-party entity (Third-Party Provider)
   - ☐ Ride is transferred to a Taxi E-Hail App
   - ☐ Driver is dispatched by a Taxi E-Hail App
   - ☐ Ride is provided by a permitted San Francisco taxi driver in a permitted San Francisco taxi vehicle
   - ☐ Upfront fare is **not** required to be based on the estimated Taximeter amount

Program Rules

Participation in the Taxi Upfront Fare Program is optional for Drivers, Taxi Color Schemes, Dispatch Services, and Taxi E-Hail Apps. All Taxi Upfront Fare Program participation is subject to the approval of the SFMTA. Program rules may be updated from time to time.

Application Requirements

1. An [application](#) to participate in the Taxi Upfront Fare Program must be submitted jointly by a [Taxi E-Hail App](#) provider and any [affiliated Dispatch Service](#).

2. The Taxi E-Hail App must be SFMTA-approved.

3. All affiliated Dispatch Services and participating Color Schemes must be in good standing with the SFMTA to be considered eligible for Program participation.

4. Applicants must demonstrate their ability to comply with SFMTA's data and transmission requirements for Taxi Upfront Fare Trips and Third-Party Trips. Data requirements for both Taxi Upfront Fare Trips and Third-Party Trips are enumerated in the taxi API specifications. Transmission specifications for Taxi Upfront Fare Trips are also included in the taxi API. Transmission requirements for Third-Party Trips are enumerated in Rule #22 below.

5. A Taxi E-Hail App must demonstrate that taxi drivers have the ability to opt out of servicing Third-Party Trips on a universal or per-trip basis.

6. If the Taxi E-Hail App elects to provide a per-trip opt-out option for Third-Party Trips, Taxi E-Hail App must demonstrate that drivers will be notified if the trip being dispatched is a Third-Party Trip.

Taxi Upfront Fare Program Participation Requirements

7. All participating Taxi E-Hail Apps, Dispatch Services and Color Schemes shall maintain compliance with all applicable state and local rules and regulations regarding taxis, including [Article 1100 of the Transportation Code](#).

8. Third-Party Participants must maintain compliance with all applicable Program rules.

9. Notwithstanding the upfront fare charged to the customer, the Taxi E-Hail App shall calculate the Taximeter fare for each Taxi Upfront Fare Trip and Third-Party Trip and shall transmit that information to the SFMTA.

10. For Taxi Upfront Fare Trips and Third-Party Trips, the only fare displayed on the Taximeter shall be the upfront fare that was accepted by the passenger.

11. The upfront fare estimate for trips originating from an approved E-Hail App must be within 10% of the Taximeter rate on average.

12. Taxi Upfront Fare Trip fares shall be consistent with Transportation Code 1124(b)(3) ("meter and a half"), where applicable for [out-of-town trips](#).

13. All Taxi Upfront Fare Trips and Third-Party Trips shall comply with all applicable state and local rules and regulations regarding taxis, including Article 1100 of the Transportation Code.

14. Taxi drivers must have the ability to opt out of servicing Third-Party Trips on a universal or per-trip basis.

15. If the Taxi E-Hail App opts to provide a per-trip opt-out option for Third-Party Trips, taxi drivers must be notified if the trip being dispatched is a Third-Party Trip.

16. Taxi drivers that choose not to service Third-Party Trips shall not be penalized.

17. Third-Party Trips shall not originate at SFO.

18. Third-Party Trips are eligible to service drop-offs at SFO pursuant to the following requirements: Taxi E-Hail App providers must maintain good standing with all SFMTA data requirements. Aside from Taxi E-Hail App providers, only Third-Party Participants with permits to operate at SFO can originate Third-Party Upfront Trips under the Program. Based on the data provided to the SFMTA by the taxi industry, SFO will track Third-Party Trips with a drop-off destination at SFO on a monthly basis. If the total number of Third-Party Trips from a particular Third-Party Participant with a drop-off destination at SFO exceeds 2% of the total number of drop-off trips provided by that Third-Party Participant for any given month, SFO may direct that Third-Party Participant with a permit to operate at SFO to cease drop-offs at SFO with fifteen calendar days written notice. SFMTA, in consultation with SFO, reserves the right to adjust this Program rule as needed with 30 calendar days written notice.

