

London TravelWatch response to TfL's review of taxi (black cab) fares and tariffs 2025

Taxi use in London

Despite travel by taxi making up a relatively small proportion of journeys in London, they play an important part in London's public transport network. There are many instances when taxis can help people get around when other options aren't viable or available, allowing people to travel at times and between locations that may not be well served by other types of transport.

Taxis can be particularly important in outer London where public transport options are more limited than in central London. They can also be vital when travelling at night, for example for those going home after working a night shift.

Most importantly they can provide door to door accessible transport for people who face barriers to using other types of transport (such as lack of step free access), and who have no access to private transport. In light of this, they can be particularly important to disabled people and older people. It is vital that this aspect of taxi services is considered when making any changes to the system.

Proposed changes

London TravelWatch understands the need to increase taxi fares and tariffs given the considerable rise in costs to taxi drivers in recent years, and the falling number of licenced taxis and taxi drivers in London. TfL licencing data shows these have fallen by 21% and 25% respectively since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, reducing the availability of taxi services for people who need them.

It is important to protect the number of remaining taxis available so that people can still access them when they need them. Fare increases will help make sure taxi drivers can continue to cover their operating costs, as well as mitigate the risk of drivers changing careers if they no longer see this as a financially viable or attractive option.

However, it is important to strike a balance between taxi drivers being fairly paid (and maintaining service levels) and people who use taxis getting fair and affordable fares. As noted in TfL's consultation documents, high fares are already a concern for some - 52% of taxi passengers thought that in general taxi fares were too expensive, with this rising to 73% for disabled taxi passengers. Only 47% thought they were about right, with just 25% of disabled taxi passengers agreeing. Only 1% of all taxi passengers said that taxi fares are too low.¹ Taken together, this highlights how important it is that people aren't priced out of using the service.

High fares and fare increases are also likely to disproportionately disadvantage people who rely on taxis for accessibility or safety reasons. If prices are unaffordable, people

¹ Black cabs and minicabs Customer Satisfaction Survey, Verian, 2024/25

may for example have to choose less safe but cheaper options or not be able to travel at all. This adds more barriers to accessing important things like healthcare, employment and education. We would therefore like to see mitigations put in place to reduce any negative impacts on these groups.

While mitigations can be put in place to protect these groups, this should also be considered in the structure of the fare increases. For example, we would call for Tariff 3, which covers fares for journeys taken at night-time, to be more protected from high increases. This will protect people who have to travel by taxi at night, for example if public transport services to their area are no longer running, from increased costs. This is particularly important from a safety perspective. Our research found that 31% of people who reported feeling unsafe when travelling in London decided to take private hire vehicles or taxis more.² Higher fares may result in some people being stranded overnight if they can't afford a taxi.

We do, however, recognise the differential between Tariff 3 and Tariffs 1 and 2 which provides an important incentive for taxi drivers to operate at night, which helps maintain service levels. Again, a balance is needed.

Mitigations

If taxi fares are increased, we would like to see TfL take steps to reduce any negative impacts on people travelling around London, with a particular focus on disabled people and people travelling at night.

- With licenced taxis and taxi drivers still significantly below pre-pandemic levels, we would like to see TfL explore wider and more innovative ways to make the profession more attractive and increase the number of drivers and in turn service availability. While fare levels are an important part of this, there are other contributing factors that could be explored to support drivers while also not adding further costs to passengers. We recognise TfL's [Taxi and Private Hire Action Plan 2025](#) includes actions to attract and retain drivers, and expect to see these measures implemented alongside engagement with driver representative groups.
- Extra support should be put in place for Taxicard members to help protect them from taxi fare increases. This could include:
 - Freezing member contributions, with the increase in fares instead covered by TfL and the boroughs
 - Exploring the option of allowing "triple swiping", so members can choose to use three subsidies in one trip to reduce the cost of longer journeys
 - Increase the number of taxi drivers who can access and accept Taxicard bookings to improve the service for members through increased availability and reduced wait times.
- Protect night services, including the Night Tube and London Overground services and night buses, to ensure that these remain a safe and viable alternative to those who can't afford taxis when travelling at night.

² ["Personal security on London's transport network: Recommendations for safer travel"](#), London TravelWatch, January 2022

- TfL should continue work to make other modes of transport more accessible, including improving step-free access across the Tube and London Overground, and providing more real-time information on lift and escalator services.
- In the longer term, we would like to see measures to increase the number of accessible vehicles in the private hire industry. As it currently stands, the lack of accessibility means that there is a section of the community who do not have the option to use Private Hire Vehicles, and this needs to be addressed so in future they have a feasible alternative to taxis.

London City Airport drop off/pick up fees

As part of this review, London City Airport is planning to increase the fee taxi drivers pay when using the taxi rank at the airport and to introduce a fee which all vehicles must pay when dropping off at the airport terminal. The Airport has asked TfL to make changes so taxi drivers can add extra charges to the metered fare, so they are paid by passengers when taking a taxi from the airport taxi rank and when they are dropped off by taxi at the airport terminal.

Having considered the proposal, London TravelWatch does not object to adding a proposed fee to the taxi fare, though again more generally note the need to balance the needs of passengers with drivers.

More widely in future, TfL may wish to consider standard pricing from each London airport to central London addresses. This would help manage costs for people who need to use a taxi to travel to the airport for accessibility reasons and remove the risk of significantly increased costs in the event of high traffic. It would also encourage drivers to avoid busy areas as much as possible.