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24th October 2012

RE: FOI 2012-0014

Dear 

I refer to your request dated 24th September 2012 and received on 27th September 2012.

In your letter you request the following information: *"[t]he vehicle standards report and all relevant documentation from the Taxi Review Meetings"*.

In relation to your request for the "vehicles standards report" please find attached the report titled *"Vehicle Standards Public Consultation Report"*.

In relation to meetings of the Taxi Review Group, this was a group established by the Minister for State for Public and Commuter Transport and accordingly your request should be directed to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Yours sincerely,



Jennifer Gilna
Communications Manager



VEHICLE STANDARDS PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT

October 2011

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1. Introduction

The Authority commenced the consultation period on 11th July and requested submissions by 5th August 2011. An advertisement was placed in a national newspaper on 11th July giving details of the consultation and how to make a submission. Every holder of a Small Public Service Vehicle (SPSV) vehicle and /or driving licence was sent a letter and a copy of the consultation document ("Vehicle Standards Consultation Paper for the Taxi, Hackney and Limousine Fleet"). Also a wide range of statutory and representative groups were written to specifically to encourage responses. A large number (32) of stakeholder meetings, mainly for various local taxi representative groups/businesses, were conducted nationwide.

There were eight issues for consultation with a number of structured questions posed, in both the consultation document and the online submission form, to encourage clarity of responses insofar as that was possible.

Submissions were accepted online using the prescribed form and in writing.

2. Responses

In total, 514 submissions were received, 66% of which were completed online.

Of the 514 submissions, 408 were received from drivers, 24 from taxi users, 29 from persons who chose no category, and the remainder from state bodies, industry representative groups, local authorities and other stakeholders. A small number of submissions were received after August 5th and the Authority has exercised discretion to include these in this report. Respondents included:

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Fáilte Ireland
- South-East Regional Authority
- Mid-West Regional Authority
- Irish Hotels Federation
- Road Safety Authority
- An Garda Síochána
- Competition Authority
- Dublin Airport Authority
- National Consumer Agency
- Dublin City Council
- Taxi Alliance of Ireland
- National Private Hire & Taxi Association
- Irish Taxi Drivers Federation
- Dublin Airport Taxi Association
- Tiomanai Tacsai na hEireann
- Ballina Taxi Association
- National Chauffeur Drive Association

- Killarney Owner & Drivers Association
- Irish Association of Funeral Directors
- Disability Federation of Ireland
- National Disability Authority
- Dublin City Business Association
- New Communities Partnership

3. Patterns and Trends

A number of respondents submitted opinions and ideas regarding issues that were not included in the consultation document. Also some contradictions were evident within individual responses in that comments might be at a variance with the response to the posed question.

The responses are best viewed as patterns and broad trends of opinion amongst those who completed a submission, also bearing in mind that the vast majority of responses came from drivers within the industry.

It should be noted that most questions posed under each of the eight issues received a substantial proportion of 'no opinion' responses.

The following sections (Sections 4 - 11) outline all the responses received. This includes all submissions received from drivers, taxi users, industry representative groups, state bodies and other stakeholders.

4. Issue One – Age

Consultees were asked about potential age restrictions and increased NCT¹ testing of SPSVs.

Option One

9 year age limit for taxis and hackneys and wheelchair accessible vehicles at change of vehicle (and new licence applications) with renewal having no upper age limit but vehicles older than 9 years of age, for those vehicle licences first issued prior to 1st January 2009, being subjected to a 6-monthly licence period and associated inspections which include roadworthiness testing (NCT) and suitability testing.

Option Two

9 year age limit for taxis and hackneys and wheelchair accessible vehicles at change of vehicle (and new licence applications) with renewal having an ultimate age limit of 14 years

¹ Due to the allocation of statutory powers, this would require regulations to be made by the Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport.

but vehicles between 9 and 14 years of age, for those vehicle licences first issued prior to 1st January 2009, being subjected to a 6-monthly licence period and associated inspections which include roadworthiness testing (NCT) and suitability testing.