19. Taxi E-Hail App providers shall be responsible for adherence to Program rules by their Third-Party partners. Taxi E-Hail App providers must notify SFMTA if they add affiliated Dispatch Service and/or Color Schemes and shall submit proof that the new affiliate agrees to participate in the Program.

20. Taxi E-Hail App providers previously approved to participate in the Taxi Upfront Fare Pilot are approved to participate in the permanent Taxi Upfront Fare Program, provided that they are compliant with Program rules and are in good standing with the SFMTA.

Data Requirements

Program data is collected through the SFMTA's [Taxi Application Programming Interfaces Specification](#) (APIs). The SFMTA's Taxi API specifications may be updated from time to time.

21. Participating Taxi E-Hail Apps must send required trip data, as specified in the taxi API, to the SFMTA in an accurate and timely manner in order to remain eligible to participate in the Program.

22. Taxi E-Hail Apps shall transmit all required data for Third-Party Trips into the SFMTA Taxi APIs within 30 calendar days of commencing taxi service under the Program and subsequently shall transmit such data by the first and third Monday of each month.

23. Where the final fare paid by the customer differs from the quoted fare provided by the Third-Party Participant ("Fallback Fare"), Taxi E-Hail Apps must provide the SFMTA with the frequency of such Fallback Fares along with the reason(s) for such difference, upon request. Circumstances where a Fallback Fare may occur include, but are not limited to:
    - drop-off address change;
    - pickup address change;
    - significant detours;
    - adding stops to the route; or
    - passing through tolls that were not factored into upfront fare.

Taxi Driver Fees

24. Taxi E-Hail Apps shall provide the SFMTA with the schedule of fees that will be charged in addition to fees charged by Third Parties to taxi drivers, including fees for Taxi Upfront Fare Trips. Driver fees for Third-Party Trips shall be reported as the weighted monthly average.

25. Taxi E-Hail Apps shall submit aggregated taxi driver payment data on a monthly basis for Third-Party Trips. Taxi E-Hail Apps must submit the aggregated taxi driver payment data for Third Party Trips no later than the 15th day of each month for driver payments made for the prior month. The monthly submission shall consist of the weighted mean average percent fee averaged over all trips in the monthly period based on the fares collected by both the E-Hail App and Third Parties.

26. If a participating E-Hail App implements a change in the fees charged to taxi drivers, such E-Hail App shall provide no less than 7 calendar days prior written notice of such change to both the SFMTA and taxi drivers.

Failure to Comply

Failure of a Taxi E-Hail App and/or its affiliated Dispatch Service, Color Schemes or Third-Party Participant to comply with any of the Program rules may result in a written notice from SFMTA to cure such non-compliance (Notice of Non-Compliance). The Notice of Non-Compliance will identify the rule(s) the Taxi E-Hail App and/or its related Dispatch, Third-Party Participant or Color Scheme(s) have violated. The Notice of Non-Compliance will also include the timeframe to cure the documented instances of non-compliance.

Failure to cure violations noted in a Notice of Non-Compliance may result in fine(s), if the violation constitutes a violation of the San Francisco Transportation Code, and/or suspension or termination of Program participation.

SF Paratransit Taxi

Taxi E-Hail App providers are not required to offer SF Paratransit Taxi trips as part of the Program, although some Taxi E-Hail Apps may choose to offer this functionality only for Taxi Upfront Fare Trips. SF Paratransit Taxi integration for Third-Party Trips is not allowable under the rules set forth in this memo.

Approval Process

There is a separate application and approval process for Taxi Upfront Fare Trips and Third-Party Trips. An applicant must be approved for Taxi Upfront Fare Trips in order to be considered for approval for Third-Party Trips. Staff will review each application for completeness and responsiveness in the evaluation process and will provide written determination as to whether an applicant has demonstrated an ability to comply with the Program rules. SFMTA staff may request additional information or clarification of information already provided from applicants and provide an applicant the opportunity to revise or modify its application.

Application forms can be found in Appendix A: Taxi Upfront Fare Application Form and Appendix B: Third-Party Trips Application Form. Participants who were approved to participate in the Taxi Upfront Fare Pilot should see Appendix C: Taxi Upfront Fare Program Certification Form. Applications and certifications must be submitted via email to SFTaxi@sfmta.com. The SFMTA will review each application and certification form and provide a written determination to each applicant/participant, based on their ability to comply with the Program requirements.