

# STRATEGY STATEMENT

2010–2014



## OUR VISION

Our vision is that SPSVs will become a preferred mode of transport in Ireland and that the Irish SPSV industry will be recognised internationally as a highly professional transport provider that provides integrated and accessible services.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the Commission, acting in the interests of its stakeholders, is to:

- Provide a regulatory framework that enables compliant and professional SPSV licence holders to provide a first class, efficient, safe, accessible and customer-friendly service;
- Facilitate access to SPSV services by all users, including people with disabilities;
- Promote increasing standards of quality; and
- Promote the integration of SPSV services into the wider public transport system.



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# Message from the Commissioner

This strategy statement sets out the Commission's key objectives for the coming five years. Our previous strategy statement (2005 to 2009) set out our ambitions for developing the regulatory framework for the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry. In executing that strategy, we introduced a range of reforms that have begun the transformation of the industry in Ireland.

Higher standards are now required of small public service vehicles and their drivers. There is greater accountability and transparency within the industry and a comprehensive store of information on the SPSV industry in Ireland is available to customers, operators, researchers and policy partners. As a result of these standards and supports, the industry has been presented with both opportunities and challenges, to which it is adapting and responding. The Commission acknowledges this, and will continue to support the industry in making this adjustment through ongoing consultation and phased implementation of reforms.

Over the next five years, the Commission will build on the licensing and compliance systems that are now firmly established. We will seek to enhance the quality and accessibility of service to consumers, and to further develop the regulatory framework so that it facilitates the delivery of high-quality services by all licence holders. We will continue to develop processes that address non-compliance in an effective and proportionate manner.

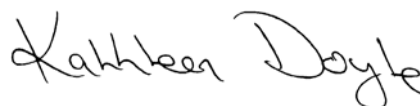
Professional licence holders who offer high-quality, customer-oriented services will benefit from the objectives and goals outlined in this strategy. The regulatory framework is based on qualitative entry and renewal standards – the aim is to assure consumers of high-quality services at competitive prices and to ensure that the market facilitates fair competition between operators who meet those standards. The Commission is firmly committed to these key principles and will continue to develop the regulatory system to the benefit of both consumers and operators.

As an organisation, the Commission aims to be dynamic, pro-active and responsive, to meet or exceed the needs and expectations of its customers and stakeholders, to deal with all stakeholders in a fair and impartial manner, and to make a positive and effective contribution to the provision of SPSV services.

Since its establishment, the Commission has consulted with a wide range of stakeholders and taken their views into consideration prior to implementing its reforms. Submissions and inputs from stakeholders are of great value to the Commission, as are the contributions made by the Advisory Council to the Commission. Over the term of this strategy, we will continue to focus strongly on partnering and engaging with stakeholders.

A key objective in this strategy is to ensure that SPSV services are better integrated into wider public transport planning and delivery. The imminent incorporation of the Commission into the National Transport Authority will help focus wider policies and resources on this essential requirement.

The Commission's staff has achieved a great deal in the past five years and has extensive expertise and experience in regulating the SPSV industry. Over the next five years, we will build on the work done to date, consolidate and enhance the qualitative standards already in place, and continue to promote the value of SPSV services to consumers, policy partners and Government.



Kathleen Doyle  
Commissioner for Taxi Regulation  
April 2010

## CHAPTER ONE

# Our role and responsibilities



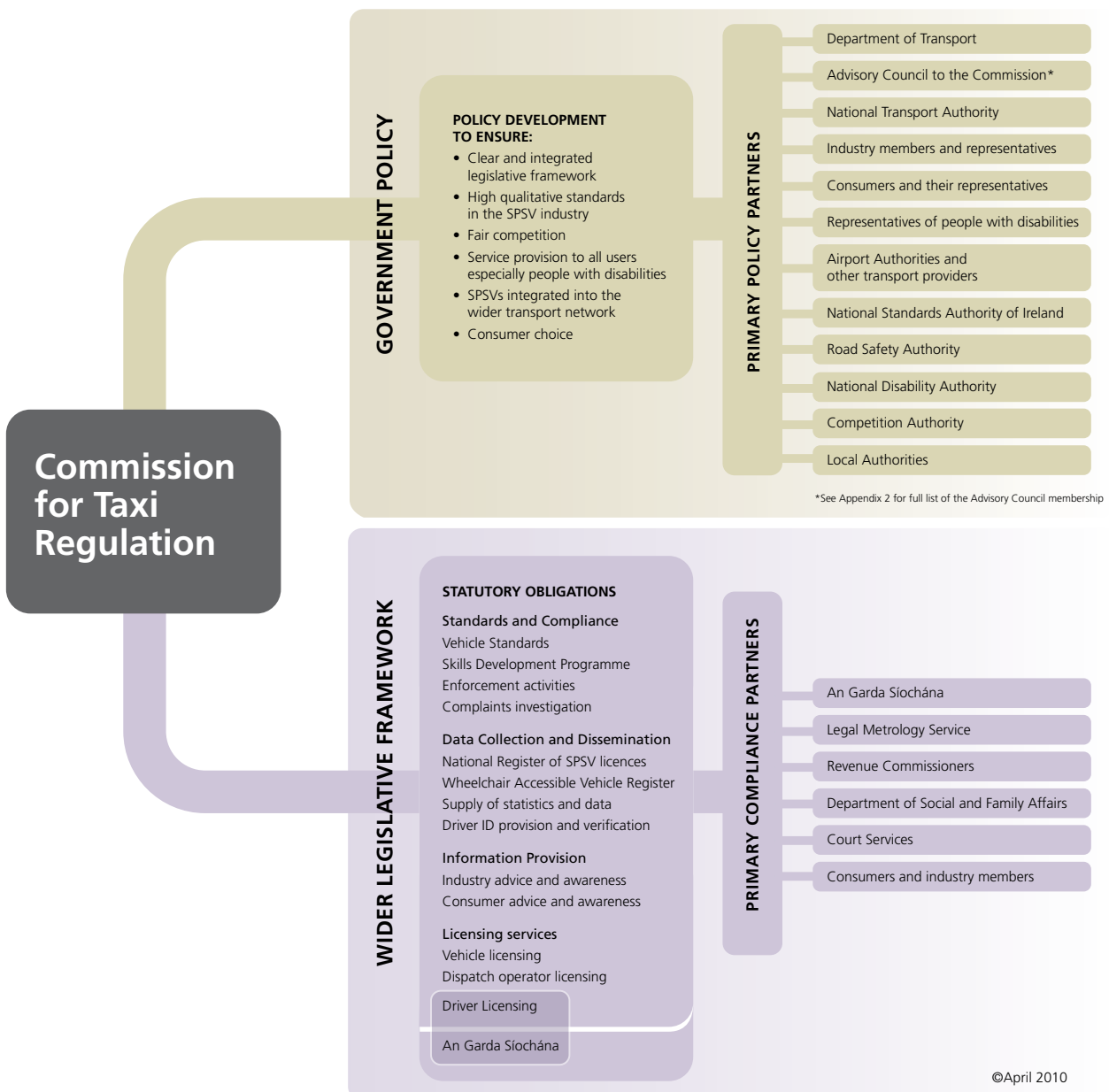
## Our Role

The Commission for Taxi Regulation was established by the Minister for Transport on the 1st September 2004 under Part 2 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2003. The Commission is currently responsible for regulating, monitoring and controlling most aspects of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry in Ireland.

The Commission pursues its objectives by promoting high quality service provision by all licence holders. The Act provides the Commission with the power to regulate

the licensing, ownership, control and operation of SPSVs, including taxis, hackneys and limousines, their drivers and dispatch operators in Ireland. As of 2010, An Garda Síochána continues to administer, monitor and control the licensing of SPSV drivers; the Commission expects to take over this function during the lifetime of this strategic plan.

