
Secretariat memorandum

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Agenda item: 7
Ref: LTW511
Drafted: 02.11.15

Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle issues

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To summarise for members various current taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) issues that are current.

2 ID and complaints notice for taxis

- 2.1 London TravelWatch has a long standing request on TfL regarding the mandating of a driver ID and complaints notice in the vehicle, located where passengers might see it. This would take the form of a notice (A5 size) behind the driver showing a driver photo and an explanation of how passengers might complain. TfL has accepted the principle of this, but have yet to initiate a consultation with the taxi trade as this constantly competes with other priorities.

3 Private Hire Regulations Review: Response to Consultation and further Proposals

- 3.1 TfL has initiated a consultation regarding 25 new proposals to regulate the PHV (mini-cab) industry. A TfL officer will be attending the Board meeting to explain the proposals.
- 3.2 Most of these proposals will be uncontroversial for London TravelWatch as there are many benefits for passengers. However, there is one regulation that might be regarded as inconveniencing passengers. TfL plan to regulate so that the journey cannot commence until five minutes from it being requested. This proposal is designed to give a little time for the passenger to receive the details of the driver and satisfy themselves they are comfortable with the information being supplied. It will have the effect of marginally differentiating between the instantaneous hail of a Black Cab and the traditional ordering of a Private Hire Vehicle which Uber- type apps have eroded.
- 3.3 There are other technical proposals that allow TfL to oversee the industry better, but also some that will mean a better service for passengers. TfL plan to:

- mandate a level of English language proficiency for drivers;
- enhance drivers topographical skills;
- improve/introduce a complaints system;
- introduce disability awareness: and
- improve driver training.

4 Taxi Fare and Tariff review 2016

- 4.1 TfL consults on and then implements changes to taxi fares annually. This follows a formula that determines the cost of operating a taxi and incentivising drivers to work in the evening and night.
- 4.2 Alongside the fares revision this is an opportunity to consult on other fare related changes.
- 4.3 The issues TfL are consulting on outside of the basic fare rise are:
- introducing a provision for fares to fall if the price of fuel falls substantially (this mirrors an existing arrangement of fare rises with exceptional fuel rises);
 - changing the current minimum fare;
 - changing the highest (late night) fare;
 - a marginal change to the increase in cost of fares that applies to a journey of over 6 miles;
 - a proposal to fix or cap some fares, e.g. Heathrow to central London.
- 4.5 Please note that the final bullet point is promoted in our airports report and as such accords with London TravelWatch's policy and is therefore supported.

5 Public consultation on proposals for paying by credit/debit card in taxis

- 5.1 TfL have previously consulted on mandating that credit cards should be accepted by all taxis in London. The responses to the consultation have been analysed and reported to the Surface Transport Panel (not a decision making committee). London TravelWatch supported the proposal.
- 5.2 TfL say that only half of taxis presently accept credit cards. 83% of those polled (90% of actual users) would like to be able to pay in this manner.
- 5.3 TfL intend to promote a recommendation to its Board that card payment becomes mandatory and that there is no fee. The minimum fare would apply and receipts would be issued. This has been a longstanding objective of London TravelWatch. To date this has not been to the TfL Board for approval.

6 Pedicabs

- 6.1 Pedicabs have operated in central London for a number of years. They generally provide an attractive ride for tourists, but have made the headlines for

high charges. There are concerns that they are unregulated and are a nuisance insofar as they create additional congestion and inconvenience by parking in an inconsiderate manner. There are personal and road safety concerns.

- 6.2 There are calls for both banning and regulation. Either would require a change in the law as there are no powers to ban or regulate. Regulation may effectively mean a ban as there are stringent laws regarding vehicles such as crashworthiness that pedicabs are unlikely to be able to comply with.
- 6.3 The police and Westminster council undertake some enforcement activity using the limited powers they have.

7 New technology – Taxi and PHV apps

- 7.1 There has been a much publicity and controversy regarding the Uber company and its move into private hire in London. Uber is similar to other PHV operators in many ways insofar as they are regulated by TfL as a PHV operator. However, their use of smartphone technology means their drivers and vehicles can effectively be requested using a smartphone rather than a wave of the hand (at a taxi) or a phone call to a PHV operator’s office.
- 7.2 From a consumer perspective this means more choice and competition for passengers. However, it may also lead to less availability of accessible taxis and drivers with the ‘Knowledge’ because of a reduction in the number of licensed taxis and drivers as demonstrated in 8.1 below. Private hire charges are unregulated and are varied by Uber in response to demand. A further problem may be to exacerbate congestion because drivers will ‘honeypot’ around the most lucrative locations, such as airports, stations, town centres and entertainment centres.
- 7.3 Some of the provisions discussed in 3 above are a response to the introduction of new technology into the industry.

