



Please find below our response to the draft Lambeth Local Plan in respect of Policy T9: Minicabs, taxis and, private hire vehicles and ride hail services on behalf of our members.

Introduction

London's Taxis have been seen on the streets of the capital since the 17th Century. In 1654, an Act of Parliament was passed making taxi driving a profession. This profession is maintained by the infamous 'Knowledge of London'. Introduced as a requirement in 1865, the Knowledge spurred social mobility, allowing working class people to find solace and pride in a trade that encompassed London.

Whilst our heritage is important in 2020 the Knowledge of London is undertaken by a wide range of individuals because the training required has no bias towards race, religion or sex. Just sheer hard work, determination and effort enables you to become one of the best cabbies in the world.

Since our inception in 2010, the UCG strives to uphold and maintain our standards doing the utmost to ensure our members are represented as individuals. We also challenge London wide issues that are important to our members or those that impact on our ability to continue to deliver a world class safe regulated and seamless door to door service for our passengers.

UCG membership include Taxi Drivers who are resident in every London borough and more importantly all Taxi Drivers work and provide a reliable and trusted service to Londoners, tourists and business people from home and abroad, offering customers safety, convenience, and a second-to-none knowledge of the Capital's streets. We service passengers within every London borough 24/7, 365 days per year and have done for over 350 years.

We consider it necessary to provide a more detailed response to represent our members interests as there are some significant concerns as to how you outline Lambeth's provision to Minicabs, taxis and, private hire vehicles and ride hail services in the relevant section of the plan. You state:

- Proposals for minicab and private hire vehicle offices and taxi ranks will be supported in town centres and other areas where they will meet a demonstrable need and where they demonstrate through a transport assessment that their operation would not adversely impact on traffic congestion, local parking supply, capacity or need, pedestrian movement or road safety."
- Minicabs, taxis and private hire vehicles are part of the transport system and aid the overall aim of seeking a lesser dependence on car ownership. They provide an important service for people with mobility difficulties and should be part of ensuring safe transport options are available late at night. Interchange between public transport and taxis and minicabs is important; however, proposals for such facilities must not compromise safety, traffic congestion and residential amenity. Designated taxi ranks should be part of the transport network in town centres and other locations where there is a busy late-night economy. Provision should be made in major schemes and within taxi ranks to set down passengers and for pre-booked pickups by private hire vehicles.
- Proposals for minicab and private hire vehicle offices and taxi ranks can often have significant transport impacts including highway safety concerns from passengers alighting, vehicles turning in unsafe locations and reducing the amount of parking available to residents, visitors and other commercial uses. Proposals should be accompanied by a transport assessment and management plan that demonstrate there will not be an unacceptable impact. This should include assessments showing how adverse transport impacts will not be diverted onto surrounding streets, particularly residential areas. In particular, it must be demonstrated that sufficient parking would be maintained for other commercial users in the area. Proposals for taxi ranks should include provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

- Particularly in relation to the growth in 'ride hail' services, there is a need to consider local amenity impacts where significant demand for these services is expected. Where this is the case agreements should be secured with service providers to ensure navigational systems direct both customers and drivers to designated 'virtual' drop off and pick up locations.

Our members and Taxi Drivers working throughout London have availability 24/7, 365 days per year and our passengers determine demand, making choices as to which transport options they use as the appropriate time based on their needs. This is how our regulated market works and adapts to meet passenger demand which is variable on a range of factors. In June 2018, based on the data contained within the Travel in London Survey the average number of taxis entering Central London daily was 11,259. In the latest TFL Congestion Charge report by November 2019, 9064 taxis were entering the area of which 3,055 were zero emission capable.

Your outline shows a misunderstanding as to what is permitted within the current two-tier system of which Licensed Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles are regulated under separate legislation. Your reference to mini cabs and ride hailing services fails to recognise these groups sit within and are required to operate under Private Hire legislation. There is no provision within the Private Hire legislation for physical or virtual hailing and this should be updated accordingly.

It is therefore important in the context of your plan that you fully understand the unique characteristics that apply to Taxis which justify the two-tier licensing system and underpin our market for hailing and picking up at ranks:

- Only taxis [also known as Black Cabs or Hackney Carriages] can 'ply for hire' without pre-booking.
- Our drivers are subject to "*compellability*", dating from the London Hackney Carriage Acts 1831 and 1853, which requires that where a taxi at a rank or in the street accepts a passenger, the taxi must take the passenger anywhere that they wish to go, within a prescribed distance or up to a prescribed journey time. There is no such 'cab rank' obligation on a minicab.
- Taxis are instantly recognised by reason of their shape and size and the illuminated TAXI sign. This is because they must comply with the Conditions of Fitness ("*CoF*"), which contain several standards (including the requirement for the illuminated sign).
- The fares of taxis are strictly regulated and set by TFL and can only be charged by reference to a taxi meter. Drivers are prohibited from charging more than the metered fare.
- The entire London taxi fleet is 100% wheelchair accessible as required under the Conditions of Fitness and drivers must carry assistance dogs free of charge. Taxis have an induction hearing loop, high-visibility grab handles and minimum vehicle dimensions for safer access.
- As drivers are subject to "*compellability*" our drivers would be in breach of the Equality Act 2010 for refusing to take a passenger with limited mobility, considered vulnerable late at night or those who share a relevant protected characteristic under the Act if their journey required reasonable access to their destination.