AND

Limousine definition to be refined to include appropriate age limits (see Limousine section), but vehicles in excess of 9 years of age would be subjected to a 6-monthly licence period and associated inspections which include roadworthiness testing (NCT) and suitability testing.

On the options put forward, approximately 58% (of those who expressed opinion) preferred option 2, i.e. imposing an upper age limit of 14 years along with 6-monthly NCT test.

Overall, there were mixed (broadly equal for and against) views on the April 2012 introduction. There were also mixed views (roughly equally for and against) on the introduction of a 6-monthly NCT cycle. However, there were concerns raised in relation to increased costs and logistics of same.

Of those who expressed a preference, 18% were in favour of a 14 year age limit.

30% - 56% of respondents had no opinion on the specific questions, with the highest 'no opinion' in relation to the proposed April 2012 introduction date.

5. Issue Two – Size

Consultees were asked about potential size restrictions on taxis and hackneys.

Option One

Maintain the current position whereby the size rules are binding on all licence holders from 3rd January 2012 at any licensing transaction including renewals.

OR

Option Two

Amend the regulation such that the size rules are applied only upon change of vehicle and transfer of taxi licence ownership from 3rd January 2012. In summary, existing licensed (pre-2009) taxi and hackney vehicles would not be subjected to the size rules at future renewals.

The majority of respondents (56% of those who expressed agreement or disagreement) were in favour of amending the existing regulations such that size rules would be applied only at change of vehicle or transfer of vehicle. Costs (including the purchase of a replacement vehicle), lack of passengers with luggage and complex boot capacity requirements were mentioned in support of the amendment to the regulations.

Approximately 34% of respondents had no opinion on the issue.

6. Issue Three – Limousine Definition

Consultees were asked about refining the definition applied to 'limousines'.

The following definitions of 'limousine' were put forward in the consultation document:

- Executive Saloon;
 - Executive MPV;
 - Ceremonial Car; or
 - Stretch Limousine.
-

There was wide-ranging support (86% of valid responses) for tightening of the current limousine definition and for those definitions put forward. Regarding the age ranges suggested, some 70% agreed with the proposals.

However, concerns were raised in relation to a number of points:

- The requirement for 6-monthly licensing of older vehicles given their (generally) lower mileage;
- Funeral mourning cars not explicitly included in the updated definitions proposed;
- The issue of relatively low mileage by funeral cars was raised;
- The Road Safety Authority raised the issue of side facing seats;
- The wheelbase measurements proposed;

There was also general support (70%) for extending the new definitions to the existing fleet at some stage in the future.

In the region of 60% of all respondents had no opinion which was to be expected given the specialised nature of the service offered by this SPSV category.

7. Issue Four – Pick-up vehicles

Consultees were asked about prohibiting use of pick-up, dual purpose and crew cab type vehicles for use for the carriage of passengers for reward.

The proposal put forward was to use definitions from the Finance Acts for the purposes of VRT as the basis for categorising such vehicles. It was stated in the consultation document that no existing licence holder should be affected.

There was overwhelming support (93% of valid responses) for a prohibition on pick-up vehicles to be introduced. There was equally large support for definition to be introduced as per Revenue Commissioners.

Approximately 50% of respondents had no opinion on the issue.

8. Issue Five – Dark Windows

Consultees were asked about potential age restrictions on the use of tinted windows in taxis, hackneys and wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Option One

To apply the prohibition on tinted windows in any location in all taxis and hackneys and wheelchair accessible vehicles at change of vehicle and transfer of licence ownership only.

Option Two

From April 2012 to apply the prohibition on tinted windows to all existing vehicles, other than limousines, on renewal of licence.

The majority of submissions (87% of valid responses) were in favour of not having dark windows and there was similar broad agreement on the light level values.

Of those who expressed views on the options, 60% had a preference for option 2, i.e. to apply at the time of vehicle licence renewal, but with special consideration being made for those existing licensed vehicles with factory-tinted windows.

Approximately 45% of respondents had no opinion on the issue.

9. Issue Six – Emerging Technologies

Consultees were asked about updating the definition of hybrid electric vehicles and flexible fuel vehicles.

