

Taxi Operational Performance Seminar – 27 February 2019

Attendees: Transport for London (TfL), Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Cabs Unit, London Cab Drivers Club (LCDC), Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union (RMT), Unite the Union (Unite)

Apologies – London Taxi Drivers' Association, City of London Police

1. Review of previous actions:

Previous action: TfL to publish taxi and private hire related research

TfL confirmed that the research would be published within the next week.

2. Licensing Update:

TfL provided an overview of its quarterly presentation for licensing which will be made available [online](#).

Licensing Process Guidance:

TfL updated trade representatives on its plans to provide online videos and guidance to help applicants through the licensing process.

Trade representatives were asked to provide their input on some of the key challenges that applicants face throughout the process (**see actions**). Unite highlighted an issue with the online application tool, asking whether a 'back button' could be added on each page, so that applicants do not have to start over again should they make a mistake (**see actions**).

Call Waiting Times and Processing of Applications:

TfL confirmed that it was working with its contractor, NSL, to reduce call handling times. NSL has employed additional staff which has had a positive effect.

LCDC reiterated this point, stating that, while licensing staff were extremely helpful when applicants can get through to someone, the current wait time is unacceptable and more could be done to make the process quicker and easier which would help reduce calls.

TfL stated that work has been undertaken to ensure that the process is made as straightforward as possible. The letters it sends to applicants are being simplified and TfL has requested additional information from applicants at the outset, including making clear that applicants need to provide their DVLA 'share code'.

LCDC suggested that a dedicated app should be produced for applicants. TfL has no current plans to do so, given the costs involved. Currently around 50 per cent of applicants apply online, which is the quickest and easiest way to apply. TfL will continue to make improvements to the online application process and encourages all applicants to use it.

RMT asked TfL to provide the number of staff it employs to process applications (**see actions**).

Unite and LCDC raised a view that resources should be apportioned separately for taxi and private hire licensing queries. LCDC asked specifically for a minimum of one taxi dedicated phone line to be made available. TfL stated that this would not be an efficient way to utilise the resources it has.

LCDC asked, on multiple occasions, for private hire statistics to be included in meeting presentations. LCDC also wanted statistics to cover a greater period, as opposed to recent periods.

TfL reiterated that the presentation for this meeting will continue to include taxi information only, on a periodic basis. Private hire information is also made available [online](#), periodically.

Unite put forward a proposal for drivers to be licensed yearly, on a rolling basis, utilising a similar subscription process to that used for the DBS Update Service. TfL believes this would be less efficient and would therefore increase demands on its resources, however, Unite were invited to provide TfL with its proposals so that further consideration could be given.

RMT and LCDC also felt they needed a better understanding of these proposals before forming a view.

The Knowledge:

Based on provisional statistical analysis, TfL confirmed that there has been a slight increase in new applications in 2018 from the previous year but acknowledged that because of an ongoing issue with renewal applicants using the wrong form, the actual number of new applicants has not yet been established and is likely to be lower.

TfL is seeking to find a resolution to this issue and while some applications from 2018 are still being assessed, it hopes to have a more accurate figure of the number accepted onto the KoL during that period, by the time of the next TOPS meeting.

On pre-Stage 3 applications, TfL is currently undertaking a wider piece of work to establish the number of applications that are inactive
Feedback from Knowledge schools also indicates a positive upturn in applicants.

LCDC raised that more needed to be done to advertise the Knowledge and that TfL needed to build on the work it had already undertaken. LCDC suggested that a portion of licence fees should be reserved for promoting the Knowledge.

TfL confirmed that licence fees could only be used by TfL to fulfil its licensing and regulatory functions; however it will continue to look at ways it can promote the Knowledge, such as attending career events and participating in other initiatives where possible.

TfL also made clear that the taxi trade had a role to play in promoting the Knowledge as a career path and asked for suggestions.

Vehicle Inspections:

LCDC raised an issue with vehicle licensees having to wait 'weeks' for an appointment following an inspection failure. TfL confirmed that it is aware of instances where there have been delays. NSL have put processes in place to reduce waiting times.

Unite asked whether comparative figures could be given for taxi vehicle MOT failures versus other privately owned vehicles.

TfL confirmed that it did not hold information on privately owned vehicles; however, comparative information for private hire vehicle non-compliance is available [online](#).

3. Topical Discussion Point: Reducing Emissions

Delicensing:

Trade representatives have received a large number of queries from applicants who have yet to hear back on their application.

