

Judge issues temporary restraining order in taxi case

Winning companies ranked much higher than Yellow Cab, Ute Cab

By Jasen Lee^[1], Deseret News

Published: Friday, Oct. 28 2011 1:00 p.m. MDT



[2]

Ute Cab drivers Rulon Glade and Kaleigh Spencer discuss the impending court case involving the Yellow Cab company's request to delay Salt Lake City International Airport from implementing new taxi services until legal challenges on the fairness of the bidding process can be heard at the Salt Lake City Airport on Friday, October 28, 2011.

Laura Seitz, Deseret News

SALT LAKE CITY — A judge Friday issued a temporary restraining order against the Salt Lake City Department of Airports' recent award of taxi contracts.

The legal action — brought by Salt Lake-based Yellow Cab Drivers Association — asked Judge Kate Toomey to "maintain the status quo" for providers as it was prior to the awarding of the contracts. The judge deliberated all day before issuing the ruling in the afternoon.

The order — which expires in 10 days — puts on hold any enforcement of taxi contracts until the parties exhaust all administrative appeals options. A hearing scheduled for Nov. 3 will complete that administrative process.

Yellow Cab lost out on a bid to provide on-demand service at Salt Lake City International Airport as well as citywide. "On-demand" refers to a taxicab company's ability to pick up passengers who flag down taxis on the street, at hotels or at the airport.

"We think the bid process is illegal on the merits," said Yellow Cab attorney Don Winder.

Following the ruling, he said justice was done — at least for now.

"All we asked for ... is to have a fair hearing, and the court agreed, so that the playing field is level," he said.

The legal action stemmed from the announcement Tuesday that the Salt Lake City Department of Airports had awarded Ace Taxi Service of Cleveland, Ohio, and Total Transit of Glendale, Ariz., contracts to provide ground transportation at the airport and across the city. The companies were selected in a competitive bid process.

The new companies would replace Yellow Cab, Ute Cab and City Cab whose contracts are about to expire.

The Department of Airports said companies submitted proposals that were ranked by a seven member voting panel that based their decision on evaluation of six criteria, including quality of service, driver programs, operational plan, prior general and specialized experience, fees and financial performance.

Winder claimed in his court arguments that the bid process developed by the airport department put local companies like Yellow Cab at a competitive disadvantage.

He also said the city had vowed to wait to award the contracts until after the Nov. 3 appeals hearing that would determine if the bid process would be upheld or forced to

start over.

"They promised they wouldn't (award any contracts)," he said.

Yellow Cab and Ute Cab had contracted with the city for years, but the Salt Lake City Council voted to turn ground transportation responsibilities over to the Department of Airports in August. Soon after, the department devised a plan to open taxicab contracting up to a competitive bid process. Ace Taxi and Total Transit were selected based on review of their detailed proposals.

Documents obtained through an open records request showed that Ace Taxi and Total Transit outscored the three other candidates by a wide margin. Each of the seven panelists on the selection committee ranked Ace Taxi first or second, while Total Transit was rated first or second by all but one panelist.

The committee also judged each bidding company on the six different criteria with the maximum possible score of 100. Ace Taxi compiled the highest average score of 91, while Total Transit tallied an average score of 88.

On the other hand, both Ute Cab and Yellow Cab compiled average scores of 60, scoring well below all other contenders.

While the contract award is on hold, the winning bid companies are forced to wait for a legal resolution before they can begin setting up operations in the Salt Lake City market.

Links

1. <http://www.deseretnews.com/author/21634/Jasen-Lee.html>
2. <http://img.deseretnews.com/images/article/midres/640993/640993.jpg>

Get a free Evernote account to save this article and view it later on any device.

Create account