The Commission does not have powers under the 2003 Act or otherwise to impose quantitative restrictions on entry to the SPSV sector.



## Our Responsibilities

The 2003 Act outlines a number of key objectives for the delivery of an SPSV service to all customers, including:

- Accessibility to those with disabilities and those with mobility, sensory or cognitive impairments;
- Promotion of quality services;
- Customer-orientated licensing systems;
- Promotion of competition;
- Integration with other modes of public transport; and
- Encouragement of investment to enhance services.

Appendix 1 provides an overview of the Commission's statutory functions.

In executing its mandate, the Commission works with and alongside a wide range of policy partners and compliance partners. The diagram opposite shows the principal bodies that have a role in SPSV regulation.

The Commission also engages with several bodies on a consultative basis. The Advisory Council to the Commission for Taxi Regulation reflects the wide ranging interests that our activities impact upon, from SPSV industry members, industry users and consumers to business and An Garda Síochána. Membership of the Advisory Council is listed in Appendix 2; Chapter 4 of this document outlines our stakeholder consultation processes.

The Taxi Regulator's areas of responsibility can be summarised as follows:

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	KEY STAKEHOLDERS
Vehicle licensing	SPSV licence holders, dispatch operators, other enforcement bodies
Dispatch operator licensing	SPSV dispatch operators, SPSV drivers, SPSV users
Vehicle standards	SPSV licence holders, SPSV users, SPSV vehicle manufacturers and converters, other statutory bodies
Skills development	Drivers, dispatch operators
Driver licensing and driver standards	An Garda Síochána, Revenue Commissioners, other enforcement bodies
Identification of licensed drivers	SPSV licence holders, SPSV users, An Garda Síochána, other enforcement bodies
Consumer advice and awareness	SPSV users
Service provision to people with disabilities, and mobility or sensory needs	SPSV users, SPSV licence holders, disability groups
Industry advice and communications	SPSV licence holders
Setting of fares for taxis	Taxi operators, taxi users, dispatch operators, Legal Metrology
Maintenance of national register of SPSV licences	SPSV licence holders, SPSV users, An Garda Síochána, other enforcement bodies
Compliance and enforcement	SPSV licence holders, An Garda Síochána, other enforcement bodies, SPSV users
Complaints and commendations	SPSV users, SPSV licence holders, other enforcement bodies
Prosecution of breaches of regulations nationally	Courts Service, An Garda Síochána
Provision of guidance on taxi ranks	Local authorities, SPSV licence holders, local interest groups, other enforcement bodies
Contribution to wider policy	SPSV licence holders, SPSV users, society, Government, other statutory bodies
Supply of statistics and data	SPSV licence holders, SPSV users, transport academics, Government, other statutory bodies



# The SPSV sector in Ireland





## Categories of SPSV

The SPSV sector in Ireland plays a critical role in the overall public transport landscape.

There are currently five categories of SPSV licensed by the Commission:

CATEGORY	PRINCIPAL USES/CONDITIONS OF HIRE			
	Stand or ply for hire	Pre-booked hire	Priority to passengers with disabilities	Corporate and luxury hire/ Ceremonial occasions
Taxi	✓	✓		
Wheelchair accessible taxi	✓	✓	✓	
Hackney		✓		
Limousine		✓		✓
Wheelchair accessible hackney*		✓	✓	

\*Category introduced in June 2010.

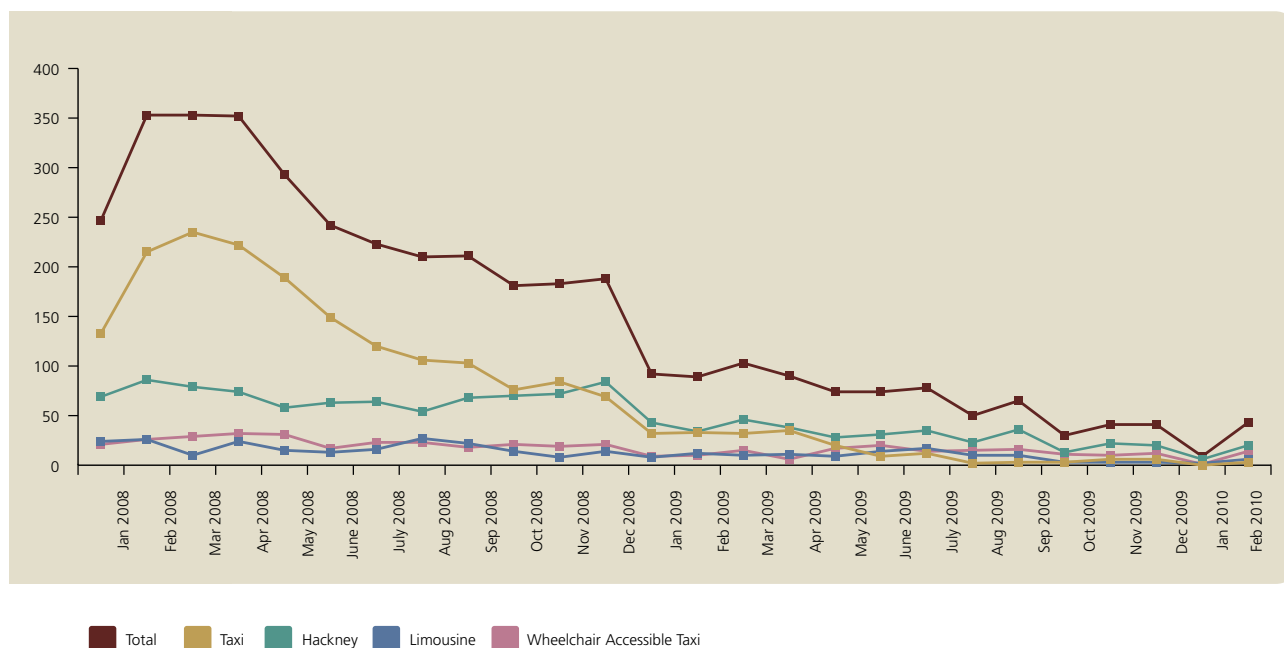
## Structure and Size of the Sector

In March 2010, there were over 26,000 vehicles licensed to operate as SPSVs in Ireland, over 46,000 licensed SPSV drivers, and approximately 300 registered dispatch operators, of whom 80 had completed the licensing process since the introduction of dispatch operator licensing in 2009. The Commission's website provides statistics on the evolving structure and size of the sector – these figures are updated every quarter.

Key trends identified at the end of 2009 were:

- The market showed signs of reaching equilibrium (the number of new licences started to reduce by mid 2008, see overleaf);
- Income levels in the industry were falling;
- There was an increasing level of price competition (including some evidence of discounting by dispatch operators); and
- There were low overall levels of both market entry and exit.

## New licences issued January 2008–February 2010



## The Importance of SPSVs in the Public Transport System

In Ireland, SPSVs are generally the only mode of transport that is available to consumers who require a door-to-door service. SPSVs offer a 24-hour, 365-day-a-year, demand-responsive transport service to a wide range of user groups.

SPSVs support and complement the services provided by other public transport operators. Scheduled public transport services generally cover pre-designated routes and often cease at night time and offer limited services at weekends. SPSVs, in contrast:

- Are demand-responsive (often through a managed booking and dispatch system);
- Are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week across the entire country; and
- Amplify the impact of ongoing improvements in other modes of public transport, as they facilitate access to and from transport interchanges.

In addition, SPSVs:

- Can use quality bus corridors which ensures that their operation is cost and fuel-efficient and provides a higher level of service. (Note: this applies to taxis only, and to with-flow bus lanes only);
- Facilitate the social inclusion of individuals who do not have access to private vehicles;
- Provide services to people with additional requirements (accessible vehicles);
- Are regulated to ensure high qualitative standards for both driver and vehicle; and
- In the case of taxis, operate with a national maximum fare structure, which is transparent, and which can be discounted by the operator to the benefit of the consumer.





