

## **Introductory Statement from Hugh Creegan Deputy Chief Executive, National Transport Authority**

Thank you for the invitation to attend. I understand that the Committee wishes to focus upon the draft Small Public Service Vehicle (Consolidation and Reform) Regulations 2014 which have recently been the subject of public consultation. Small public service vehicles include taxis, hackneys and limousines.

### **Firstly, the Government Review....**

Following a Government decision of June 2011 a wide ranging review of the industry was carried out, chaired by Mr. Alan Kelly TD, Minister of State for Public and Commuter Transport. The resultant Review Report was published in January 2012.

The aim of the review was to secure consumer confidence in the taxi system by ensuring that an appropriate regulatory framework is in place which is adequately enforced. The National Transport Authority was given responsibility for implementing the vast majority of actions and responsibility for the enactment of necessary Statutory Instruments rests with the Authority.

Certain actions required primary legislation to be enacted. The Taxi Regulation Act 2013 was enacted at the end of last year and it included all the required legislative changes needed to deliver on the Review's actions. Some sections of the Act have been commenced but the main body of the Act is to be commenced in the coming months in tandem with the consolidated regulations.

### **Regarding the draft Regulations.....**

The draft Regulations were released for public consultation on 19th December 2013 and submissions could be made until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014. A total of 242 submissions were received.

The Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles, a statutory group appointed by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to represent both the operators within the industry and various other relevant stakeholders, will also set out its views directly to the Authority. All these views will be considered by the Board of the Authority when it convenes later this month to decide on the regulations.

As part of this deliberative process I will bring back the views of this Committee to the Authority's Board.

### **What is contained in the draft regulations?**

Firstly, the draft regulations consolidate all existing taxi regulations into one statutory instrument, bringing together regulations made over the last 50 years.

Secondly, various new regulations have been included in order to give effect to the requirements of the Government Review. In the Appendix overleaf I set out a list of key changes proposed.

**That concludes my introductory presentation. I trust that I can answer any queries that arise.**

# Appendix

## List of Key Change Items in New Regulations

- 1. Section 7: Tax clearance status**  
Drivers of small public service vehicles will be required to maintain tax clearance certificates.
- 2. Section 10: Exemption from requirement to hold a licence to drive small public service vehicles**  
This excludes non-commercial car sharing and own-chauffeur arrangements from licensing.
- 3. Section 11: Mandatory area knowledge test**  
Permits the Authority to require applicants for driver licence renewals to sit the relevant area knowledge test.
- 4. Section 13(3): Grant of new small public service vehicle licence**  
Proposes that the age of a vehicle attaching to a new licence (except limousines) to be less than six years.
- 5. Section 13(4) and (5): “Stamp 2 Visa” Holders**  
This provision reflects the position set out in immigration legislation regarding restrictions under these visas in relation to operating a business or being self-employed.
- 6. Section 15(4): Period of validity of small public service vehicle licence**  
Proposes that limousines first registered before 1<sup>st</sup> January 1980 to be allowed 1 year vehicle licences instead of six month licences as at present.
- 7. Section 18: Death of a licence holder**  
Sets up arrangements facilitating transfer of a licence upon the death of a vehicle licence holder.
- 8. Section 29: Modified Vehicles**  
Proposal for a full engineer’s report at first licensing and a basic engineer’s report every 5 years.
- 9. Section 46: Taxi Roof Sign**  
Provides for a new credit card sign and the exclusion of the representative group names.
- 10. Section 48: Prohibition on advertising**  
Proposal to prohibit advertising on small public service vehicles.
- 11. Section 54: Taximeter**  
Proposal to prohibit additional charges for credit/debit card payments and to prohibit a minimum fare for credit/debit card payments.
- 12. Sections 61 to 64: Licensing of Dispatch Operators**  
Proposes a simplified system and a reduced fee for licensing of dispatch operators.
- 13. Section 66: Substantial breach of regulations**  
As required under the new Act, this sets out items that constitute substantial breaches resulting in the application of four demerit points.
- 14. Schedule 4: Item 1 – Smaller Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles**  
Current requirement that wheelchair accessible vehicles must be able to carry three passengers in addition to an occupied wheelchair to change to one passenger plus an occupied wheelchair.