

July 9, 2025

**OFFICE OF THE HEARING EXAMINER
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON**
Telephone (206) 477-0860
hearingexaminer@kingcounty.gov
www.kingcounty.gov/independent/hearing-examiner

REPORT AND DECISION

SUBJECT: King County For-Hire Licensing file no. **25097**

AWET NEGESSE
For-Hire Driver Enforcement Appeal

For Hire no.: 136723

Appellant: Awet Negesse
represented by **Stephen Hoth** (Union Rep)
[REDACTED]
Tukwila, WA 98168
Email: [REDACTED]

King County: King County For-Hire Licensing
represented by **Tyson Taylor**
King County For-Hire Licensing
201 S. Jackson Street Suite 206
Seattle, WA 98104
Telephone: (206) 263-1373
Email: ttaylor@kingcounty.gov

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

Overview

1. After hearing the witnesses' testimony and observing their demeanor, studying the exhibits admitted into evidence, and considering the parties' arguments and the relevant law, the Examiner denies the appeal.

Background

2. On February 14, 2025, King County Department of Records and Licensing – For Hire Licensing Section (Licensing) received a complaint regarding a trip that occurred on February 13, 2025, at approximately 11:45 p.m. The trip in question was from the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport to the Town Place Seattle Southcenter Hotel in Kent. The complaint contains several allegations; however, the only one at issue in this appeal is whether the driver, Mr. Negesse, turned on his taximeter at the beginning of the trip as required by KCC 6.65.160.H. Exs. D1-001, D2; testimony of Ofc. Taylor.
3. The complainant, Rick Harrison, identified the vehicle he rode in as E-Cab #228. He stated that upon entering the vehicle, the driver informed him the fare would be \$35, which Mr. Harrison thought was an estimate. Mr. Harrison indicated that he questioned whether the trip would be metered (through a taximeter) and the driver informed him it would be a flat rate. Exs. D1-001, D3.
4. Mr. Harrison indicated that he then questioned why the trip would be a flat rate when there was signage in the window of the taxicab with taximeter rates listed. Ex. D1-001.
5. Mr. Harrison stated that the driver again confirmed his destination and then changed the fare quote to \$21, the minimum fare for taxicab trips originating at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Exs. D1-001, D6-003, A1.
6. Ground Transportation staff with the Port of Seattle (SeaTac Airport) identified the driver as Awet Negesse, FH 136723. Ex. D1-001.
7. Licensing issued a Notice of Complaint outlining the allegations in the complaint to Mr. Negesse on March 19, 2025. In his March 31 response, Mr. Negesse indicated that he did activate the taximeter. Exs. D1-001, D5, D6, D8.
8. Mr. Negesse stated that the complainant asked for the fare to Kent and he told him the metered rate is generally \$29-41, depending on traffic, to which the customer agreed and entered the vehicle. Exs. D1-001, D6-001, D8.
9. Mr. Negesse explained that, upon confirming the address and learning the hotel was behind Southcenter, only 3.9 miles away, he told the customer the fare would be \$21. Exs. D1-001, D6-002, D8; testimony of Awet Negesse.
10. Licensing contends that, as a metered taxicab operator, Mr. Negesse is required to activate his taximeter on all trips, even those that he knows will be contained within the \$21 minimum fare. Ex. D1-001.
11. Mr. Negesse was found to be in violation for not activating his taximeter and paid the related fine for a trip that occurred just 11 days prior, on February 3. In that case (#25-065), Mr. Negesse failed to activate his taximeter and charged his customer a \$45 flat rate fare for a trip from the SeaTac Airport to Renton. Ex. D1-002; Taylor and Negesse

testimony.

12. On April 4, 2025, Licensing issued Mr. Negesse a Notice of License Action- Citation with a \$500 civil penalty based on his second offense Exs. D1-002. D7.
13. Mr. Negesse filed a timely appeal. Ex. D1-002, D8.

Relevant Codes and Rules

14. The Examiner does not grant substantial weight or otherwise accord deference to agency determinations. King County Hearing Examiner Rules of Procedure and Mediation, Rule XV.F.3. For those matters or issues raised in an appeal statement, the agency bears the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence both the violation and the appropriateness of the remedy it has imposed. KCC 20.22.080.G; .210.B.
15. Thus, the issues are as follows: has Licensing demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that:
 - i. Appellant failed to start his taximeter at approximately 11:45 p.m. on February 13, 2025, at the beginning of a paid trip in violation of KCC 6.65.160.H?
 - ii. The remedy it imposed (\$500 civil penalty) is appropriate? KCC 20.22.210.
16. E-Cab is a regional dispatch agency. KCC 6.65.340.A.7 provides: A regional dispatch agency must:
 7. Have a system that enables each passenger to receive an electronic or paper receipt upon payment of the fare. A receipt shall include at least the following information:
 - a. the date and time the trip began and ended;
 - b. the medallion number for a taxicab or for-hire vehicle trip;
 - c. the driver's regional for-hire driver's license number or unique driver identification number;
 - d. the fare charged and any tip paid;
 - e. the transitional regional dispatch agency or regional dispatch agency with which the vehicle is affiliated; and
 - f. a phone number, email address, or website to submit passenger feedback and inquiries to the transitional regional dispatch agency or regional dispatch agency. (Emphasis added.)
17. KCC 6.65.160.C, entitled Regional for-hire driver operation – requirements, provides:
 - A regional for-hire driver shall:
 - C. Ensure the lights, brakes, tires, steering, seat belts, any system relied on for

safe operation, taximeter, and other vehicle equipment are working properly prior to each shift and while operating. (Emphasis added).