## Development of the Regulatory Model for SPSVs In Ireland

Prior to 2000, regulation of the SPSV sector was characterised by quantitative entry restrictions to the taxi market, diversity in taxi fare structures and levels across the country and a fragmented administrative structure for all vehicle licence categories. Historically, the only two forms of licence were those for taxis and hackneys, until the category of wheelchair accessible taxi was introduced in 1992. The category of limousine licence was introduced in 2000.

Before 2000, demand for SPSV services far exceeded supply, particularly in Dublin. A High Court decision in 2000 led to the full liberalisation of the SPSV sector. Quantitative entry restrictions to the taxi market were lifted and existing licensing conditions remained in place for the hackney, wheelchair accessible taxi and limousine categories. There was an immediate increase in the number of SPSVs – the fleet increased from approximately 13,000 at the end of 1999 to just over 20,700 by the end of 2004. A notable development was the reduction in the number of hackney licences, as many (but not all) hackney operators applied for and were granted taxi licences.

The Taxi Regulation Act of 2003 recognised the need for a greater degree of qualitative regulation and set out a number of objectives in this regard. The Commission for Taxi Regulation was established in September 2004 and began its programme of introducing qualitative regulations and supporting systems from 2005 onwards.

## The Impact of the Irish Regulatory Model to 2010

In the first five years of its existence, the Commission has had a significant impact on the SPSV sector. The table (see opposite page) summarises the key changes since 2005. Full details of the activities and progress for each year are published in the Commission's annual reports, which are available on the Commission's website.

## Building on the Regulatory Model – From 2010 On

A recurring theme in ongoing consultation with industry members is the effectiveness of the regulatory model in Ireland and the challenges that arise from full liberalisation. The views of the OECD, and the World Bank, as well as those of the Competition Authority support the approach to regulation adopted in Ireland. The OECD favours entry deregulation accompanied by other regulatory measures such as price reform and stricter service quality standards<sup>1</sup>.

As the current regulatory model is to remain in place in Ireland, the Commission will continue to focus on stimulating demand by raising quality standards, addressing latent demand for accessible services, and encouraging wider innovation and integration. Continued success in the industry is dependent on the provision of high quality services to consumers and on the development of modern, competitive businesses, whether by sole operators, cooperatives or limited companies. The Commission will continue to promote competition within the SPSV sector by enabling consumers to distinguish and reward high quality providers, while ensuring that competition between operators on price and services is maintained, and that unlicensed and non-compliant operators are sanctioned appropriately. The Commission will encourage industry members to further develop their skills and competencies through the Skills Development Programme and other training courses.

We will ensure that our policy decisions are informed by consultation with stakeholders and by Regulatory Impact Analyses (RIA). Implementation will be closely monitored and reviewed to ensure that these decisions achieve their objectives. We will provide the legislative and institutional framework necessary for the continued development of the SPSV industry, and will support this with proportionate levels of enforcement. We will continue to develop licensing conditions and systems that are fair, transparent, cost-effective and efficient. We will also continue to support the integration of the SPSV sector into the wider transport network, and promote the use of in-vehicle technologies to further progress an innovative and customer-responsive SPSV sector in Ireland.

<sup>1</sup> OECD, *Taxi Services, Competition and Regulation*, 2007

	CONSULTATION	REGULATIONS/SUPPORTING PROCESSES INTRODUCED	OTHER
2005	<p>Consultation conducted covering the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services and standards</li> <li>• New national regulatory code</li> <li>• Taximeter areas</li> <li>• Taxi fares</li> </ul>	<p>Commission internal processes and administrative systems initiated</p>	<p><i>National Review of SPSV Services and Standards</i> published</p> <p><i>Strategy Statement 2005—2009</i> published</p> <p>Submissions to Government and State agencies on matters of relevance to SPSVs</p>
2006	<p>Vehicle standards consultation process undertaken</p>	<p>National taximeter area introduced</p> <p>National vehicle licensing system rolled out</p> <p>First national maximum taxi fare rolled out</p> <p>Launch of national information lines for industry and consumers</p> <p>National complaints process rolled out</p>	<p><i>Driving Forward – action plan for 2006–2007</i> launched</p> <p>Public awareness campaign on SPSV consumer rights and responsibilities</p> <p>Regulatory Impact Assessments conducted on future requirements</p> <p>Industry newsletter launched</p> <p>Submissions to Government and State agencies on matters of relevance to SPSVs</p>
2007	<p>Consultation paper on the transferability of SPSV vehicle licences issued to licence holders</p>	<p>Introduction and distribution of in-vehicle information for consumers</p> <p>Introduction and distribution of enhanced driver identification</p> <p>Development of national SPSV driver licence database</p> <p>Dedicated enforcement team recruited, and supporting processes initiated</p> <p>Introduction of fixed-charge penalties system</p> <p>Commencement of prosecutions nationally</p> <p>One vehicle, one licence rule introduced</p> <p>Requirement for all SPSV operators to issue receipts introduced</p> <p>Requirement to carry guide dogs introduced</p> <p>Obligation not to unreasonably refuse fares of 30 kilometres or under, introduced</p> <p>Necessity to apply to the District Court to restore a SPSV licence that has lapsed for more than six months removed</p> <p>Roof sign requirements clarified</p>	<p>Policy on disclosure of information in relation to licence holders finalised</p> <p>Regulatory Impact Assessment conducted on vehicle standards</p> <p><i>National Vehicle Standards</i> published</p> <p>Information and public awareness campaigns to promote use of SPSVs</p> <p>Submissions to Government and State agencies on matters of relevance to SPSVs</p>
2008	<p>Second consultation on taxi fares</p> <p>Surveys completed on operator earnings and working conditions and on consumer usage of SPSV services, in preparation for Economic Review of the SPSV industry</p>	<p>Hackney and limousine licence fees revised</p> <p>Document verification and record keeping requirements introduced for vehicle licence holders whose vehicle is operated by another person</p> <p>National maximum taxi fare revised</p> <p>Introduction of colour coded tamper-proof discs for all licensed vehicles</p>	<p><i>Action Plan 2008—2009</i> published</p> <p>Joint campaign with RSA to promote the use of SPSVs</p> <p>Dispatch Operator Newsletter launched</p> <p>Submissions to Government and State agencies on matters of relevance to SPSVs</p>
2009	<p>Consultation processes conducted on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Review recommendations</li> <li>• Taxi rank planning and provision</li> <li>• 2010–2014 strategy process</li> </ul>	<p>New vehicle standards introduced for new entrants</p> <p>Skills Development Programme launched and SPSV Entry Test introduced for all new SPSV driver licence applicants</p> <p>Dispatch operator regulations introduced</p> <p>Introduction of dispatch operator licensing system</p> <p>Wheelchair accessible vehicle register established</p>	<p><i>Economic Review of the SPSV Industry</i> published</p> <p>Regulatory Impact Analyses conducted on key recommendations of the Economic Review</p> <p><i>Progressing Quality Improvement</i> published, outlining key proposed reforms for 2010 onwards</p> <p>Submissions to Government and State agencies on matters of relevance to SPSVs</p>

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Our stakeholders





## Our Stakeholders

The Commission sees the five-year period covered by this strategy statement as a critical stage in the maturing of the current regulatory model. We remain determined to work with all our stakeholders to continuously improve overall industry standards and to work towards greater integration of the fleet into the wider public transport system. Our incorporation into the National Transport Authority will assist this task significantly.

