

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

SURFACE TRANSPORT PANEL

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE

DATE: 10 NOVEMBER 2009

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update the Surface Transport Panel on the work being undertaken by the Taxi and Private Hire Directorate and to respond to questions raised by the Panel at the meeting on 19 May 2009.

2 ENGAGEMENT WITH TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE TRADES

- 2.1 The new Director of Taxi and Private Hire, John Mason, started work at the end of September 2009. Effective engagement with the taxi and private hire trades is a key priority for him as he seeks to understand their issues and develop his plans for the Directorate. He also continues to speak to drivers and operators directly to identify the issues that matter most to them.

3 REVIEW OF DRIVER LICENSING APPROVAL PROCESS

- 3.1 The Taxi and Private Hire Directorate has a long established, robust process in place for vetting would-be taxi or private hire drivers in London. Anyone with a history of violence would not have been licensed until they had a clean record for a minimum of three years, more if the original offence was of a serious nature, or racially motivated, or if the individual had more than one conviction for a violent offence. The Licensing Authority made decisions on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- 3.2 A recent high profile case raised significant concerns about the underlying licensing guidelines. TfL commissioned a review of these guidelines and introduced a series of immediate changes as a result.
- 3.3 Applications for taxi or private hire driver licences from anyone with a serious criminal record will now be refused unless there are exceptional mitigating circumstances. In addition, a review panel will be established by the end of this year where complex and sensitive cases can be presented and discussed before a decision whether or not to issue a licence is made. It is expected that the panel will include experts in the fields of criminal justice as well as senior representatives from TfL.

4 REAR WINDOW ADVERTISING IN TAXIS

- 4.1 Following an approach by the taxi trade in February this year to allow advertising on the rear windscreen of licensed taxis, TfL has worked with interested parties and implemented the change at the end of October 2009.

- 4.2 This change allows advertising on the lower 33 per cent of the glass area, measured from the lower edge of the glass at the window seal (similar to private hire vehicle signage). The specification outlines materials which can be used so that visibility into and out of the vehicle is maintained and any media on the glass is not visible to rear facing passengers.
- 4.3 This change has been implemented by amending the Public Carriage Office's advertising guidelines. No changes to legislation were required.

5 DRIVER SHIELDS IN PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

- 5.1 TfL is generally supportive of measures which improve the safety of passengers and drivers. It is also important that any after-market parts do not compromise the safety of the vehicles (for example, create a fire hazard or conflict with safety equipment such as air bags).
- 5.2 TfL has passed on advice from the British Standards Institute (BSI) and the Vehicle Certification Agency regarding the installation of driver shields in private hire vehicles to the manufacturer to help them obtain approval. TfL is advised that approval has not yet been received. In the meantime, there is a choice of licensed vehicle types in London (Mercedes Eurocab, Fiat Scudo and Peugeot Partner) which allow optional factory fitted shields.

6 CCTV IN TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

- 6.1 In June 2009, TfL issued guidelines relating to the use of CCTV in both taxis and private hire vehicles. These guidelines assist the vehicle owners with fitting CCTV equipment safely and provide advice on ensuring compliance with data protection requirements.
- 6.2 In addition, TfL can provide signs for vehicle owners to complete and display in their vehicles notifying passengers of the presence of CCTV equipment, as set out in the CCTV Code of Practice 2008 issued by the Information Commissioner.

7 MAYOR'S AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

- 7.1 The first draft of the Mayor's Air Quality Strategy (MAQS) was published on 5 October 2009. The MAQS notes that taxis and private hire vehicles have the potential to make a significant contribution to improving London's air quality and ensuring that London does not breach EU emission thresholds.
- 7.2 TfL has been discussing options with leading representatives of the taxi and private hire industries since the summer. TfL is now organising a series of workshops for taxi and private hire trade stakeholders to ensure that they can fully contribute to the development of London's air quality strategy. These workshops will seek the stakeholders' views and concerns with regard to the proposals and identify other suggestions and ideas to include in an emissions reduction strategy.
- 7.3 The first of these workshops is due to take place in November 2009, with two further workshops scheduled for January and March 2010. These workshops are expected to lead a specific taxi and private hire consultation document for the trades on more specific proposals developed in partnership to accompany

the next phase of public consultation on the MAQS expected to commence in late March 2010.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Panel is asked to NOTE this report.

9 CONTACT

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