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## Bill Requiring Taxis to Accept Card and Digital Payments Wins Legislative Support

**Senator Kurt Vialet's bill mandating electronic payment options for taxis advances again after being vetoed in 2019. With strong industry support, lawmakers say it's time to modernize the taxi sector to meet traveler expectations and improve transparency.**

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Six years after first introducing a bill that mandated the use of electronic payment methods by taxi drivers, Senator Kurt Vialet has reintroduced the measure, hoping for a better outcome this time around.

When Bill 33-0044 was presented in [June 2019](#), Senator Novelle Francis stated that “the time for discussion on the need for electronic payment option for taxis was ripe.” Governor Albert Bryan

Jr., however, ultimately vetoed the measure when it came across his desk for signature.

“It is time that we modernize the industry,” Sen. Vialet reiterated when the bill was heard as Bill [36-0148](#) in the Committee on Government Operations, Veterans Affairs, and Consumer Protection on Monday. He noted that since the measure was first introduced in the 33rd Legislature, electronic payment options have increased. He described it as an “opportunity for the taxi industry to be able to move forward.”

Addressing the hesitation that adaptation may be difficult, Vialet argued that “our taxi drivers are more than smart enough that once they are taught, they are going to learn this system.”

Unlike during the 2019 hearing, those invited to testify on Bill 36-0148 on Monday were all supportive of the measure.

“Modernizing how visitors and residents pay for transportation is not just a convenience, it is crucial to our ability to keep the Virgin Islands competitive as a global destination,” Elizabeth Hansen-Watley, assistant commissioner in the V.I. Department of Tourism, said. She testified that “many travelers still express frustration over the limited credit and digital payment options available in our taxi services.”

Outside of aligning the territory with “international standards for travel convenience,” Ms. Hansen-Watley expects that it will bolster safety and “support data-driven management.” She also expects that implementing Sen. Vialet’s bill will “enhance transparency and tax revenue.”

Emerson Knight of the VI Taxi Association also approved of the measure. “By enabling drivers to accept credit cards, debit cards and mobile payments, we can prevent lost fares, increase drivers' income and provide convenience and modern service to all passengers,” he testified. Mr. Knight was excited about the prospect of being “competitive with other tourism destinations” and aligning with “visitors' expectations.”

The need to incorporate technology into taxi operations was emphasized during the Legislature's [town hall meetings](#) on St. Thomas and St. John. Bill 36-0148 addresses the request head-on.

“I want to commend the bill sponsor for his stick-to-itiveness, and again, bringing forward this legislation because it makes good sense,” Senator Novelle Francis commented. He suggested a robust marketing campaign accompany the implementation. “I think that there's some taglines that could be used along with this experiment,” he said.

The bill requires that the implementation of electronic payment methods take effect 120 days after the legislation is enacted. Elizabeth Hansen-Watley admitted to Sen. Francis that more time may be needed to accomplish that goal.

“It's going to take some time to educate the taxi drivers, as well as have the conversation, like I said, with subject matter experts,” she stated. She, nonetheless, appreciated the inclusion of a deadline. “I think it's feasible, but that would be left to be seen,” the assistant commissioner said. Ms. Hansen-Watley, who also chairs the Taxicab Commission’s board, assured lawmakers that the body will meet in a “timely” manner to address the changes if the bill becomes law.

Lawmakers supported an amended version of Bill 36-0148, which requires taxi drivers to offer at least two payment options, including debit or credit card or electronic transfer. Vialet’s bill now moves to the Committee on Rules and Judiciary for further consideration.