The Commission interacts with a broad spectrum of stakeholders on a regular basis including (in alphabetical order):

- The Advisory Council to the Commission (see Appendix 2 for details)
- Chambers of Commerce Ireland
- Competition Authority
- Consumers' Association of Ireland
- Courts Service
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Department of Transport
- Disability groups and their representative bodies
- Dispatch operators
- Dublin Airport Authority
- Fáilte Ireland
- An Garda Síochána
- Individual consumers
- Individual operators
- Industry representative bodies
- Irish Hotels Federation
- Irish Insurance Federation
- Legal Metrology Services
- Local Authorities
- National Consumer Agency
- National Disability Authority
- National Standards Authority of Ireland
- Revenue Commissioners
- Road Safety Authority
- Suppliers to the industry (for example, of in-vehicle equipment)
- Vehicle manufacturers, converters and suppliers

The Commission understands the concerns of service providers, service users and other stakeholders. As we strive to maintain a balance between the different interests, we are unlikely to fully address all the concerns of any one stakeholder. We seek to achieve the best balance with regard to all viewpoints and to consistently develop the overall regulatory framework to the benefit of the sector as a whole.

We value our relationship with all of our stakeholders and we acknowledge the role and significant contribution of the statutory bodies involved in SPSV licensing processes as below:

- **An Garda Síochána** currently administers the SPSV driver licensing system, and it will always be the agency authorised and qualified to assess an applicant's suitability for an SPSV driver licence.
- The **Legal Metrology Service** is responsible for and administers taximeter calibration.
- The **Road Safety Authority** is responsible for and administers the National Car Testing Service.

We value the support that these and other agencies provide to the SPSV sector in Ireland. The Commission works closely with all of these agencies and will continue to do so at both the operational and policy development levels to improve overall standards in the SPSV industry.

We equally value our relationship with industry members and consumers. We carry out public consultation processes regularly and ensure that feedback from these processes informs the development of our policies. We conduct regular meetings with industry representatives and take due consideration of all their concerns during the policy deliberation process. The Commission's reform agenda continues to be advanced on a phased basis to allow existing operators to adapt to the improved qualitative standards. We also communicate regularly with service users through a number of mechanisms. Representatives of people with disabilities in particular actively engage with our policy making process.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Our priorities and objectives



## OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Following consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, the Commission has set five strategic objectives for the period 2010–2014.



Two overarching objectives have been set to reflect the Commission's statutory remit:

- 1 To continue to develop and maintain the **regulatory framework** for the SPSV industry in Ireland; and
- 2 To facilitate access to **high quality SPSV services** by all users, particularly people with disabilities.

A further three strategic objectives have been set to progress the SPSV sector towards our vision (see inside front cover). Achievement of these objectives will be dependent on maintaining sufficient resources for the Commission.

These objectives are:

- 3 To enhance **quality assurance** for SPSV users and service providers;
- 4 To **partner and engage** with stakeholders in order to progress statutory and strategic objectives; and
- 5 To **promote the integration of SPSV services** into the wider public transport system.

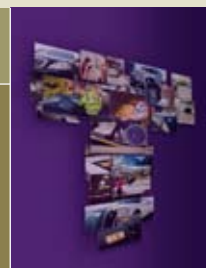
The following pages outline the supporting goals and actions that are necessary to achieve the objectives set out above. The Commission's supporting action plans will give further detail on the range of activities that will be undertaken to implement this strategy.





## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

### To continue to develop and maintain the regulatory framework for the SPSV industry in Ireland



Since 2003, the Irish regulatory model has focused primarily on setting quality standards and ensuring compliance with them. In its first five years of operation, the Commission developed a national approach to the regulation of the SPSV sector, for the benefit of both consumers and industry operators. The current regime provides for:

- A national taximeter area and supporting national maximum taxi fare;
- A national vehicle licensing service;
- A national dispatch operator licensing service;
- National vehicle standards;
- National driver identification system;
- National driver standards through the Skills Development Programme;
- Guidelines for taxi ranks incorporating accessibility;
- A national register of vehicle, driver and dispatch operator licences;
- A dedicated enforcement team and prosecution function;
- A national complaints and commendation system;
- Improved services for people with disabilities; and
- A detailed SPSV industry profile which is regularly updated with licence and usage statistics, analyses of trends, and economic reviews.

Over the lifetime of this strategy, the Commission will continue to develop and implement policies that:

- Facilitate the licensing, monitoring and control of all SPSV licence holders (vehicle licence holder, drivers and dispatch operators);
- Reflect the principles set out in the Government White Paper *Regulating Better*;
- Give a legal basis for continued improvements in standards for SPSV drivers, vehicles and dispatch operators; and
- Provide effective and proportionate ways of addressing non-compliance and illegal activity, in order to ensure that compliant operators are protected from unfair competition.

The Commission will continue to promote maximum compliance through all the means at its disposal. We will seek to reward excellence and promote consumer confidence in the industry.

We will address non-compliance through our monitoring and enforcement processes and in cooperation with other key partners – professional industry operators, enforcement agencies such as An Garda Síochána, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Revenue Commissioners, and the Legal Metrology Service, and the general public.

## Regulatory framework

The Commission will continue to ensure the most efficient and effective approach to regulating the SPSV industry in Ireland, given the regulatory model particular to Ireland.

### GOAL 1

**Continue to consolidate existing SPSV regulations so that they are clear and accessible.**

- Work with the Department of Transport, the Road Safety Authority and other relevant bodies to ensure that the legislative framework for SPSVs clearly provides the supports required to achieve the objectives of the overall regulatory model;
- Consider the impact of any proposed changes by conducting regulatory impact analyses (RIAs);
- Communicate any change in requirements to stakeholders in a timely and effective manner through all available media (for example, newsletter, industry information line, Commission website);
- In cooperation with the Department of Transport, An Garda Síochána, the Courts Service and licence holders (and in parallel with the transfer of the administration of SPSV driver licensing from An Garda Síochána to the Commission) seek commencement of Section 36 (mandatory disqualification) and Section 44(5) (penalties for convictions) of the Taxi Regulation Act 2003.

### GOAL 2

**Regularly review existing regulations to enable ongoing development and improvement of standards and processes.**

- Conduct a review every two years of licensing conditions, regulatory fees and sanctions to ensure that they continue to fulfil their underlying objectives in a cost-effective, proportionate and efficient manner;
- Use technology appropriately, so as to maximise the benefits and reduce the costs of licensing, monitoring and compliance activities;
- Participate in external, independent reviews of our regulatory model, as directed by Government.

### GOAL 3

**Maintain and continually develop the National Register of Licences and ensure supporting licensing processes remain transparent, consistent, proportionate and effective.**

- Provide vehicle inspection and licensing services to all SPSV licence holders by appointment;
- Continue to provide advice in relation to vehicle specifications through our website and industry information line to support operators in application, renewal and change of vehicle processes;
- Provide licensing services to registered dispatch operators;
- Provide ancillary services to the driver licensing process in cooperation with An Garda Síochána as current licensing authority (driver identification, driver skills testing and certification);
- Continue to work with An Garda Síochána to further enhance existing licensing conditions and processes and plan for the transfer of primary responsibility for driver licensing to the Commission.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1 CONTINUED

### Compliance and enforcement

The Commission will use all available resources to maximise compliance, and will address non-compliance effectively.

#### GOAL 4

Maximise the impact of current enforcement resources.

- Identify the optimum model for enforcement to ensure that the Commission's resources have maximum impact;
- Review and enhance enforcement powers where necessary;
- Further integrate activities and information-sharing with other enforcement agencies, including An Garda Síochána, Department of Social and Family Affairs, Revenue Commissioners, and the Legal Metrology Service, to meet compliance challenges;
- Investigate methodologies used by other enforcement processes to enable risk profiling and targeting.

#### GOAL 5

Develop further controls and processes to maximise compliance.

- Implement further appropriate controls in licensing administration and inspection to monitor and assure compliance;
- Review all data collection, data dissemination and monitoring processes to identify potential for further compliance gains.

#### GOAL 6

Develop innovative solutions to persistent compliance challenges.