There was majority support (90% of valid responses) for updating the definitions and for such definitions to be introduced as per the Revenue Commissioners. Many respondents indicated that the discretion that the National Transport Authority currently has in relation to the licensing of such vehicles be limited in some way (currently the Authority has unlimited discretion), particularly in relation to boot capacity and shoulder width.

Approximately 50% of respondents had no opinion on the issue.

10. Issue Seven – Modified Vehicles

The public was asked about the definition of a modified or converted vehicle and also the requirements that should apply

There was significant support (92% of valid responses) for imposing requirements on modified vehicles from 2012, with similar strong support (84%) for a further 5-yearly check. There was also strong agreement (85%) on applying higher standards on vehicles new to the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) fleet.

Approximately 50% of respondents had no opinion on the issue.

11. Issue Eight – Branding

The public was asked for their views on introducing a form of distinctive external branding or signage on all taxis to help the consumer better identify vehicles for hire on the street.

This particular issue was included and framed in such a way to stimulate debate and discussion. Mixed views were received (roughly equally for and against) on the branding issue.

Regarding different means or methods of branding, there was equally good support for colour/wrap/decal and also for retaining the current roof sign, but in some cases it was unclear whether support for these were perceived as being mutually exclusive.

Approximately 18% of respondents had no opinion on the issue.

12. Views of State Bodies

Nine submissions were received from this group which includes An Garda Síochána, the Road Safety Authority and Dublin City Council. Some submissions were received after the August 5th but the Authority exercised discretion and assessed all submissions:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Fáilte Ireland
- South-East Regional Authority (SERA)
- Mid-West Regional Authority
- Road Safety Authority (RSA)
- An Garda Síochána (Commissioner and Traffic Superintendent)
- Competition Authority
- Dublin Airport Authority (DAA)
- National Consumer Agency (NCA)
- Dublin City Council (DCC)

Issue 1: Vehicle Age

8 respondents expressed a preference in relation to vehicle age as follows:

Support for Option 1: no upper age limit	Support for Option2: 14 year upper age limit
Fáilte Ireland	EPA
NCA	Garda Commissioner
DCC	SERA
DAA*	DAA*

* The response from DAA indicated support for Option 1, however, question 1.4 which asked specifically about an upper age limit of 14 years received support from DAA

DAA agreed with the proposed date of introduction. Others did not comment.

Issue 2: Vehicle Size

5 respondents expressing a preference in relation to vehicle size as follows:

Support for Option 1: Change size rules from 3rd January 2012	Support for Option2: Apply new size rules only upon change of vehicle and transfer of taxi licence ownership from 3rd January 2012
Fáilte Ireland	DCC
DAA	Garda Commissioner
	SERA

Issue 3: Limousine Definition

All of those respondents who expressed a view in relation to the limousine definition were in favour of the proposals put forward.

Support for new limousine definition proposed
RSA
Fáilte Ireland
DAA
Garda Commissioner
SERA

Issue 4: Pick-Up Vehicles

All of those respondents who expressed a view in relation to pick-ups were in favour of their prohibition.

Support for prohibition of pick ups
RSA
Fáilte Ireland
DAA
Garda Commissioner
SERA

Issue 5: Dark Windows

5 respondents expressed a preference in relation to dark windows as follows:

Support for Option 1: Prohibition of dark windows on transfer of ownership from April 2012	Support for Option2: Prohibition of all dark windows from April 2012
NCA	DCC
DAA	Garda Commissioner
	SERA

Issue 6: Emerging Technologies

All of those respondents in relation to emerging technologies definition were in favour of the proposals put forward.

Support for emerging technologies definition proposed
RSA
Fáilte Ireland
DAA
Garda Commissioner
DCC
SERA

Issue 7: Modified Vehicles

All of those respondents in relation to modified vehicles were in favour of the proposals put forward.