TfL confirmed that it is working through them and will contact each and every applicant. Applicants do not need to take any further action until they hear from TfL.

Given the large number of applications that have been received, it is taking longer than normal to process applications. TfL is looking to increase its resources to speed up processing.

TfL will be providing more information on the delicensing process, to potential and current applicants, via its communication channels (**see actions**).

1,191 zero emission capable (ZEC) taxis have been licensed in London.

Air Quality Initiatives:

LCDC raised a general point that TfL should provide, and analyse, statistics for past years to establish an accurate picture and develop policies. LCDC stated that the new air quality initiatives being put forward do not take into consideration the impact on the taxi trade. LCDC also raised that uptake for ZEC vehicles will fall without sufficient charging infrastructure and alternative vehicles, siting Heathrow as a particular concern.

TfL explained that, as part of the process of developing and finalising policies, it undertakes an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) as well as a public consultation. An IIA assesses the social, economic and environmental impacts of new policies. An IIA and full public consultation took place before Ultra Low Emission Zone proposals were finalised. TfL also undertook an IIA for taxi age limit proposals, which are currently going through a [public consultation](#).

Mayor's Action Plan:

Discussion turned to the Mayor's 2016 Taxi and Private Hire Action Plan. LCDC raised a view that the Mayor's commitments were not being met.

TfL disagreed and will be providing an overview of progress it has made in implementing the Mayor's Action Plan (**see actions**).

4. Compliance and Enforcement update

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

Key highlights:

- Compliance rates have generally remained static
- No MOT is still the top reason for non-compliance, followed by lights not working
- Compliance at King's Cross is higher than the London-wide compliance rate
- 100 per cent compliance at Heathrow.

Heathrow:

TfL informed trade representatives that it was working with Hillingdon to undertake a planned day of compliance action.

LCDC raised the view that more compliance presence was needed at Heathrow in the evenings (e.g. around 9pm).

TfL confirmed that it does undertake evening and night operations. Compliance operations are staggered and intelligence is used to plan resources.

Unite raised that it had seen an improvement in the deployment of compliance officers, however it felt that more should be done to conduct on the spot checks to determine whether a driver is licensed by TfL.

Unite also raised that TfL should take action against a licensed driver based on intelligence it receives from marshals.

TfL will be providing trade representatives with contact details for its complaints team. TfL to discuss this further with trade representatives at the next Heathrow compliance meeting (**see actions**).

LCDC raised a greater compliance presence was needed on the forecourts. It was stated that 25 per cent of private hire vehicles were not picking up via the Authorised Vehicle Area and were instead picking up passengers on the forecourts.

LCDC welcomed the planned day of action at Hillingdon but that this needed to happen on a more frequent basis.

TfL confirmed that it will look at its resources and joint working with the borough and Heathrow to target non-compliant working practices.

LCDC asked TfL how many compliance officers there were currently. TfL confirmed that it has 242 authorised officers and that it was in the process of reviewing its resources to establish the most effective way to utilise officers and better target non-compliance while ensuring that the current level of service is maintained.

TfL reiterated that it was reviewing its resources and would provide more information once this has been completed.

Met Police Update

A discussion took place regarding accident statistics being separated for taxis and private hire vehicles.

LCDC asked why these statistics are no longer separate, as they were previously.

Met Police confirmed that separate statistics will be published in the summer.

5. AOB

Lisson Grove

Met Police confirmed that there continues to be a strong focus on the area.

Open actions:

Meeting Date	Item Name	Action Details	Due Date
27/02/2019	Licensing Process Guidance	Trade representatives to provide feedback on the key challenges that applicants face throughout the application process	asap
27/02/2019	Online Licensing Applications	TfL to look at the feasibility of adding a 'back button' on its online application tool.	Next meeting
27/02/2019	TfL TPH staff	TfL to provide trade representatives with the total number of licensing staff it employs	asap
27/02/2019	Taxi Delicensing Scheme	TfL to provide more information on the delicensing process, to potential and current applicants, via its communication channels	asap
27/02/2019	Mayor's Action Plan	TfL to provide an overview of progress it has made in implementing the Mayor's Action Plan	Next meeting
27/02/2019	Heathrow: Reporting of Non-Compliance	TfL to provide trade representatives with contact details for its complaints team. Further discussion will take place with trade representatives at the next	April 2019

		Heathrow compliance meeting.	
--	--	------------------------------	--