- Use emerging technologies where appropriate for monitoring and profiling purposes;
- Investigate the use of further security devices to promote consumer confidence and assist the detection of illegal operation.

#### GOAL 7

Promote public confidence in compliant operators.

- Provide a user-friendly online portal to our registers of SPSV licence holders;
- Provide service users with additional information that will create confidence in the operating standards of licensed SPSV operators.

#### GOAL 8

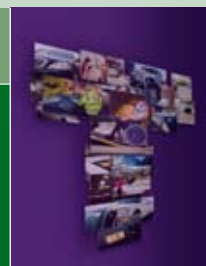
Continue to educate stakeholders and thereby maximise awareness of SPSV compliance requirements.

- Provide consumer information on how to avoid and report non-compliant operators;
- Continue to input into training programmes of An Garda Síochána and other relevant enforcement bodies;
- Provide ongoing information to the industry regarding regulatory and compliance issues;
- Engage with the industry on compliance issues and act on all verifiable information received regarding such issues.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

### To facilitate access to high quality SPSV services by all users, particularly people with disabilities



The dynamic and evolving SPSV sector in Ireland continues to provide a demand-responsive service to the travelling public. The Commission from the outset has sought to improve standards and service access for all members of the public, so that they can continue to benefit from the 24/7, personal and door-to-door service offered by the SPSV sector.

As Ireland's consumers can attest, the vast majority of SPSV service providers are professional operators who are fully compliant with all licensing standards and offer a friendly, professional and courteous service to all their customers. The past five years have seen continual improvements in both the standard and the quality of service on offer from the SPSV sector, along with greater public awareness and appreciation of the sector. This raising of standards has been accompanied by increased competition between operators, particularly on price.

Since 2005, the Commission has taken a number of steps to support access to and uptake of SPSV services, including:

- Improving public information and awareness, through its website, and print and other media;
- Enhancing consumer protection through better provision of regulatory information;
- Running regular consumer awareness campaigns;
- Providing a national consumer information and advice line; and
- Improving services for people with disabilities through regulatory and service measures including the provision of a register of wheelchair accessible vehicle operators.

The Commission aims to achieve the following improvements over the next five years:

- Ensure an appropriate range of vehicles for people with disabilities;
- Further stimulate the demand for SPSV services, by enhancing consumer confidence in and access to SPSV services; and
- Make information and services more easily available to users with specific requirements.

A key concern in the coming years is the maintenance of the existing wheelchair accessible fleet. One of the aims of the 2005–2009 strategy was that 10% of the SPSV fleet should be fully accessible. The deteriorating economic environment and the absence of required funding made this target unachievable in the timeframe.

The Commission will continue to investigate ways of maintaining and improving the availability of accessible vehicles, in partnership with the Department of Transport, the disability sector and the industry itself.

Ensuring that the fleet is accessible to all user groups remains particularly challenging, and the Commission will continue to work with the National Transport Authority, the Department of Transport and SPSV operators to explore appropriate financial and non-financial based strategies to ensure continued and improved availability of accessible services.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2 CONTINUED

### An accessible and high quality service

The Commission will continue to promote an SPSV fleet capable of addressing the full range of customer needs, in terms of both quality and quantity, so that the use of SPSVs is maximised, to the benefit of both operators and users.

#### GOAL 9

Continue to promote the availability of an appropriate number of accessible vehicles.

- Continue to seek financial assistance to support the upgrade of the existing accessible fleet to improved vehicle standards in anticipation of the introduction of new EU vehicle standards in 2012 and beyond;
- Liaise with vehicle importers, converters and other relevant authorities to promote awareness of the new standards;
- Provide information to operators to familiarise them with the approval processes for wheelchair accessible vehicles and to help them select vehicles that meet the required standards;
- Work with the industry to ensure that supply and demand for accessible services are better matched, as set out in the Commission's October 2009 RIA, *Improving Accessibility to SPSV Services*.

#### GOAL 10

Monitor service levels to ensure operator compliance with regulations and best practice.

- Monitor the level and quality of service provision by wheelchair accessible vehicle operators through mystery shopping and other methods;
- Continue to respond effectively and efficiently to all commendations and complaints.

### Consumer awareness and assurance

The Commission will provide appropriate consumer information and assistance to ensure that each SPSV journey is to the highest standard, irrespective of how or when the service is accessed.

#### GOAL 11

Help users to identify the most appropriate service for their needs.

- Provide consumer information to increase awareness of how to select a licensed operator;
- Provide vehicle licence holders with appropriate evidence of their licence status, including an SPSV licence certificate and tamper-proof discs, which they must display for consumer information and compliance purposes;
- Continue to provide licensed SPSV drivers with appropriate ID cards which they must display for consumer information and compliance purposes;
- Continue to provide licensed dispatch operators with licence certificates;
- Make the contact details of licensed dispatch operators publicly available, to facilitate advance booking and better customer service;
- Investigate the provision of information on the location and facilities at taxi ranks throughout Ireland;
- Work with relevant agencies to improve the provision of information on SPSV services at major transport interchanges and other access points.

**GOAL 12**

Continue to run public campaigns to promote the use of SPSVs and raise consumer awareness of the benefits of licensed operators.

- Use regional and other media to promote local and specialist SPSV services in a proactive and effective way within available resources;
- Disseminate information on improved standards and supporting processes in order to maximise uptake of SPSV services.

**GOAL 13**

Continue to enhance in-vehicle and supporting customer information.

- Update in-vehicle consumer information on a regular basis;
- Ensure that the consumer information line continues to provide accessible, relevant and timely advice;
- Provide consumer information using all appropriate media (for example, through mobile technology, consumer websites, or joint information and awareness campaigns with other public sector bodies).

**Fair competition**

The Commission will promote fair competition within the industry in order to maximise consumer demand and to stimulate increased uptake of SPSV services.

**GOAL 14**

Set the maximum national taxi fare at a level that provides a fair return while maximising demand.

- Conduct a review of the national maximum taxi fare at least every two years;
- Increase public awareness of the fact that the fare is a maximum, to encourage appropriate price competition to the benefit of both operators and consumers (including the use of discounting and other measures to stimulate extra demand);
- Consider measures to address affordability for different SPSV user groups, particularly where there is likely to be unmet demand;
- Engage with the Department of Social and Family Affairs to identify opportunities for providing subsidised SPSV travel to eligible individuals.

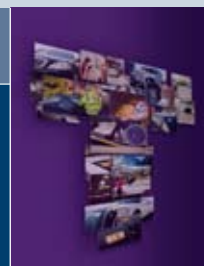
**GOAL 15**

Help service users who contract SPSV services to determine an appropriate level of service for their particular requirements.

- Engage with large-scale public sector buyers of SPSV services to help them to identify indicators of quality and choice;
- Provide public information on operators who deliver higher standards of service (such as an operator commendation scheme or other public recognition that minimum standards have consistently been exceeded).

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

### To enhance quality assurance for SPSV users and service providers



The Commission has statutory powers to set quality standards for the SPSV industry and to require operators to comply with them. The Commission's raising of standards over the past five years has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of SPSV services at all levels. These include:

- **Vehicle Standards:** Higher levels of vehicle standards came into effect from 2009 for all new entrants operating a standard taxi or hackney. These standards will apply to all operators from 2011 onwards. All new wheelchair accessible vehicle licence applicants will have to meet the new accessible vehicle standards from 2010 onwards. Existing wheelchair accessible taxi licence holders (those licensed prior to June 2010) will have to meet the accessible vehicle standards from 2012 onwards.
- **SPSV Driver Licence Knowledge Requirements:** All new entrants must pass the SPSV Entry Test as part of the application process for an SPSV driver's licence. This test includes an Area Knowledge Module and an Industry Knowledge Module. Existing SPSV driver licence holders are required to sit the Industry Knowledge Test by 2012.
- **Dispatch Operators:** All dispatch operators are required to fulfil the dispatch operator licensing requirements, which include passing the SPSV Entry Test.

