

A Review of Small Public Service Vehicle Driver Licensing Public Consultation Questionnaire

Introduction

The National Transport Authority (the “Authority”) is the statutory body responsible for the regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) sector, i.e. small public service vehicles (taxis, and private hire vehicles, both hackneys and limousines), together with their drivers, owners and associated services, including booking services. The rationale for SPSV regulation is to ensure that passengers have a safe vehicle for their journey, with appropriate insurance in place, driven by a driver who has been vetted by An Garda Síochána. While there are many other aspects to the overall regulatory system, these are the foundation elements, focussing on passenger safety and protection.

To be licenced to drive a small public service vehicle (taxi, hackney or limousine) in Ireland, you must:

- (i) Hold a standard driver’s licence (covering car driving) without endorsements;*
- (ii) Pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test;*
- (iii) Complete the required application form and pay the appropriate fee;*
- (iv) Be tax compliant; and*
- (v) Be confirmed by An Garda Síochána to be a suitable person to hold a licence (vetting).*

The Authority has decided to conduct a review of this driver licencing framework, together with the associated testing, training and monitoring of drivers, which has been in place since 2009. The focus on this public consultation is on the SPSV Driver Entry Test, in order to assess whether it appropriately reflects today’s needs.

SPSV Driver Entry Test

The test that all drivers of taxis, hackneys and limousines have to pass is called the SPSV Driver Entry Test. The SPSV Driver Entry Test is designed to test the applicant’s knowledge of the small public service vehicle industry and the applicant’s geographical knowledge of the county that the applicant wishes to operate in.

A licenced taxi driver may only stand for hire at a taxi rank, or be hired on-street, within the county for which a geographical test, called the Area Knowledge Test, has been passed. If already licensed, an applicant who wishes to stand or ply for hire in any county other than the one in which they are already licensed must pass the Area Knowledge Test for each additional county.

The SPSV Entry Test is taken by an applicant in one of 5 test centres established around the country. Lasting approximately 1 hour 45 minutes in total, the test consists of 90 questions in two sections. The format is Multiple Choice Questions displayed on a computer screen with four possible answers for each question.

The first section – the Industry Knowledge Module – consists of 54 questions relating to regulations and good practice in the taxi, hackney and limousine industry. The second section of the Entry Test – the Area Knowledge Module – consists of 36 questions relating to the county in which the applicant wishes to be licensed to operate.

Candidates must achieve a score of 80% or more in both modules at the same sitting to pass the SPSV Driver Entry Test.

Submissions

We are seeking your views on the current arrangements for testing an applicant’s suitability to be licensed as a driver of taxis, hackneys or limousines. Should the current arrangements continue? Or should revised arrangements be put in place?

Overleaf is a set of questions to which we are seeking responses. You do not have to respond to all questions and we would welcome any other ideas you may have in relation to this specific topic. In order to promote discussion, we have also prepared a short document, which outlines the existing circumstances with regard to the licensing of SPSV drivers in Ireland, along with information on the regulation and management of the SPSV industry in other relevant jurisdictions, highlighting issues that might be of particular interest. This discussion paper is available on the “**Current Consultation**” section on the Authority’s website - www.nationaltransport.ie

Written submissions can be made in one of the following ways:

1. **Online:** please visit the Current Consultation section on the Authority’s website www.nationaltransport.ie
2. **Email:** SPSVDriverEntry@nationaltransport.ie
3. **Post:** SPSV Driver Entry Requirements Consultation 2016, National Transport Authority, Dún Scéine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2

The Authority may publish any submissions received and is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Deadline for receipt of submissions - 5:00pm, Wednesday, 30 November 2016

Questionnaire

1. Should there be a specific test for applicants to drive SPSVs, or should a standard driving licence, confirmation of tax clearance and Garda vetting be sufficient?
2. If there should be a specific test to become an SPSV driver, should there be
 - a. one type of driver licence covering the driving of all SPSVs (taxis, limousines and hackneys); or
 - b. should there be one licence for the driving of taxis and a different licence for the driving of hackneys and limousines? *(Note: hackneys and limousines can only operate on a pre-booked basis – they are not permitted to wait at taxi ranks or stop on the street to pick up passengers without a pre-booking.)*
3. Do you think that a test on the industry's regulation and good practice is required as part of an application to drive taxis, hackneys or limousines?
4. Do you think that geographic knowledge of a particular area or zone needs to be tested as part of an application to drive taxis, hackneys or limousines?
5. If testing of the geographic knowledge of an area of operation is necessary, should that area be based on county boundaries, as it is currently, or should there be a sub-division of counties into smaller zones of authorisation?
6. Should there be an electronic navigation equipment test as part of the entry test?
7. Should there be a practical driving test as part of the entry test?
8. Should there be a practical programme that candidates must successfully complete in relation to providing a public transport service for passengers using wheelchairs; other passengers who require assistance; young, old or vulnerable passengers?
9. Should there be a module on professional customer service as part of an entry test?
10. Should there be a practical language test as part of the entry test to test a candidate's communication ability in English?
11. Should a medical examination be a part of the entry requirements?
12. Should there be a required training programme that candidates must successfully complete prior to becoming authorised to drive small public service vehicles?
13. Should a programme of on-going learning or continuous professional development be a condition of renewing a licence?
14. Should an SPSV driver licence be renewed every one, three or five years?
15. Should there be a requirement on all new entrants to the industry to affiliate with a dispatch operator for a set period on entry?
16. Do you think there should be a dress code for the drivers of taxis, hackneys and limousines?
17. Do you have any other proposals that you would like considered?