

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

In the Matter of Determining the Proper  
Carrier Classification of, and Complaint  
for Penalties Against:

HIGH SOCIETY TRANSPORTATION  
LLC

DOCKET TE-210619

ORDER 01

ORDER INSTITUTING SPECIAL  
PROCEEDING; COMPLAINT SEEKING  
TO IMPOSE PENALTIES; NOTICE OF  
VIRTUAL HEARING

**(Set for December 7, 2021, at 9:30 a.m.)**

**INTRODUCTION**

- 1 The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission), pursuant to RCW 81.04.510, institutes this special proceeding on its own motion to determine whether High Society Transportation LLC (High Society Transportation or Company) has engaged, and is engaging, in unlawful operations without a charter party and excursion service carrier certificate in violation of RCW 81.70.220.
- 2 The Commission has information from which it believes and therefore alleges that High Society Transportation has advertised, solicited, offered, or entered into one or more agreements to provide charter party or excursion carrier service within the state of Washington without having first obtained a charter party and excursion service carrier certificate.
- 3 Pursuant to RCW 81.04.510, upon proof of these allegations, the Commission is authorized to issue an order requiring High Society Transportation to cease and desist activities subject to regulation under Title 81 RCW. In addition, RCW 81.04.110 authorizes the Commission to file a complaint on its own motion setting forth any act or omission by High Society Transportation that violates any law, or any order or rule of the Commission. The Commission may impose financial penalties of up to \$5,000 for each violation.
- 4 At the hearing in this special proceeding that will be conducted pursuant to Part IV of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), RCW 34.05, of which notice is given here, the Commission will also consider its Complaint against High Society Transportation

alleging violations of law as specified below and will decide whether High Society Transportation should be penalized.

**ORDER AND NOTICE OF HEARING**

5 The Commission has jurisdiction to institute a special proceeding to determine whether High Society Transportation is conducting business requiring operating authority, or has performed or is performing any act requiring Commission approval without securing such approval pursuant to RCW 80.01.040, RCW 81.01.010, and RCW 81.04.510. In addition to the foregoing statutes, this matter involves Title 81 RCW, including but not limited to RCW 81.04.020 and RCW 81.70.220. This matter also involves the administrative rules set forth in WAC 480-30 and WAC 480-07.

6 **THE COMMISSION ORDERS that High Society Transportation appear virtually before the Commission in this special proceeding conducted under the authority of RCW 81.04.510 at 9:30 a.m., on December 7, 2021,** to give testimony and evidence under oath as to its operations. The burden of proving that the alleged operations are not subject to the provisions of Title 81 RCW shall be upon High Society Transportation, as provided by RCW 81.04.510.

7 To attend the hearing telephonically, you may call (253) 215-8782 and enter Meeting ID: 979 4317 7878# and Passcode: 654629#. If you wish to attend via Zoom, please email [michael.dotson@utc.wa.gov](mailto:michael.dotson@utc.wa.gov) and a link will be provided to you.

8 **THE COMMISSION GIVES NOTICE THAT ANY PARTY WHO FAILS TO ATTEND OR PARTICIPATE IN THE HEARING SET BY THIS NOTICE, OR ANY OTHER STAGE OF THIS PROCEEDING, MAY BE HELD IN DEFAULT IN ACCORDANCE WITH RCW 34.05.440 AND WAC 480-07-450.**

9 If a limited English-speaking or hearing-impaired party needs an interpreter, a form is attached to this notice to be filled out and returned as indicated, so that a qualified interpreter may be appointed at no cost to the party or witness.

10 The names and mailing addresses of all parties and their known representatives are shown as follows:

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| Carrier: | Brandon Russell<br>High Society Transportation LLC<br>302 W 5 <sup>th</sup> Steet, Unit A<br>Cle Elum, WA 98922 |
|----------|---|

brandon@highsocietytransportation.com

Representative: Unknown

Commission: Washington Utilities and  
Transportation Commission  
P.O. Box 47250  
Olympia, WA 98504-7250  
(360) 664-1160

Representative: Michael Dotson  
Compliance Investigator  
P.O. Box 47250  
Olympia, WA 98504-7250  
(360) 480-5420  
[michael.dotson@utc.wa.gov](mailto:michael.dotson@utc.wa.gov)

### **COMPLAINT SEEKING PENALTIES**

#### **PARTIES**

- 11 Complainant, the Commission, is an agency of the state of Washington, authorized by state law to regulate the rates, services, facilities, and practices of public service companies, including charter party or excursion service carriers, under the provisions of Title 81 RCW.
- 12 Respondent, High Society Transportation, is a charter party or excursion service carrier that does business in the state of Washington.

#### **JURISDICTION**

- 13 The Commission has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to RCW 80.01.040, RCW 81.04.110, RCW 81.01.010, RCW 81.04.160, RCW 81.04.460, and RCW 81.70.

## BACKGROUND

- 14 According to the Declaration of the Commission compliance investigator, presented to the undersigned administrative law judge<sup>1</sup> under penalty of perjury, the following facts establish probable cause for the Commission to complain against the activities of High Society Transportation and to seek penalties in accordance with applicable law.
- 15 On or about August 4, 2021, High Society Transportation offered to provide charter party or excursion carrier service without first having obtained a certificate from the Commission.
- 16 According to evidence obtained from the Company's Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/highsocietytransportationllc](http://www.facebook.com/highsocietytransportationllc), High Society Transportation has been operating as a charter party carrier or excursion service carrier within the state of Washington without a certificate.