These are all minimum standards and have been established to ensure consistent levels of service delivery across all aspects of the SPSV industry.

Competing modes of transports (such as bus, train and tram) continue to improve their quality standards on an ongoing basis. To remain competitive, the SPSV industry must continue to raise its standards.

The Commission requires all operators to adhere to its standards and many operators provide a service that noticeably exceeds these minimum standards. Due to the particular nature of the industry, it can be difficult for customers to determine service standards prior to hiring an operator, particularly if the service is not booked in advance. As outlined in Strategic Objective 2, the Commission will help consumers to identify operators who provide high levels of customer service, and will aim to reward operators who consistently provide exceptionally high quality services.

The challenge for the next five years is to ensure that quality improvements are introduced in a manner that ensures that:

- The benefits to the operator outweigh any costs;
- Improvements are future-proofed and take into account emerging technologies;
- Quality can be signalled to the market in a timely and effective way to ensure maximum take up; and
- SPSV service providers can match or exceed the customer benefits offered by other modes of transport.



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## Improving standards

The Commission will ensure that the continued development of the SPSV sector is based on improving standards.

### GOAL 16

**Ensure that every SPSV driver has the skills and knowledge needed to provide an appropriate level of service.**

- Continue to promote the programme of ongoing skills development and certification to support professional development and higher levels of customer service by all licence holders;
- Promote specialist additional training for certain service areas – for instance wheelchair accessible vehicle operators.

### GOAL 17

**Consider the introduction of a quality assurance mechanism to enable better informed consumer choice.**

- Investigate the establishment of an Operator of the Year programme or similar award scheme;
- Identify international approaches and supporting requirements for a quality mark system for the SPSV sector, and consider rolling out such a system in Ireland;
- Liaise with other stakeholders that share a quality promotion remit (such as Fáilte Ireland) to cooperate on relevant initiatives.

### GOAL 18

**Continue to promote the different categories of SPSV to operators and users.**

- Continue to promote all categories for door-to-door and out-of-hours services;
- Encourage the take-up of wheelchair accessible hackney licences, in order to maximise the availability of services for people with disabilities and other special requirements;
- Ensure that the limousine category is appropriately regulated and supported, so that the demand for ceremonial and prestige services is satisfied;
- Continue to review vehicle standards to ensure that SPSVs meet current and future user needs.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

### To partner and engage with stakeholders to progress statutory and strategic objectives



One of the principles of regulation is that stakeholders must be consulted and engaged in decision-making and in review processes. In developing the regulatory system, the Commission's mandate is the continuous improvement of standards, and the regulation of the SPSV industry for the benefit of service users and service providers, with due regard for the requirements of all other stakeholders. Executing this mandate requires balancing costs and benefits, which are often different for different sets of stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement is essential to ensure that relevant input is provided to inform decisions, and that the effects of such decisions are fully considered.

The Advisory Council to the Commission is a key platform for consideration of proposals and deliberation by stakeholders. The Council's advice is particularly welcomed by the Commission, and is always afforded careful consideration, as it helps the Commission to ensure that its decisions are effective and proportionate.

The Commission will also continue to work with other agencies to ensure that its objectives are met in a timely and effective manner.

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## Stakeholder engagement

The Commission will continue to engage with stakeholders so that decision-making and service provision is responsive to their needs, while ensuring that the benefits to stakeholders outweigh costs.

### GOAL 19

**Ensure an appropriate level of stakeholder engagement and manage key relationships in an effective and constructive way.**

- Develop relationships with other policy bodies whose remit is relevant to the regulation of SPSVs and their integration into the wider public transport network;
- Manage contact points such as the Commission's email address and website so that stakeholders can interact on service or policy issues;
- Continue to enhance the specialist information and support provided by the industry and consumer information lines.

### GOAL 20

**Ensure that key decisions are informed by stakeholder input.**

- Continue to conduct public consultation on key issues as appropriate;
- Invite and measure public response to service changes and policy implementation (for example, through surveys);
- Seek feedback on existing services and processes in order to achieve continuous improvement and more responsive services.

### GOAL 21

**Establish and maintain appropriate mechanisms for consultation with industry and consumer stakeholder.**

- Work with existing consumer panels that have a transport or public service focus in order to establish more effective consultation with SPSV users;
- Continue to engage with registered industry representative bodies;
- Seek other fora to engage with stakeholders that have specialist interests or knowledge (such as equipment suppliers).

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## Information exchange

**The Commission will ensure that information relating to the SPSV industry is made widely available.**

### GOAL 22

**Continue to collect internal and external data and information relating to the SPSV industry.**

- Continue to engage with international bodies involved in relevant research;
- Ensure that the Commission has adequate data to inform its work by continuing to collect data and to work with other bodies that collect and collate transport and related data.

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## Influencing wider policy

**The Commission will ensure that other relevant public policy bodies recognise the opportunities offered by, and the particular requirements of, the SPSV sector.**

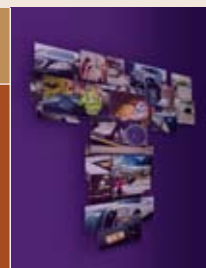
### GOAL 23

**Ensure wider transport planning and policy formulation include SPSV services at the heart of the public transport model.**

- Facilitate widespread dissemination of accurate information about SPSVs and service providers;
- Work with the National Transport Authority to identify strategies and policy actions that will maximise the use by the public of SPSVs;
- Work with the accessibility sector to develop approaches to using SPSVs to meet the transport requirements of their clients;
- Continue to engage with the Public Transport Accessibility Committee, the National Disability Authority and other policy makers;
- Work with the voluntary and community sector to develop appropriate transport solutions.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5

### To promote the integration of SPSV services into the wider public transport system



A key transport planning maxim is that the last mile determines the mode. When someone is considering alternative ways of making a journey, they are most likely to choose the mode of transport (or combination of modes) that brings them closest to their final destination. This has particular relevance for SPSVs, given that the sector is the only public transport option that provides a demand-responsive, door-to-door service.

In this context also, SPSVs can provide a vital link in the public transport infrastructure. Buses and trains do not provide a door-to-door service, so that members of the public very often choose to drive private cars instead of taking public transport, even though public transport could actually satisfy the major part of their requirement. By providing services to and from key public transport interchanges, SPSVs can encourage users to use public transport rather than private cars, thus making a significant contribution to energy saving, environmental sustainability and traffic decongestion.

At a system level, the significant capacity in the SPSV sector presents a clear opportunity for developing a more cost-effective and future-proofed Irish public transport model. Wider policy objectives, such as sustainability, cost-efficiency and speed of implementation, could all be advanced by considering SPSVs as a complement to other modes of transport – one that has unique characteristics.

The establishment of the National Transport Authority provides fresh opportunities for integrating the SPSV sector into the wider public transport system and for raising the profile of the sector among policy makers and funders.

While our primary focus will continue to be the delivery of a regulatory framework for the SPSV industry as a key element in the professional public transport system, we will also actively participate in the development of wider transport policies and in the associated decision-making processes. We will continue to ensure that SPSV service providers and users are given due consideration by other relevant sectors.

The National Transport Authority is currently developing a strategic vision for transport in Ireland in 2030, and the Commission will engage with this process to ensure that SPSV services are recognised for their essential contribution to public transport, and in particular for their delivery of door-to-door services to people with disabilities. To this end, the Commission will act as an advocate for the SPSV industry, representing its interests and influencing future policy for the wider public transport system.



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### **Integrate SPSVs into wider transport initiatives**

The Commission will ensure that the SPSV sector is fully integrated into ongoing transport planning and development.