8 Rising numbers of PHVs

- 8.1 TfL are reporting a sharp rise in the number of licensed Private Hire Vehicle drivers and vehicles whilst the numbers of taxi and taxi drivers is relatively stable. The Mayor has suggested this is contributing to congestion in the central area and that numbers should be controlled, however this would require legislation. A license has to be granted to anyone who fulfils the relevant criteria.

License type	Taxis P5 2013/14	Taxis P6 2014/15	Taxis P5 2015/16	PHV P5 2013/14	PHV P6 2014/15	PHV P5 2015/16
Drivers	25,524	25,546	25,067	67,504	70,928	80,663
Vehicles	22,500	22,597	22,359	51,400	56,167	64,731

9 Private Hire Vehicles and taxis in bus lanes

- 9.2 Being allowed into bus lanes is a longstanding aspiration of the PHV industry on the grounds of equity with taxis. This has been resisted by TfL. London TravelWatch supports this position.
- 9.3 This is being challenged through the courts. TfL have won at several stages of the legal process that means there is now a strong likelihood that they will win at the Court of Appeal.

10 Tottenham Court Road

- 10.1 Camden council is proceeding to implement a new traffic management scheme for Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street to revert their operation to two-way. This is a long standing aspiration of London TravelWatch's as it is very beneficial for buses and their passengers. There are additional benefits for pedestrians, cycles and business.
- 10.2 It is intended to ban Taxis and PHVs from travelling the length of Tottenham Court Road during certain hours in order that the street operates without too much congestion. These vehicles can serve the area using side roads and crossing Tottenham Court Road.
- 10.3 This is an innovative proposal and may well be beneficial in terms of making the best use of available road space in central London, but may disadvantage taxi and PHV operators and users.

11 Cabs at airports – additional charge

- 11.1 There is an extra charge of £2.80 for journeys that start from Heathrow Airport ranks. London TravelWatch wants to see this additional charge abolished. If this is not to happen then there must be clear information that passengers will have to pay this additional charge.

12 London Assembly scrutiny

- 12.1 In December 2014 the London Assembly Transport Committee published a report of its scrutiny into the taxi and PHV industry. The report makes 19 recommendations, some of which are being progressed by TfL. These recommendations are appended below and TfL are asked to report on their progress at the Board meeting.

13 Taxi fare transparency

- 13.1 The taxi fare that a passenger is charged is difficult to understand because there is a minimum fare and then two further elements, time and distance. There are also three tariffs for different time bands and additionally the cost goes up after 6 miles. Very few passengers know that a fare can also be negotiated with the driver before the journey commences. It is a longstanding aspiration of London

TravelWatch that there should be greater transparency for passengers, but this will mean some fundamental changes.

14 Recommendations

- 14.1 Members consider this report.

15 Equalities and inclusion implications

- 15.1 Taxis and Private Hire vehicles provide door to door accessible transport for passengers that are unable to use mainstream public transport and have no access to private transport. It is therefore important that this aspect of the service is considered.

16 London TravelWatch priority

- 16.1 Whilst Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles journeys are small in number they are nevertheless an important part of London's public transport. They provide transport at times and between locations that may not be well served, or where passengers are encumbered with luggage or are just in a hurry. Most importantly they provide door to door accessible transport for passengers that are unable to use mainstream public transport and have no access to private transport. Therefore it is appropriate that the Board understand the issues for Taxi and Private Hire vehicle passengers. This Board meeting themed around these modes is therefore an appropriate use of the Board's time.

17 Legal powers

- 17.1 Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider - and where it appears to the Committee to be desirable, to make recommendations with respect to - any matter affecting the functions of the Greater London Authority or Transport for London which relate to transport (other than of freight).

18 Financial implications

- 18.1 There is no financial implication for London TravelWatch as a result of this report.

Recommendation 1

By May 2015, the Mayor should publish a long term strategy for the development of both taxi and private hire industries. The strategy should clearly set out the Mayor's position on the continued role of taxi and private hire services in London, and actions that will improve passenger and driver safety, guarantee a sufficient number of high quality drivers and vehicles across the city, and ensure that all services meet the highest possible standards for accessibility. The strategy should also set out how TfL will strengthen its enforcement and clamp down on illegal activity, within a clear and transparent governance and decision-making framework.

Recommendation 2

By May 2015, the Mayor and TfL should develop specific public awareness campaigns which show how to correctly identify whether a driver/vehicle is licensed. TfL should also work with the tourism industry to ensure that visitors arriving in London have access to this information.

