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Port of Seattle ordered to stand down from signing taxi contract

Court of Appeals granted STITA's temporary injunction against Port of Seattle

Seattle, Wash. – The Washington state Court of Appeals on Monday ruled in favor of the Sea-Tac International Taxi Association (STITA) by granting a temporary injunction against the Port of Seattle. This means the Port cannot sign a planned contract with Yellow Cab/Puget Sound Dispatch "until further order of the Court."

STITA's request to expedite the appeal was also granted by Commissioner Mary Neel. The Commissioner's order states that this case will be heard by a three-judge panel "toward the end of the April 2010 term." (The order is attached).

Members of STITA, who filed the original lawsuit against the Port of Seattle on Jan. 29, were very pleased with the decision.

"We are thrilled that the court stopped the Port from proceeding with an illegal contract," said Jesse Buttar, a STITA member and spokesperson. "We've only ever asked for a fair process and a legal contract and now we hope the Port has finally listened and will re-do its flawed bidding process."

STITA, a non-profit co-op with one of the greenest cab fleet in the country, was created in 1989 by the Port of Seattle to exclusively serve the airport and provide reliable service to airport users. Now, after an unfair proposal process, STITA

and its approximately 450 members and drivers will essentially be put out of business. They have the airport contract through August 2010.

STITA's lawsuit claims that the Port's bidding process violated state law by requiring bidders to commit to pay an unfair concession fee of at least 10 percent of their airport-based revenues to the Port. This revenue system violates the Airports Act, which says airport concession fees must be based upon the actual cost of operations and be reasonable and uniform. Previously, the Port had charged a per-trip fee to taxis based on the airport's actual cost of services provided to the cabbies.

Additionally, the lawsuit contends that the Port's new concession fees violate the King County Code and takes away from the King County Council's authority to set "just and reasonable" taxi meter rates.

Despite protests from STITA to the Port about these glaring problems with the process and the proposed contract, the Port has so far declined to re-do its flawed contract bid.

A second lawsuit against the Port and Yellow Cab by Farwest Taxi was filed on Feb. 12.