## APPLICABLE LAW AND REGULATION

- 17 Under state law, the definition of "charter party carrier" includes every person "engaged in the transportation over any public highways in this state of a group of persons who, pursuant to a common purpose and under a single contract, acquire the use of a motor vehicle to travel together as a group to a specified destination or for a particular itinerary, either agreed upon in advance or modified by the chartered group after leaving the place of origin." RCW 81.70.020(1).
- 18 Under state law, the definition of charter party carrier includes a person who "advertises, solicits, offers, or enters into an agreement to carry passengers over any public highway within the state of Washington." RCW 81.70.220(1).
- 19 The term "person" can mean a corporation or firm as well as an individual. RCW 81.70.020(9). Specifically included in this term are individuals, firms, corporations, associations, partnerships, lessees, receivers, trustees, consortiums, joint venture, or commercial entities. WAC 480-30-036.
- 20 The term "charter party carrier" or "charter carrier" means every person engaged in the transportation over any public highways in this state of a group of persons who, pursuant

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<sup>1</sup> Administrative law judges appointed by the Commission are empowered, among other things, to "make findings of probable cause and issue complaints in the name of the commission." RCW 80.01.060(1).

to a common purpose and under a single contract, acquire the use of a motor vehicle to travel together as a group to a specified destination or for a particular itinerary, either agreed upon in advance or modified by the chartering group after leaving the place of origin. A person who is engaged in the transportation of persons by party bus over any public highway in this state is considered engaging in the business of a charter party carrier or excursion service carrier. WAC 480-30-036.

21 Charter party and excursion service carriers are common carriers. RCW 81.04.010(11). For the purposes of Title 81 RCW, every common carrier is a public service company. RCW 81.04.010.

22 It is illegal to engage in business as a charter party or excursion service carrier within the state of Washington without having first obtained a certificate from the Commission. RCW 81.70.220(1).

23 Any person who engages in business as a charter party or excursion service carrier in the state of Washington without having first obtained a certificate from the Commission is subject to a penalty of up to \$5,000 per violation. RCW 81.70.220(2). If the basis for the violation is advertising, each advertisement reproduced, broadcast, or displayed via a particular medium constitutes a separate violation. RCW 81.70.220(1).

24 The Commission is authorized to file a complaint on its own motion setting forth any act or omission by any public service company that violates any law or any order or rule of the Commission. RCW 81.04.110.

### **COMPLAINT**

25 The Commission, through its Staff, re-alleges the statements contained in paragraphs 14 through 24 above.

26 High Society Transportation has violated RCW 81.70.220(1) at least once by offering charter party or excursion carrier service to transport passengers without first having obtained a certificate from the Commission.

27 High Society Transportation has violated RCW 81.70.220(1) at least once by advertising to transport passengers without first having obtained a certificate from the Commission.

### REQUEST FOR RELIEF

28 Staff requests that the Commission, pursuant to its authority under RCW 81.70.220(2), assess penalties of up to \$5,000 per violation against High Society Transportation. Staff will present testimonial evidence at the hearing to address the factors for determining an appropriate penalty amount. Further, Staff may request that some portion of any penalty actually imposed be suspended for a period of time sufficient to demonstrate High Society Transportation's intent to comply with all applicable laws and rules governing the charter party and excursion service carrier industry.

### PROBABLE CAUSE

29 Based on a review of the Declaration of the Commission compliance investigator assigned to this matter, and consistent with RCW 80.01.060 and WAC 480-07-307, the Commission finds probable cause exists to issue this Complaint.

### NOTICE OF VIRTUAL HEARING

30 **THE COMMISSION GIVES NOTICE THAT it will conduct a virtual hearing concerning this Complaint concurrently with the special proceeding noticed above, which will commence at 9:30 a.m., on December 7, 2021.**

31 To attend the hearing telephonically, you may call (253) 215-8782 and enter Meeting ID: 979 4317 7878# and Passcode: 654629#. If you wish to attend via Zoom, please email [michael.dotson@utc.wa.gov](mailto:michael.dotson@utc.wa.gov) and a link will be provided to you.

32 Administrative Law Judge Rayne Pearson, from the Commission's Administrative Law Division, is designated to preside at the hearing of these matters.<sup>2</sup>

DATED at Lacey, Washington, and effective November 2, 2021.

*/s/ Samantha Doyle*  
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SAMANTHA DOYLE  
Administrative Law Judge

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<sup>2</sup> Judge Pearson can be reached by telephone at (360) 664-1136 or by email at [rayne.pearson@utc.wa.gov](mailto:rayne.pearson@utc.wa.gov).

Inquiries should be addressed to:

Amanda Maxwell  
Executive Director and Secretary  
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
P.O. Box 47250  
Olympia, WA 98504-7250  
(360) 664-1160

**NOTICE**

Hearing facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. Smoking is prohibited. If limited English-speaking, hearing-impaired parties or witnesses are involved in a hearing and need an interpreter, a qualified interpreter will be appointed at no cost to the party or witness.

If you need an interpreter, or have other special needs, please fill out and return this form to:

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
Attention: Amanda Maxwell  
Executive Director and Secretary  
P.O. Box 47250  
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

(PLEASE SUPPLY ALL REQUESTED INFORMATION)

Docket: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hearing Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hearing Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Language: \_\_\_\_\_

Hearing Impaired: (Yes)\_\_\_\_\_ (No)\_\_\_\_\_

Do you need a certified sign language interpreter?

Visual\_\_\_\_\_ Tactile\_\_\_\_\_

Other type of assistance needed: \_\_\_\_\_

English-speaking person who can be contacted if there are questions:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Phone No.: (\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_