Recommendation 3

By May 2015, TfL should further develop the database that links drivers to vehicle and operator information. TfL should work with app developers to produce a tool that will enable passengers to check the status of their driver, vehicle or operator.

Recommendation 4

By May 2015, TfL should produce a signage strategy for the licensed taxi and private hire industries, including plans to pilot number plate-based fixed signage.

Recommendation 5

By March 2015, The Mayor and TfL should report back to the Assembly on options to incentivise the uptake of cashless payment options, for both the taxi and private hire industries.

Recommendation 6

By May 2015, the Mayor and TfL should set out how they intend to monitor and improve supply and demand, for both taxi and private hire industries, across London. This should include a specific study into potential demand for taxi services in outer London town centre locations.

Recommendation 7

By May 2015, the Mayor and TfL should set out plans to ensure that all Underground stations located on the 24-hour Tube network have a taxi rank in place by the launch of the programme in September 2015, and suburban Underground and National Rail stations have a rank by May 2016. TfL should also prioritise rank provision in outer London town centre locations with unmet demand. Rank locations should be included on TfL journey planning tools and TfL should explore options for increasing the visibility of ranks through distinctive signage. The Mayor and TfL should also set out clear guidance for event planners to ensure that taxi and private hire provision is explicitly contained in transport planning for major events and attractions.

Recommendation 8

By May 2015, the Mayor and TfL should satisfy this Committee that the entry requirements into each market are fit for purpose. This should include providing evidence that there are no artificial barriers to entry, that the requirements are relevant to the specific demands of each industry and that they ensure protection for passengers, drivers, and other road users.

Recommendation 9

The Mayor and TfL should ensure that disabled taxi and private hire passengers' needs are met by taking steps to incentivise the provision of wheelchair accessible private hire vehicles (for example, through reduced vehicle licensing fees) with a view to reaching 25 per cent wheelchair accessibility across the private hire fleet by 2018. By May 2015, TfL should also introduce requirements for all taxi and private hire drivers and operators to undertake mandatory disability awareness training as part of the licensing process. TfL should also enforce a zero-tolerance approach to drivers and operators across both industries who illegally refuse to carry disabled passengers, and increase the visibility of its complaints process so that disabled passengers can name and shame providers who break the law. Drivers and operators who are found to not comply with these regulations should face suspension of their licences.

Recommendation 10

By March 2015, the Metropolitan Police should improve the information it collects on cab-related crime, to ensure greater understanding of whether offences are committed by licensed taxis, private hire vehicles and Pedicabs, and by licensed or unlicensed drivers/vehicles.

Recommendation 11

By May 2015, The Mayor and TfL should provide the Committee with a definitive assessment of the resources currently devoted to enforcement, setting out costed plans to increase these where necessary and address funding gaps. This should include options to increase licence fees to ensure adequate enforcement resources are available.

Recommendation 12

By March 2015, The Mayor and TfL and the Metropolitan Police should set out specific steps that will be taken to improve the efficiency and visibility of non-covert night-time operations.

Recommendation 13

The Mayor and TfL should immediately clarify the policy on destination bookings and reinstate the requirement for private hire drivers and operators to record a destination at time of booking.

Recommendation 14

By March 2015, The Mayor and TfL should conduct a full review of the policy on 'satellite offices', identifying and securing the enforcement resources required to regulate these effectively, including plans to clamp down on unlicensed 'marshals'. Any further satellite office applications should be suspended until this has been achieved.

Recommendation 15

By May 2015, the Mayor and TfL should enable greater joined-up working on enforcement, including working with the private hire trade and boroughs to develop a cohesive, pan-London policy on picking up/setting down arrangements.

Recommendation 16

The Government should act upon the findings of the Law Commission Review and propose legislation that introduces stiffer penalties for touting, and greater enforcement powers for borough and police officers, including higher fines and vehicle seizure powers.

Recommendation 17

By May 2015, The Mayor's office, TfL and the trades should develop and publish a Memorandum of Understanding which clearly sets out terms of reference and defines the respective roles, responsibilities and expectations of each party. This should include specific service level agreements.

Recommendation 18

By March 2015, TfL should revise its driver engagement activity to ensure that it is as widely representative as possible, and improve the transparency of taxi and private hire policy and decision making processes by routinely publishing the minutes of meetings with the trades. TfL should also provide and publish a detailed breakdown of annual licence fee spending.

Recommendation 19

By March 2015, the Mayor and TfL should set out how it will increase the visibility and accessibility of its complaints process, and improve systems for passengers to give feedback and make complaints about both taxi and private hire services. Complaints data should be reported to the TfL Board on a quarterly basis.