#### **GOAL 24**

**Engage with relevant bodies planning and implementing integrated transport solutions.**

- Promote advantages of taxis, based on research and international best practice;
- Seek to have taxis incorporated into integrated ticketing once the system is an established payment mechanism in the wider public transport network;
- Promote information awareness at public transport interchanges for the booking of taxi, hackney, limousine and wheelchair accessible SPSV services;
- Provide guidance to local authorities and transport planners on matters relating to SPSVs.

#### **GOAL 25**

**Promote the use of the Commission's taxi rank guidelines at all major transport interchanges.**

- Seek to have the Commission consulted on all relevant planning matters;
- Make submissions on major infrastructure projects, both through the offices of the National Transport Authority and directly.

## CHAPTER SIX

# Our capacity to deliver



## Implementing this Strategy

In implementing this strategy, the Commission will take the necessary steps to ensure that:

- We have the appropriate resources – financial, technological and human – to realise our goals, and we have the ability to manage these resources;
- We use best practice regulatory and other methodologies to support decision-making and implementation;
- Our customers are kept as a central focus of our work;
- Our policies, practices and services regularly undergo appropriate appraisal, assessment and proofing processes to ensure they meet diverse requirements (e.g. disability proofing); and
- We apply appropriate risk management and contingency planning.

We will also ensure that progress on implementing the strategy is measured appropriately and clearly – this aspect is dealt with in Chapter 7.

## Adequate Resources and their Appropriate Management

Our ability to achieve our objectives is critically dependent on the availability of sufficient resources. It will be a particular challenge to maintain organisational capacity in the context of restrictions on public sector staffing and the growing pressures on budgets. If adequate resources are not available, we will have to prioritise our objectives and goals, and allocate our resources accordingly.

In line with government strategies relating to improved customer service and eGovernment, the Commission will continue to place particular emphasis on the use of new technologies to increase efficiencies and impact. The Commission views information and communication technologies as key enablers of our core functions.

We will use technology:

- As a support to core functions;
- With appropriate controls to ensure statutory compliance, governance and oversight;
- With a focus on improved productivity and efficiency; and
- In a way that maximises the potential for delivering our services online.

The Commission needs to maintain and further develop its expertise in a number of highly technical areas, such as compliance and enforcement, regulatory impact analysis, transport pricing (through the setting of taxi fares), vehicle standards and the interpretation of European Union law. The Commission's day-to-day activities are dependent on the capability of the staff to exercise sectoral and regulatory leadership, to manage and develop people, to make good decisions and judgements, and to work effectively in teams. The Commission's strategic human resource and staff development policies seek to continually develop these key competencies, skills and behaviours in all our staff.

Everyone who works in the Commission is asked to take responsibility, to innovate, to challenge themselves, and to learn. In return, our staff can expect:

- Equitable people management processes;
- Clarity regarding roles and contributions;
- Opportunities for skills development; and
- A supportive, pleasant and safe working environment.

Line managers have a key role in implementing people management policies, in fostering an environment conducive to learning, and in managing performance. We will pay particular attention during the implementation of this strategy to supporting managers in this role. We will continue to provide staff with ongoing learning and development opportunities to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and competencies to fulfil the goals of the Commission and to further their own career development.



The Commission is also fully committed to progressing equality and diversity through our human resource policies, training programmes and communications with staff. We will continue this process through the lifetime of this strategy to ensure that we value and benefit from everyone's contribution.

The Commission also places a premium on working productively, with minimum wasted effort and expense. We will maintain a financial management function that supports the effective use of our financial resources, through the delivery of economy, efficiency, value-for-money and promptness in all expenditure.

We will ensure that a robust system of internal financial controls is in place and that the Commission's financial responsibilities are fully discharged. The Internal Audit function has key roles to play, providing assurance that the system of internal controls is robust, and helping to develop a risk management framework.

Future resource allocation will be determined by developments in public finances. Through improved management and a clear focus on value for money, we intend to continue to provide an excellent service within the resources available to us.

## Use of Best Practice Regulatory and Other Methodologies

In line with the Government White Paper *Better Regulation*, our aim is to ensure that, whenever regulation is justified, it is prepared in a fully transparent way, with maximum public participation throughout its formulation. We also seek to ensure that it:

- Is clear;
- Achieves its objectives;
- Is not overly burdensome;
- Is properly enforced;
- Has no unintended effects; and
- Is reviewed regularly.

The Commission is an active participant in the Annual Regulatory Forum sponsored by the Department of the Taoiseach, and also participates in other mechanisms to support peer engagement and access to best practice.

Internally, the Commission will ensure that it continues to employ appropriate mechanisms to maximise the effectiveness and quality of our outputs, such as:

- Continuous process improvement;
- Data collation and management;
- Appropriate research; and
- Quality assurance.

All management processes are designed with the capacity to respond flexibly to changed circumstances and emerging priorities.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Measuring progress



## Measuring Progress

In line with best practice for statutory public bodies, the Commission is committed to measuring and reporting clearly on progress towards its objectives. The following mechanisms will be used:

- A series of two-year action plans will be developed, with detailed actions and performance indicators; and
- Annual reports will be published, with output statements and progress reports on the objectives set out in this strategy statement.

These documents will be structured around the five strategic objectives set out in Chapter 5 of this document, to enable clear tracking of the detailed planning and progress. They will be written in plain English.

The output statements will also detail the expenditure and other resources associated with the actions undertaken each year and will outline the relevant outputs and outcomes.

The overall outcomes from this strategy are long term, and in some cases are related to wider transport and national objectives for which we do not have direct or sole responsibility. Many of the individual goals within each objective will be achieved by the joint efforts of the Commission, the licence holders, the public and the Government. Progress towards our short- and medium-term goals will be made on a phased basis, with review points built in to our action plans to ensure that the overall regulatory system continues to develop in line with our strategic objectives.

The Commission will develop quantitative and qualitative performance indicators at individual, business unit and organisational level which are aligned with the five strategic objectives set out in Chapter 5. We will keep all indicators under review to ensure that they remain relevant throughout the life of this strategy and that, wherever necessary, corrective action is taken in a timely way.

## Other Aspects of Accountability

Apart from the measurement and reporting mechanisms outlined above, the Commission accounts for its actions and their outcomes in a number of other forums and through a range of other channels, including:

- The Department of Transport;
- The Department of Finance;
- The Houses of the Oireachtas;
- The public;
- Regulatory and oversight bodies (such as the Comptroller & Auditor General, and the Standards in Public Office Commission);
- International institutions such as the EU and the OECD;
- Evaluation by academic and other non-governmental institutions, trade and industry bodies;
- Staff and their representatives;
- The internal audit function;
- Customers and citizens, through freedom of information and other democratic machinery; and
- Annual reporting of progress against customer charter targets.

## APPENDIX 1

# Statutory functions of the Commission

Section 9(1) of the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 provides that ‘the principal function of the Commission is the development and maintenance of a regulatory framework for the control and operation of small public service vehicles and their drivers’.

Section 9(2) of the 2003 Act requires that, in exercising its functions, the Commission shall seek to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) To promote the provision and maintenance of quality services by small public service vehicles and their drivers,
- (b) To pursue the continued development of a qualitative and customer orientated licensing system, regulatory code and standards for small public service vehicles, small public service vehicle licence holders and small public service vehicle drivers,
- (c) To oversee the development of a professional, safe, efficient and customer-friendly service by small public service vehicles and their drivers,
- (d) To encourage and promote competition in relation to services (including fares) offered by small public service vehicles,
- (e) In seeking to achieve the provision of quality services by small public service vehicles and their drivers, to have due regard to the protection of service users and providers alike,
- (f) To promote measures to facilitate increased integration of taxi services in the public transport system,
- (g) To promote the development of high quality cost effective services by small public service vehicles and their drivers which meet a wide range of customer needs including those of passengers with mobility or sensory impairments,
- (h) To promote access to small public service vehicles by persons with disabilities,
- (i) To encourage investments to support and enhance the services offered by small public service vehicles and to promote innovation in this regard.

