

## **Taxi Operational Performance Seminar**

10 December 2018

**Attendees:** Transport for London (TfL), Metropolitan Police Cabs Unit, City of London Police, London Cab Drivers Club (LCDC), Licensed Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA), Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union (RMT), Unite the Union (Unite)

### **Review of previous actions:**

LCDC: Requested that discussion minutes be taken at trade meetings and that comments or questions be attributed to specific parties.

TfL: Reaffirmed that all meeting notes are distributed amongst attendees for comment and agreement prior to online publication.

There was broad agreement that if something was specifically requested to be recorded in the meeting this would be decided upon within the meeting to avoid any disagreement.

**Previous action: TfL to consider raising the trades concerns about taxis being excluded from borough-led low emission zones.**

TfL: Confirmed that guidance is being drafted regarding these schemes with specific reference to taxis.

LTDA: Asked when the guidance would be available and said that they could confirm that the City of London is aware that this guidance will soon be available.

RMT: Confirmed that the zones were being enforced.

TfL: Explained that the guidance would be available in the New Year and stressed that it is only guidance and that the London boroughs or City of London would ultimately make decisions for the streets under their control. (see actions).

**Previous action: TfL to give advice on whether starting the meter on arrival for a Taxicard booking has Equality Act implications.**

TfL: Said that it saw no reason to treat a Taxicard booking differently to any other taxi job, with respect to the DfT's statutory guidance which says: "in practice, a meter should not be left running whilst the driver performs duties required by the Act, or the passenger enters, leaves or secures their wheelchair within the passenger compartment."

**Previous action: TfL to provide guidance on taxis setting down and picking up on cycle lanes.**

TfL: General road users are allowed to enter advisory cycle lanes (no solid white line, no blue paint) but the regulations for mandatory cycle lanes (those separated from the carriageway by a solid white line) with regards to London taxi drivers needs some further clarification (see actions).

LTDA: Said that they believe that taxis are permitted to enter mandatory cycle lanes and that access to semi-segregated cycle lanes should be looked into.

Previous action: **TfL will look into the reported difference between the number of new taxi applicants and those recorded as being accepted to study the KoL.**

Attendees agreed to discuss this action as part of the licensing presentation.

Previous action: **TfL invites further discussion around the issue of red-lining with stakeholders and will consider a review if there is a consensus of opinion.**

Attendees agreed to discuss this action as part of the licensing presentation.

### **Licensing Update:**

TfL presented its quarterly presentation for licensing which will be made available [online](#).

RMT: Said that the DBS update service was helpful for driver licence renewals but that it was unclear that applicants had to still provide TfL with a certificate.

LCDC: Expressed concerns that the number of applicants to the Knowledge of London (KoL) was lower than it has been historically and that the number of applicants for the Knowledge was much higher than those accepted to study the Knowledge.

TfL said that it regularly liaises with Knowledge schools who have anecdotally reported a higher number of students. TfL said that new applications are not indicative of the number of KoL applicants and that the total number will include incomplete applications and any that are withdrawn due to administrative error.

TfL: Explained recent changes to sharing information with the DVLA with respect to the 'share code'. TfL explained the limitations of having a code that is only valid for 21 days and that it has asked the DVLA for an extension to reduce the impact on driver applications.

LTDA: Asked if a data agreement form could be included in the driver application packs.

TfL: Confirmed that the application pack agreement form had already been updated so that a separate DVLA agreement form wasn't required.

RMT: Asked if simplified guidance to assist drivers with renewal applications could be provided. TfL confirmed that it had provided information to assist drivers with their applications, such as an article in OnRoute but that this will be looked into (see actions).

RMT: Said that its members had raised problems with uploading passport information as part of the online application process.

TfL: Said that it was a known issue and one that it was working to resolve.

LCDC: Asked about licensing telephony and specifically if staffing levels in this area were at full compliment.

TfL: said that it continually recruits and trains staff in order to remain at full headcount. It explained a number of mitigating measures it had recently taken to reduce phone waiting times and to resolve queries in a timely way. These include prioritising renewal applications, multiskilling staff and targeted partial phone closures to clear email backlogs in order to prevent further phone calls and duplicate emails.

LCDC: Asked if customer telephone complaints were taken by the same phone teams.

TfL: Confirmed that TfL customer services answered and investigated passenger complaints.