18. KCC 6.65.160.H provides:

A regional for hire driver shall:

H. Activate the taximeter or smart taximeter at the beginning of each paid trip, whether the fare is computed by the taximeter, smart taximeter, application dispatch system, contract, or flat rate, and deactivate the taximeter or smart taximeter upon completion of the trip. The beginning of a trip is the point where the passenger is seated, and any materials are stowed, and the forward motion of the vehicle begins. Emphasis added.

19. KCC 6.65.430.B.1, entitled violations and penalties, provides:

The following monetary penalties shall be assessed or license action taken for violations of the listed sections or subsections of this chapter: The director shall assess a Class B penalty, which is a two-hundred-fifty-dollar civil penalty for a first offense, a five-hundred-dollar civil penalty for a second offense, or a one-thousand-dollar civil penalty for a third or subsequent offense: K.C.C. 6.65.160.H.

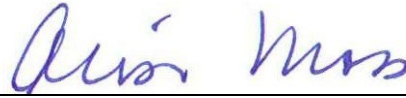
Analysis

20. Mr. Negesse stated in his appeal statement and in his sworn testimony that he did turn on the taximeter, but that it does not automatically print out a receipt stating the time the trip began and ended. Ex. D6-002; Negesse testimony.
21. Mr. Negesse's testimony leads the Examiner to conclude that either (a) his testimony is not credible (i.e. that he did not turn on the taximeter; or (b) his taximeter was not properly functioning as required by KCC 6.65.340.A.7.a and 6.65.160.C. In either case, Mr. Negesse did not comply with the applicable for-hire regulations.
22. Licensing has borne its burden of proof on the alleged violation and the appropriateness of the penalty.

DECISION:

The appeal is **DENIED**.

ORDERED July 9, 2025.



Alison Moss
Hearing Examiner pro tem

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL

King County Code 20.22.040 directs the Examiner to make the County’s final decision for this type of case. This decision shall be final and conclusive unless appealed to superior court by *August 8, 2025*. Either party may appeal this decision by applying for a writ of review in superior court in accordance with chapter 7.16 RCW.

MINUTES OF THE JULY 8, 2025, HEARING IN THE APPEAL OF AWET NEGESSE, KING COUNTY FOR-HIRE LICENSING FILE NO. 136723

Alison Moss was the Hearing Examiner in this matter. Participating in the hearing were Tyson Taylor and Awet Negesse. A verbatim recording of the hearing is available in the Hearing Examiner’s Office.

The following exhibits were offered the department and entered into the record by Licensing:

Exhibit no. D1	King County For-Hire Licensing staff report
Exhibit no. D2	Complaint
Exhibit no. D3	Response to complaint with photos
Exhibit no. D4	Response to complaint with photos removed
Exhibit no. D5	Notice of Complaint, issued March 19, 2025
Exhibit no. D6	Response to Notice of Complaint, dated March 31, 2025
Exhibit no. D7	Citation, issued April 4, 2025
Exhibit no. D8	Appeal, received April 30, 2025

The following exhibits were offered the department and entered into the record by Licensing:

Exhibit no. A1	Notice of Minimum Fare from SEA Airport
Exhibit no. A2	Receipt

July 9, 2025

**OFFICE OF THE HEARING EXAMINER
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON**
Telephone (206) 477-0860
hearingexaminer@kingcounty.gov
www.kingcounty.gov/independent/hearing-examiner

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

SUBJECT: King County For-Hire Licensing file no. **136723**

AWET NEGESSE
For-Hire Driver Enforcement Appeal

I, Jessica Oscoy, certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that I transmitted the **REPORT AND DECISION** to those listed on the attached page as follows:

- EMAILED to all County staff listed as parties/interested persons and parties with e-mail addresses on record.
- placed with the United States Postal Service, through Quadient-Impress, with sufficient postage, as FIRST CLASS MAIL in an envelope addressed to the non-County employee parties/interested persons to addresses on record.

DATED July 9, 2025.



Jessica Oscoy
Administrator

Bailey, Kendall

Finance and Admin Svcs, Consumer Protection Div

Cantu, Eddie

King County For-Hire Licensing

City of Seattle Hearing Examiner

Hoth, Stephen

Hoth, Stephen

Hardcopy

Megow, John

Finance and Admin Svcs, Consumer Protection Div

Negesse, Awet

Hardcopy

Newhouse, Cregan

Finance and Admin Svcs, Consumer Protection Div

Taylor, Tyson

King County For-Hire Licensing