

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

SURFACE TRANSPORT PANEL

SUBJECT: PRIVATE HIRE CONSULTATION OUTCOME

DATE: 8 FEBRUARY 2012

1 PURPOSE AND DECISION REQUIRED

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide further information to the Panel regarding a proposed Driving Standards Agency (DSA) Assessment for private hire drivers.
- 1.2 The Panel is asked to NOTE the contents of this paper.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The private hire consultation undertaken by TfL, which closed in January 2011, proposed that all new private hire drivers would be required to pass a DSA taxi and private hire vehicle driving assessment before becoming licensed.
- 2.2 The responses to the consultation were mixed with some parties supporting the proposal while many within the private hire trade such as the Licensed Private Hire Car Association and many larger operators against the proposal. They felt such a requirement would be over-regulatory given the number of larger, more executive private hire operators who already provide additional training to drivers.
- 2.3 Despite these concerns, having reviewed all of the responses to the consultation, and being aware of the diversity within the private hire industry, it was considered appropriate to proceed with this requirement in order to ensure a minimum standard across all drivers.
- 2.4 The outcome of the private hire consultation was presented to the meeting of the Panel in July 2011 and Members were advised of the recommendations for each of the original proposals. This matter was debated in further detail as there remained concern that this proposal was unnecessary, would be over-regulatory for the industry and perhaps be a barrier to entry for drivers. It was agreed that TfL would undertake further work to understand the full impact on the private hire industry.

3 PRIVATE HIRE CONSULTATION PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The requirement that private hire drivers must pass the DSA assessment was included in the consultation to help raise private hire driver standards to a minimum standard across the whole private hire industry. It was felt that this would benefit the travelling public and the private hire trade by ensuring consistency. Although some large private hire operators require their drivers to

undertake some form of training or assessment, there is not one consistent standard of driver training or assessment applied throughout London.

- 3.2 The DSA advanced driving assessment has successfully formed a part of the taxi driver applications process for many years and all taxi drivers are required to undergo this before becoming licensed.
- 3.3 The DSA Taxi and PHV driving assessment provides an industry standard throughout the UK. It is more demanding than the learner test and assesses a driver's ability to transport passengers safely in an urban environment. In addition, the assessment includes an element of eco-driving.
- 3.4 As stated above, feedback from the consultation was mixed. Some large operators felt that the proposal to have a driving assessment would be a restriction to them recruiting drivers. However, there were a number of respondents that supported the proposal including LondonTravelWatch and the Police.
- 3.5 Since the Panel meeting in July 2011, further analysis has been carried out to determine the overall impacts on the private hire industry, should such a requirement become mandatory.
- 3.6 From the analysis carried out the key benefits include:
 - (a) increased safety of passengers and other road users by improving the driving standards of new drivers;
 - (b) assurance that all new drivers are able to demonstrate their ability to not only drive in the UK but also carry passengers safely in an urban environment;
 - (c) assessment to the same standards as licensed London taxi drivers;
 - (d) improved professionalism and image of PHV drivers in London; and
 - (e) raised standard of London PHV drivers to meet that of other major licensing authorities in England and Wales such as Leeds, Leicester and Cardiff.

Potential disadvantages include:

- (a) assessment could cause delays before becoming licensed;
- (b) An additional one-off cost for individual applicants prior to becoming licensed (up to £96);
- (c) An unknown impact on the ability of private hire operators to recruit drivers as the assessment could be seen as a barrier to entry; and
- (d) Additional verification processes to be implemented within TfL to ensure that a driver has completed the DSA assessment before becoming licensed.

4 OPTIONS

- 4.1 The following options have been considered since the Panel meeting in July 2011:
- (a) introduction of a requirement that all new private hire driver applicants undertake the DSA assessment prior to becoming licensed. In addition, all existing drivers be encouraged to undertake the assessment;
 - (b) encouraging new and existing drivers to undertake a DSA assessment and/or an eco-driver course, but not making this mandatory; and
 - (c) do nothing.
- 4.2 Having reviewed the options available and the impact on the private hire industry, should this be introduced as a mandatory requirement, it is considered that option (b) is the most appropriate way to proceed.

5 LEGAL/FINANCIAL/CROSS-MODAL

- 5.1 There are no legal or financial implications to TfL to implement any of the options. However, there will be financial implications on individual private hire applicants with either option (a) or (b).

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Panel is asked to NOTE the contents of this paper and the selected option to proceed with encouraging new and existing drivers to undertake either the DSA Assessment or an eco-driver training course, but to not make this mandatory.

7 CONTACT

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