

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

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

BLACK TIE LIMOUSINES, INC.,  
D/B/A BLACK TIE WINE TOURS,  
BLACK TIE, BLACK TIE  
TRANSPORTATION, AND WALLA  
WALLA WINE TOURS

DOCKET TE-190303

DECLARATION OF  
JASON HOXIT

Jason Hoxit, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington, declares as follows:

1. I am employed by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) as a compliance investigator in the Consumer Protection Division. As a compliance investigator, my responsibilities include conducting investigations regarding the business practices of regulated utility and transportation companies. As part of those duties, I investigate charter party and excursion service carriers that may be operating without the required Commission-issued certificate.
2. On June 14, 2018, I sent Black Tie Limousines, Inc., d/b/a Black Tie Wine Tours, Black Tie, Black Tie Transportation, and Walla Walla Wine Tours (Black Tie or Company) a compliance letter stating that the Commission believed Black Tie was “providing passenger transportation services that require charter and excursion authority from the Commission.”<sup>1</sup> The compliance letter also stated that, “[a]ny company that operates a ‘vehicle with a manufacturer’s seating capacity for eight or more passengers, including the driver, used on the public highways, for the transportation of persons for compensation’ and ‘pursuant to a common purpose and under a single contract,’ requires a charter and excursion certificate from the Commission.”
3. On June 25, 2018, Leah Maldonado, a governing person of Black Tie, responded via email stating, “I want to let you know that I have received your letter and I am working on whether this applies to us or not.”<sup>2</sup> Black Tie never contacted Commission staff after this communication.

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<sup>1</sup> See Attachment A for a copy of the compliance letter, dated June 14, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> See Attachment B for a copy of the emails with Black Tie, dated June 25, 2018, and June 26, 2018.

4. On April 10, 2019, I located the Company's website, [www.blacktiewinetours.com](http://www.blacktiewinetours.com). The website's homepage states, "Black Tie Wine Tours provides luxury transportation in one of the world's fastest growing wine regions. Each of our wine tours is completely customized for your group, can be any length of time, and can include wineries of your choice." The homepage also states that the Company provides brewery tours.<sup>3</sup> Under the website's pricing tab, the Company advertises rates for an eight passenger super stretch vehicle, a 10 passenger Mercedes Sprinter Van, and an 11 passenger van.<sup>4</sup> The Company's website provides a contact phone number of (509) 525-8585.
5. On April 10, 2019, I searched Washington Secretary of State's database, and Washington Department of Revenue's Business Licensing Service's database, which produced records showing Black Tie in active status in the state of Washington. I found the governing people of Amy Bruner, Leah Maldonado, and Manuel Maldonado, an address of 1650 Reser Rd., Walla Walla, WA 99362, and UBI: 602-276-517.<sup>5</sup>
6. On April 11, 2019, I searched Commission records and found that Black Tie is not a certificated charter party and excursion service carrier.<sup>6</sup>
7. On April 11, 2019, I completed a reservation form under an assumed name through Black Tie's website.<sup>7</sup> On April 11, 2019, Amy, a representative of Black Tie, sent me an email from [reservations@blacktiewinetours.com](mailto:reservations@blacktiewinetours.com) stating that both the sprinter van and the passenger van are available on June 28, 2019, and June 29, 2019.<sup>8</sup> Amy's signature line provides UBI: 602-276-517, phone number (509) 525-8585, and web address of [www.blacktiewinetours.com](http://www.blacktiewinetours.com).
8. On April 12, 2019, I emailed Black Tie stating that, "I'm looking to take a group of 10 on a wine tour on 6/29/19. We'll all be staying at the Marcus Whitman Hotel in Walla Walla and would like for your company to pick us up around 11am at the hotel, take us to multiple wineries in the Walla Walla area, possibly take us to a nice restaurant for dinner, and then take us back to our hotel. I'd imagine this will require the Mercedes Sprinter Van (the vehicle I prefer) for about 5-6+ hours."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Attachment C for a copy of Black Tie's website, captured on April 10, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> See Attachment D for a copy of the Company's website, captured on April 10, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> See Attachment E for a copy of Washington Secretary of State, and Washington State Department of Revenue's Business Licensing Service records, captured on April 10, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> See Attachment F for a copy of Commission records, captured April 11, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> See Attachment G for a copy of the Company's "Reservations" page, captured on April 11, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> See Attachment H for a copy of the emails with Black Tie, dated April 11, 2019, and April 12, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

9. On April 12, 2019, Amy responded via email stating, “The sprinter van is available on Saturday, June 29th. For a five hour tour, the cost would be \$550.00 plus 5% fuel charge and 15% driver gratuity for a grand total of \$660.00. Each additional hour would be \$110.00 plus the 20% for a total of \$132.00 per hour.”<sup>10</sup>

DATED this first day of May, 2019, at Olympia, Washington.

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JASON HOXIT

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<sup>10</sup> *Id.*