LCDC: Raised concerns regarding the practice of “red lining” candidates as part of the Knowledge examination process and said it believed the practice placed additional pressure on students.

TfL: Explained that this process was to ensure that resources were focussed on those making adequate progress through the exam system. TfL said that the practise of drivers obtaining nine points and being ‘red lined’ back does not happen often at all and that the stage 2 pass rate is 60 per cent. TfL said ‘red lining’ helped maintain the required standard. It further explained how the initial talk to applicants made it clear what the expected standards are, and that it was making a voluntary informal assessment after six months mandatory in order to maintain engagement with students and give them the experience of undertaking stage 2 assessments.

RMT: Asked if there was anyway the length of time taken to complete the Knowledge could be reduced without dropping overall standards.

TfL: Said this is something it is looking into particularly with regarding the suburban runs.

LCDC: Argued that a large number of candidates recorded as currently studying the Knowledge must be inactive as a relatively small number of

candidates are accepted annually, citing approximately 2,000 who were accepted in 2015.

TfL: Explained that there has been a marked shift in how people study the Knowledge and that many of the current pre-stage 2 candidates are studying on a part-time basis. It said that it would remove candidates from the Knowledge if they had not heard from them for a year and generally seeks to assist applicants by giving them an extension if requested i.e. for family, or medical reasons.

LTDA: Asked how many candidates were existing taxi drivers studying for a licensing area extension.

TfL: Said this was not represented in its report but it was a very low number of candidates.

LCDC: Asked whether call handling times for TfL's vehicle testing contractor NSL were monitored.

TfL: Confirmed that it does monitor this and that it is currently six minutes a call but is working with NSL to reduce this. As part of this work TfL said nine additional staff had been recruited by NSL.

LTDA: Asked when online vehicle booking would be implemented.

TfL: Said it was planning on introducing this in spring 2019.

RMT: Said that it had heard of poor vehicle standards of rental vehicles and believed that some garages were only doing the bare minimum possible to get a vehicle licensed.

TfL: Said that it did appear as if some vehicle owners/garages were using the licensing test process as an inspection service.

LCDC: Noted that 8 per cent of inspection failure defects for the new ZEC taxi seemed high.

TfL: Said that it would take this away and look into these failures specifically (see actions).

LCDC: Asked if TfL believed that the target of 9,000 zero emission capable (ZEC) taxis would be reached and raised concerns regarding the reduction in numbers of licensed taxi vehicles saying that the total number licensed has dropped by approximately 700/800 vehicles since January 2018.

TfL: Said instead of a specific vehicle target it was concentrating on reducing overall fleet emissions by 45 per cent. It also noted that LEVC had said it was increasing vehicle production and should have 1,000 licensed ZEC taxis by the end of 2018. TfL said the total number of licensed taxi drivers and taxis remained largely consistent.

LCDC: Said TfL's Congestion Charge figures show the average number of licensed taxis detected in the Congestion charge zone during charging hours on charging days reduced from 10,402 in July/September 2016 to 9,024 in the same period in 2018, and that it believed we are not seeing a similar reduction in licensing numbers as drivers did not want to give up their badges.

LCDC: Said that it believed that the current de-licensing scheme was a failure.

TfL: Said that it is taking a fresh look at the scheme.

LCDC: Referred to a previous Mayor's Question response which outlined spending on taxi and private hire related research and asked when this would be published.

TfL: Committed to publishing this research information as soon as possible (see actions).

TfL: Said that it has also noticed over recent months that taxi vehicles linked to fleets were of a poor standard. It said that it is setting up a team to carry out checks on fleet vehicles in order to improve vehicle quality.

TfL: Spoke about its compliance officers who have been accredited under the Community Safety and Accreditation Scheme (CSAS). Prior to CSAS accreditation officers relied on patrolling which was labour intensive and less efficient. TfL explained that its CSAS vehicle stops resulted in better intelligence, particularly at night. It said these stops were a better use of our resources and freed up police time. Non-compliance detection rates improved from 5.26 per cent non-compliance prior to CSAS powers being granted to 12.88 per cent afterwards.

RMT: Asked about TfL's compliance officer numbers and whether there had been a reduction.

TfL: Said it was reviewing the cost effectiveness of compliance numbers.