Support for modified vehicles definition proposed
RSA
Fáilte Ireland
DAA
Garda Commissioner
DCC
SERA
NCA

Issue 8: Branding

Consultation on this issue did not provide a definitive recommendation but rather put forward a number of potential measures. Support for some form of new universal branding was received from the following:

Support for new universal branding
NCA
Garda Commissioner
DAA
Fáilte Ireland

13. Views of Industry Representatives

This group includes a number of unions and other industry representative bodies, 18 in total.

Issue 1: Vehicle Age

- 1.1 Options: Of 7 respondents, 5 favoured Option 1, while 2 opted for Option 2.
- 1.2 Introduction Date: Of the 6 respondents, only one agreed, while remaining 5 disagreed.
- 1.3 Increased NCT testing: 3 of 10 respondents agreed while 7 did not agree.
- 1.4 Upper age of 14 years: Almost an even split of the 9 respondents, with 5 agreeing and 4 not agreeing.

Issue 2: Vehicle Size

- 2.1 Options: 4 of 10 respondents preferred Option 1 and 6 preferred Option 2.

Issue 3: Limousine Definition

- 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 Of 7 respondents, 4 agreed and 3 disagreed on all three points.
- 3.4 *Apply to existing vehicles:* There was the same number of respondents as on other points, 5 agreed and 2 did not.

Issue 4: Pick-Up Vehicles

- 4.1, 4.2 All respondents, 9 in total, agreed with prohibition and use of Revenue Commissioners' definition.

Issue 5: Dark Windows

- 5.1, 5.2 Of 7 respondents, 6 agreed with proposals, only 1 did not.
- 5.3 Options: 4 of the 7 respondents chose Option 1, with 3 going for Option 2.

Issue 6: Emerging Technologies

- 6.1 All 5 respondents agreed.

Issue 7: Modified Vehicles

7.1, 7.2, 7.3 All 7 respondents agreed with all points.

Issue 8: Branding

8.1 Of the 9 respondents, 8 agreed with some type of branding, with 1 not agreeing.

14. Views of Other Representative Groups

This group includes vehicle manufacturers, disability groups and taxi companies, eight in total.

Issue 1 Vehicle Age

- 1.1 Options: Of 7 responses received, just 1 was in favour of Option 1, while remaining 6 preferred Option 2.
- 1.2 Introduction date: There were 4 responses received, just one of which agreed, the other 3 did not agree.
- 1.3 Increased NCT testing: There was almost an even split on this particular question, with 3 of the 7 responses in agreement, with 4 not so.
- 1.4 Upper age of 14 years: Just 2 of the 7 responses received were in agreement while the remaining 5 were not.

Issue 2 Vehicle Size

- 2.1 There was almost an even split of opinion on this issue, with 3 of the 7 respondents favouring Option 1 while 4 respondents chose Option 2.

Issue 3 Limousine Definition

- 3.1 & 3.2 Definition and types: The same number of responses were received, 5 in total, and on both questions, all 5 agreed with both.
- 3.3 Age ranges: All 4 respondents were in agreement.
- 3.4 Apply to existing vehicles: Of the 5 responses received, 3 were in agreement and 2 were not.

Issue 4 Pick-Up Vehicles

- 4.1 Excluded: All 6 respondents were in agreement.
 - 4.2 Revenue definitions: All 5 respondents were in agreement.
- All 6 respondents indicated that they supported the prohibition of pick-up vehicles, and agreed with using the Revenue Commissioners definition to define same.

Issue 5 Dark Windows

5.1 & 5.2 All 7 respondents to both questions were in agreement.

5.3 Options: Of 5 responses, 2 favoured Option 1 while 3 were in favour of Option 2.

Issue 6 Emerging Technologies

6.1 All 6 respondents were in agreement.

The same number of respondents indicated that they agreed that the discretion regarding requirements for such vehicles, e.g. boot capacity, was important.

Issue 7 Modified Vehicles

7.1 Assurance method: Of the 7 responses received, 5 agreed while 2 did not.

7.2 5 years proof: All 6 responses were in agreement.

7.3 New vehicle requirements: All 7 responses were in agreement.

Issue 8 Branding

8.1 All 8 respondents indicated they were in favour of some type of branding.