## APPENDIX 2

# The Advisory Council to the Commission for Taxi Regulation

The Advisory Council to the Commission for Taxi Regulation, which was established under the 2003 Act, consists of a chairperson and 17 members appointed by the Minister for Transport. The function of the Council is to advise the Commission or the Minister for Transport, as appropriate, in relation to issues relevant to SPSVs and their drivers.

The Advisory Council may offer advice to the Commission or the Minister. Alternatively the Commission or the Minister may seek the advice of the Council in relation to particular areas or issues.

The Commission or the Minister, as appropriate, may consider the advice of the Council given under the 2003 Act, but is not bound to act on it.

The Council is representative of:

- Small public service vehicle and driver interests;
- People with disabilities;
- An Garda Síochána;
- Consumer interests;
- Local authorities;
- Business interests;
- Specialist expertise; and
- Tourism interests.

### Membership of the Advisory Council (as at March 2010)

Mr Pat Byrne, Former Garda Commissioner, *Chairperson*

Mr Frank Moore, Irish Taxi Drivers' Federation

Mr Peter Rodgers, SIPTU

Mr James Connolly, National Taxi Drivers' Union

Mr Christopher Humphrey, National Private Hire and Taxi Association

Mr Thomas Fannin, National Chauffeur Drive Association

Mr Michael Kilcoyne, Consumers' Association of Ireland

Ms Noreen Mackey, The Competition Authority

Mr Donie O'Shea, National Disability Authority

Mr John Rice, Chambers Ireland

Mr Douglas Jordan, Fáilte Ireland

Mr Al Ryan, Irish Hotels Federation

Mr Joe MacGrath, County and City Managers' Association

Mr Michael Rowland, Road Safety Authority

Mr Derek McGovern, Taxi Company Owners' Association

Mr Brian Killeen, Transport and Logistics

Chief Superintendent Cornelius G. McIntyre,  
Garda National Traffic Bureau

Ms Kathleen Diamond, Ordinary Member.



## APPENDIX 3

# Glossary

**Advisory Council** – the Advisory Council to the Commission for Taxi Regulation was established under Part 4 of the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 to advise the Commission in relation to matters pertaining to small public service vehicles (SPSVs).

**Commission** – the Commission for Taxi Regulation, an independent public body established under the Taxi Regulation Act 2003, is responsible for the regulation of taxis, hackneys and limousines. Note that the terms ‘Commission for Taxi Regulation’, ‘Commissioner’ and ‘Taxi Regulator’ all refer to the same entity, and tend to be used interchangeably.

**Dispatch operator** – a dispatch operator is a person who takes bookings for SPSV services that are supplied by another person, and who arranges with the operator or driver of the vehicle to provide the service booked.

**Dispatch operator register** – a register of licensed dispatch operators in Ireland.

**Driver ID cards** – a large display card and a smart card that identify the holder of an SPSV driver licence. The large card is displayed on the dashboard of the SPSV; it provides passengers in the vehicle with a picture of the driver, their licence number and the licence expiry date. The other side of the card, facing towards the windscreen, shows the county in which the driver is licensed to ply or stand for hire in a taxi. All SPSV drivers must also carry a smart card with them when operating as SPSV drivers. This card can be requested by enforcement officers and checked with hand-held devices, and it also acts as a form of identification for customers at pick-up point.

**Driver licence register** – a register of all licensed SPSV drivers in Ireland, maintained by the Commission for Taxi Regulation.

**Fare structure** – the rules and parameters that specify how a taxi fare is calculated.

**Fixed charge penalty system** – the system by which the Commission is legally empowered to impose fixed charges for specified breaches of regulations.

**Hackney** – an SPSV which may be operated only in response to pre-booking; it must not be used to ply for hire on the street or stand at taxi ranks. The fare must be agreed in advance with the customer. Hackneys may not use bus lanes.

**Liberalisation** – this refers to fewer government regulations and restrictions in the economy in exchange for greater participation of private entities. In the case of the SPSV sector in Ireland, liberalisation relates to the removal of restrictions on the number of licences issued, but does not control quality standards.

**Limousine** – an SPSV which may be operated only in response to pre-booking; it must not be used to ply for hire on the street or stand at taxi ranks. The fare must be agreed in advance with the customer. Limousines may not use bus lanes. A limousine must be suited by its style and condition to be used for ceremonial, corporate or other prestige purposes.

**Maximum fare** – the maximum amount which may lawfully be charged by a taxi driver.

**National register of licences** – under Section 38 of the Taxi Regulation Act, the Commission is required to maintain a national register of licences. There are currently three separate registers – a register of licensed SPSVs (vehicle register), a register of licensed SPSV drivers (driver register) and a register of licensed dispatch operators (dispatch operator register). The Commission provides information from these registers to appropriate enforcement agencies on request to ensure compliance with legislation.

**NSAI** – National Standards Authority of Ireland.

**NTA** – National Transport Authority.

**Private hire vehicle** – an SPSV, such as a hackney or limousine, which must be pre-booked and cannot be used to ply for hire or stand at a taxi rank.

**Public hire vehicle** – An SPSV, such as a taxi or a wheelchair accessible taxi, which can be used to ply for hire or stand at a taxi rank or be called out or pre-booked by a passenger.

**Qualitative restrictions** – restrictions on the operation of the market based on legal requirements, vehicle standards, driver knowledge, etc.

**Quantitative restrictions** – specific limits or quotas on the quantity or value of goods, such as on the number of licences issued.

**Regulatory framework** – the body of legislation and regulation that is relevant to operating in the industry.

**RIA** – Regulatory Impact Analysis.

**RSA** – Road Safety Authority.

**Skills Development Programme** – a new programme of skills development and testing for SPSV drivers and dispatch operators.

**Small public service vehicle (SPSV)** – vehicles that are licensed to carry up to eight fare-paying passengers. The term is used to refer collectively to taxis, wheelchair accessible taxis, hackneys, wheelchair accessible hackneys and limousines.

**SPSV Entry Test** – the test all new SPSV driver licence applicants are required to pass. It includes both the Area Knowledge and Industry Knowledge Modules of the Skills Development Programme.

**SPSV driver licence** – the licence required to drive an SPSV.

**SPSV licence holder** – the person to whom any one of the three broad categories of SPSV licences has been issued – a vehicle licence, a driver licence or a dispatch operator licence.

**Statutory Instrument (SI)** – A form of secondary legislation that includes regulations and is made in the exercise of a statutory power.

**Tamper-proof licence disc** – a disc affixed to the front and rear windows of a licensed SPSV. The discs display the details of the vehicle registration, the SPSV licence number, the expiry date of the SPSV licence, and the number of passengers the vehicle is licensed to carry. The discs remain in place for the duration of the SPSV licence. The discs are visible to passengers and enforcement agencies from inside and outside the front and back windows of the vehicle. They contain a hologram and advanced security features making transfer, replication or forgery difficult.

**Taximeter area** – an area designated by the Commission for the operation of taxis. The Commission has designated the whole country as a single taximeter area.

**Taxi** – an SPSV which can be used to ply for hire or stand at a taxi rank or be called out or pre-booked by a passenger.

**Vehicle licence** – the licence required to operate a vehicle as an SPSV.

**Vehicle licence register** – a register maintained by the Commission of all licensed SPSVs in Ireland.

**Wheelchair accessible hackney** – a new category of SPSV, the specification for which is set out in the Commission's *National Vehicle Standards* publication of November 2007.

**Wheelchair accessible taxi** – a taxi which meets a number of additional vehicle specifications to allow use by persons using their wheelchairs.

**2003 Act** – Taxi Regulation Act 2003 (No 25 of 2003).

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for Taxi Regulation.**

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