TFL quote "*As taxis can be hailed in the street and asked to go anywhere, taxi drivers must have a thorough knowledge of London. Therefore, taxi drivers must learn and pass the world-famous Knowledge. London's taxi service is the best in the world, in part because our cab drivers know the quickest routes through London's complicated road network. There are thousands of streets and landmarks within a 6-mile radius of Charing Cross. Anyone who wants to drive an iconic London cab must memorize them all*".

Sadiq Khan outlined in his manifesto to "*set a clear objective to ensure the markets for licensed taxi drivers and private hire drivers are fair – with special privileges built in, as they always have been, for those who become a licensed London taxi driver. Retaining the exclusive right of licensed taxi drivers to use bus lanes and ply for hire. The taxi trade is an icon of our city and should be supported.*

The Mayor of London goes on to say *“London’s taxi drivers are highly trained and are required to meet the strictest safety standards. They drive wheelchair accessible vehicles and possess the incredible geographical recall and sense of direction that only those with the Knowledge have. With the world’s most qualified cabbies at the wheel, it’s easy to understand why the iconic black cab is recognised across the globe and is a source of pride for Londoners.”*

Public Sector duties within Equality Act 2010

The first two protected characteristics under section 149(7) of the 2010 Act are ‘age’ and ‘disability’. Plainly, if a public authority purports to allow access to taxis, it is guilty of failing to take steps *“to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic [e.g. the elderly and the disabled] that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it”*, contrary to its statutory duty under section 149(3) of the Act – indeed, it is guilty of committing direct discrimination against such persons contrary to section 13 of the Act and/or indirect discrimination contrary to section 19. The elderly and the disabled (including wheelchair users and persons with restricted vision) have a distinct and particular need to be able to hail taxis which are easily visible, in the lane nearest the pavement, and for there to be ease of access from the pavement when they are flagged down.

In addition, the Governments Ministerial Forward states;

“While many take for granted the ability to travel easily from A to B, this is not the reality for everyone. For our ageing population, and the fifth of people who identify as having some sort of disability, access to transport can be far from straightforward. That is why this Government is determined to make sure that disabled people have the same access to transport as everyone else, and that they are able to travel easily, confidently and without extra cost. We have a manifesto commitment to get a million more disabled people into work by 2027, and this Strategy will help to deliver that. I have been encouraged by the increasing awareness among transport operators of the need to design and deliver their services in a genuinely inclusive way, in particular the greater recognition that less visible disabilities such as autism, dementia or anxiety can be just as much of a barrier to travel as a visible disability”.

The Department for Transport’s Strategy (achieving equal access for disabled passengers) states that taxis should;

“...be as accessible to disabled passengers as it is for those who are not disabled. This should mean not only that vehicles are sufficiently accessible to provide for people with a range of access needs, but that the means of hiring them is accessible, that passengers can be picked up or dropped off at a location convenient to them, and that no disabled person is ever left at the kerbside or charged extra for their journey.”

Taxicard enables over 80,000 members in 32 participating boroughs to take around 1.3million trips per year. The Taxicard scheme offers London residents with mobility impairments or who are sight impaired subsidised travel. The scheme enables members who may have difficulty using public transport, such as buses, trains and tubes, to get out and about and enjoy the city. It is a matter of accessibility and in line with the Equality Act which explains that having **due regard** for advancing equality involves:

- a. Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- b. Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people.
- c. Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Air Quality and actions the trade have taken to date:

Today, the taxi industry is preparing to play a vital role in the future of a greener, cleaner London and actively taking a key part in tackling London’s toxic air. From 1 January 2018, no new diesel taxis have been licensed in London. Instead, all those presented for licensing for the first time in London need to be Zero Emission Capable.

The taxi fleet is rapidly moving towards electric with nearly 3,055 zero emission taxis coming into our market since 2018 which is significant progress unlike buses that can still run on diesel until 2030.

All new taxis must be zero emission capable. The trade agrees that we need to embrace this for the future and currently has invested £182 million in new vehicles alongside a reduction in the vehicle age limit from 15 to 12 years which reduced the taxi fleet from 22,500 in 2014 to 19,287 taxis in January 2020. Passenger numbers remain constant and are likely to grow with London's population.

However, the pace of change can be dependent upon a driver's ability to invest in a more sustainable vehicle as every driver is a self-employed sole trader and the availability of rapid charging points of which only 73 within the Greater London area are dedicated to taxis. We are of course asking TFL and London boroughs to ensure they do their bit and increase the pace now we have purchased these new vehicles to ensure even more drivers can move to greener cabs. It is also worth stating for the record taxis have always conformed to the EU Emissions Strategy and are stringently tested twice a year to ensure they uphold rigorous emission standards.

Please do not hesitate to come back to me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Merralls

General Secretary

United Cabbies Group