Introducing the Legal Context Protocol

An open standard that gives agentic commerce a legal foundation.

By:
Bridget McCormack, president and CEO, AAA
David Fisher, CEO, Integra Ledger

Software agents have begun to transact on behalf of the businesses that deploy them. They can purchase services, commit funds, and accept terms at machine speed without human review. Gartner projects that by 2028, 90% of B2B purchases will be intermediated by AI agents, moving more than $15 trillion through automated exchanges.

The infrastructure to move the money and to authorize the agents already works. What does not yet exist is the infrastructure the law relies on for enforcement: a reliable record of what was agreed, by whom, on what terms, and under what jurisdiction's law. When people transact, that record is a byproduct of their interaction. There are messages, drafts, retained copies, often a signed contract, and someone who can later say what was understood. Disputes about terms are old and ordinary, and the law has resolved them for as long as there has been commerce, precisely because the proof needed to settle them is usually there to be found. Autonomous agents transacting at scale break that assumption. Across millions of transactions a day, the record may be partial, inconsistent between the parties, or absent altogether. What is routine and recoverable at human scale becomes unmanaged legal risk at machine scale.

But it doesn't have to be. The Legal Context Protocol (LCP) is an open standard for the legal context of agentic commerce. It makes the terms governing any agentic transaction discoverable before the deal, provable afterward, and tied to the law the parties chose to govern it. It is free to adopt, owned by no one, and built so that its stewardship can pass to a neutral foundation.

LCP launches with founding contributors that span the agentic economy: enterprise and payments companies such as Google, IBM, Circle, UiPath, and Wayfair; leading blockchain networks including Stellar Development Foundation, Ava Labs Inc., Cardano, Hedera, Mysten Labs, the original contributor to Sui, Aptos Foundation, and Sei Labs; and identity and infrastructure providers such as Crossmint, Pinata, Baselayer, Trinsic, and the First Person Cooperative. A legal foundation for agentic commerce is only useful if it is common to all of it, and from the outset, it is.

What it is

Every agentic transaction has terms. They might be standard across a particular service, or specific to a single deal, negotiated or generated in the moment. LCP does not standardize terms or advise parties on them. It standardizes how parties locate terms, bind them to payments, and can verify them later.

The exact terms that govern a transaction produce a unique cryptographic fingerprint, and that fingerprint is bound to the payment. From that moment the terms are provable and tamper-evident; they are tied to that specific transaction, and open to verification afterward by either party or by a court, regulator, or other reviewer.

LCP allows the legal frameworks that have supported all of commerce to support agents engaging in it. It makes the governing terms discoverable, so an agent can find and evaluate them before it commits. It makes them provable, because the fingerprint can be confirmed by anyone. And it allows the parties to elect their dispute-resolution path and the governing law for the transaction.

LCP supplies the evidentiary foundation to support enforcement and grow trust. It does not make an agreement enforceable; it makes provable the agreement on which enforceability turns.

What it is not

Because LCP sits where law meets technology, it can be mistaken for more than it is.

It is not a mandate on any party's terms. As in traditional commerce, parties set them as they see fit. LCP governs where they are found and how they are verified.

It is not a checkpoint in the transaction. It does not sit in the payment path, slow a deal, or block it. It is an audit trail, produced alongside the transaction rather than standing in its way.

It is not tied to any single technology. LCP requires no special infrastructure to adopt. Where parties want stronger guarantees, other technologies, including blockchains, can build on it, but none is required.

And it is not a product or anyone's property. LCP is published under an Apache 2.0 license, and its governance is designed to move to a neutral foundation, so that no participant, including its creators, controls the standard that others rely on.

Why we created it

The agentic-commerce ecosystem has advanced quickly, and the pace isn't slowing down. Payment rails now let agents move value, and identity and authorization frameworks increasingly establish who is acting. Each protocol supporting these functions has advanced the market's potential, and LCP integrates seamlessly with all of them. It rides within the payment and authorization protocols that agents use, rather than competing with them.

Payment systems show what was paid. Identity systems show who acted. But neither supplies the legal terms that govern the transaction, which jurisdiction's law applies, or what process the parties want to follow if something goes wrong.

The law is not an obstacle; it is an enabler, even an accelerant. New technologies have been known to advance faster than the law that supports them, and that gap can slow adoption and increase risk. With a protocol for attaching legal terms to agentic transactions, this market has a head start in growing trust and adoption.

Contract law has long accommodated automated contracting. The Uniform Electronic Transactions Act contemplates contracts formed through the interaction of electronic agents, even where no individual reviewed the agents' actions or the resulting terms; E-SIGN gives legal effect to electronic signatures; and UNCITRAL's 2024 Model Law on Automated Contracting carries the same principle into cross-border practice. Settled law supports new markets. We assume there will be new legal questions that agentic commerce introduces. But with the LCP, what the parties agreed will be clear and knowable, allowing those questions to be resolved against a reliable record.

Novel legal questions need an accurate and shared record of what the parties' expectations were at the time of transaction. Where the record is missing or contested, enforcement collapses into an argument about whose records to believe.

A standard governing this record cannot belong to one party to a transaction, or to any single vendor; if it did, it could not serve as a trustworthy shared reference. LCP was therefore created as an open standard; it is neutral by design. The fuller argument for why agentic commerce needs this layer, and why we describe the result as trust in depth, appears in the companion white paper, *"Identity, Trust, and the Legal Foundations of Agentic Commerce"*, by David Fisher and Bridget McCormack.

How it works in practice

The digital proof does not add a step to the transaction; it is a byproduct of payment. Before an agent commits, it retrieves the terms for that specific transaction and checks them against the fingerprint quoted for it. If satisfied, the agent proceeds: the fingerprint is recorded with the payment, and each side keeps its own copy of the terms.

That binding is what makes the record dependable later. If the transaction is later questioned in a dispute, an audit, or a regulatory inquiry, either side can recalculate the fingerprint from the terms it kept and match it against the one recorded with the payment. The result is independent confirmation of which terms governed, without either party having to trust the other's records.

What it means for you

Whichever side of the transaction you are on, LCP is what keeps it auditable, provable, and grounded in law. For a service that agents will pay for, publishing your legal context allows them to transact with you with full information and signals that you stand behind your terms. Requiring legal context as part of a transaction before it closes is due diligence, applied at machine scale.

To go further: read the white paper for the full framework behind the standard; review the specification, or direct your teams to it; and, if your organization believes agentic commerce needs a legal foundation, join the contributors building it. The standard is open to any organization ready to help.

Autonomous agents will transact at a scale and speed no legal system has confronted before. The rule of law has underpinned commerce for centuries. LCP is how it keeps pace.

The Legal Context Protocol is stewarded by Integra Ledger and the American Arbitration Association, with founding contributors. The specification, reference implementation, and companion white paper are available at legalcontextprotocol.org.