LCDC: Asked if there were still 250 officers.

TfL: Said there are approximately 246 compliance officers.

LCDC: Asked about compliance problems that were occurring at the pick up and drop off points at Heathrow Airport terminals.

TfL: Said that it only became aware of some of the issues over the weekend and confirmed that it has a regular compliance presence at Heathrow and that this includes uniformed and undercover officers who will continue to be deployed over the Christmas period.

RMT: Enquired about card payment devices in taxis noting that CMT payment devices were not working over the past weekend.

TfL: Confirmed that if a payment card device wasn't working it would be regarded as non-compliance but explained that a common sense approach would always be taken and that it had published guidance on its website for drivers who are having problems with card payments. This can be found at the following location: [www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/taxis-and-private-hire/accepting-card-payments](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/info-for/taxis-and-private-hire/accepting-card-payments).

UNITE: Raised the recent O2 mobile data outage which occurred on 7 December 2018 which had affected all O2 users, including many taxi drivers who used the network for payment card transactions.

TfL: Said that it was aware of the outage and that it was an exceptional circumstance and that compliance action wouldn't be taken in cases like this.

### **Compliance Update:**

TfL presented its quarterly compliance presentation which will be made available [online](#).

RMT: Asked if a Police community support officer (PCSO) could issue Traffic Offence Reports (TORs) to drivers stopping on zig-zags.

MPS: Said that PCSOs did not have powers to issue TORs.

LCDC: Asked if the MPS operations targeting handheld mobile phone use had improved this practise among drivers.

MPS: Said that reported offences have dropped and that it hopes that the message is getting out to licensed drivers.

MPS: Provided an update on Lisson Grove and a spate of crimes reported as having occurred against taxi drivers at this location; saying that there had been 15 offences reported since the previous October. The MPS confirmed that it was an ongoing investigation and that they were throwing a lot of resources at it. The MPS said CCTV had helped with an arrest in September and that CCTV images from taxi vehicles makes a big difference in many investigations.

RMT: Said touting in the City was a problem.

TfL: Said it had offered to provide its control centre with a list of taxi union/organisation official phone numbers so they could report things of this nature but that no one had taken this offer up. TfL said that if anyone would like to take this offer up they should provide it with their mobile phone number (see actions).

UNITE: Said that Winter Wonderland needed rank management and compliance officers, adding that coaches are loading/unloading at the taxi rank.

TfL: Said it would follow up with more compliance officers and that it would look into what could be done regarding private vehicles parking on ranks.

**AOB:**

RMT: Asked for an update on the provision of rapid charging points in London.

TfL: Confirmed that it was on target to meet its target of 150 charging points by the end of 2018.

LTDA: Said that the distribution of charging points is not sufficient, pointing out that the City of London only recently installed its first charging point. It said that charging infrastructure should've come first, not the other way around.

Unite: Asked if there had been any response to a letter sent from the Mayor to the London boroughs encouraging them to install 20 charging points each.

TfL: Said that it did not have an immediate answer available and would provide this at the next meeting (see actions).

LDCD: asked when the Taxi/PH 2017/2019 financial summary is due for publication.

TfL: Said it did not have this information available and would update trade representatives with a publication date.

**Open actions:**

Meeting Date	Item Name	Action Details	Due Date
22/08/2018	Low emission zones	TfL to share guidance it is providing to the London Boroughs regarding the introduction of low emission zones.	Next meeting
22/08/2018	Taxi accessibility	TfL to provide guidance on taxis setting down and picking up in cycle lanes.	Asap
10/12/2018	Driver renewal applications	TfL to provide additional guidance for renewal licence applicants to ensure that they are aware of the renewal process, especially with regards to providing their DBS check information.	Next meeting

10/12/2018	ZEC inspection failures	TfL to provide data on ZEC vehicle inspection failures	ASAP
10/12/2018	Research publication	TfL to publish taxi and private hire research	ASAP
10/12/2018	Incident reporting	Taxi stakeholders to provide their mobile phone numbers to TfL for access to its 24hr control centre.	At any time
10/12/2018	Charging infrastructure	TfL to provide feedback on a request from the Mayor to the London boroughs encouraging them to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure.	ASAP
10/12/2018	TPH financial summary	TPH to confirm when its latest financial summary will be published.	Next meeting