

Minutes of the Advisory Committee on SPSVs (TAC) Meeting

Held by video conference on Thursday 29th April 2021

Present:

Chairperson	Mr. Con O'Donohue
Representing SPSV and driver interests	Mr. Kevin Finn Mr. John Murphy Mr. Shajedul Chowdhury Mr. Francis Doheny
Representing local authorities	Ms. Mary Henchy
Representing the interests of consumers	Mr. James Cawley Ms. Michelle Reid
Representing interests of persons with disabilities	Ms. Joan Carthy
Representing the interests of business	Ms. Ann Campbell
Representing the interests of older persons-	Mr. Peter Fleming
Representing the interests of tourism	Mr. Al Ryan
Representing Special interest or expertise	Mr James O'Brien Mr. Noel Ebbs Mr. Martin Plummer Ms. Fiona Brady

Apologies:

Representing An Garda Síochána - Superintendent Thomas Murphy.

Others in Attendance:

Mr. Eamon Ryan, Minister for Transport (Items 2 and 3)

Mr. Éanna O'Conghaile, Principal Officer, Public Transport Regulation Division (DoT) (Items 2 and 3)

Mr. George O'Keeffe, Assistant Principal Officer , Public Transport Regulation Division (DoT) (Items 2 and 3)

Mr. Carlos Acarreta, Public Transport Regulation Division (DoT) (Items 2 to 8)

Ms. Wendy Thompson, Director of Transport Regulation (Items 2 to 8),

Ms. Patricia Craven, Head of Taxi Regulation ((Items 2 to 8)),

Ms. Jackie Mullen (Secretary).

=====

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Introduction of new appointees to the Advisory Committee and welcome to the Minister for Transport.

The Chair welcomed the new appointees to the Committee, Mr. Francis Doherty and Mr. Shajedul Chowdhury representing SPSV and driver interests, Ms. Michelle Reid representing the interests of consumers and Ms. Fiona Brady in the category of special interest or expertise. He thanked former member Mr. Alan Fox for his valued contributions to the work of the Committee.

The Chair welcomed the Minister for Transport Mr. Eamon Ryan and the Department of Transport officials, Mr. Éanna O’Conghaile, Mr. George O’Keeffe, and Mr. Carlos Acarreta to the meeting.

3. Discussion with the Minister for Transport on COVID-19 and other issues relevant to the SPSV industry.

The Minister welcomed all of the new members to the Committee. He informed the Committee that following the Cabinet sub-committee meeting on the 28th April, we are now moving into a new phase of managing COVID-19, with a gradual and cautious re-opening from 10th May.

The PUP payment and fees waiver remain in place and drivers will still be permitted to continue earning €960 over each 8 week period net of operating costs without losing the PUP.

He informed the Committee that €15m has been allocated to the electric vehicle grant in 2021. To date approximately 400 grant applications have been received, 10% of the applications are for eWAVs and he would like to see this figure increase. The choice of electric vehicles is opening up as more vehicles are made available to the market.

The BusConnects Dublin project will give priority to bus and active travel. There are no plans to remove taxis from bus lanes. It is intended to roll out the BusConnects project in Cork, Galway, Waterford and Limerick to encourage modal shift away from private vehicles in addition to measures to reduce the demand for travel such as more remote working and compact development – the 15 Minute town/city

The Minister took questions from Committee members

In response to a question on the return of international travel, the Minister informed the Committee that it would be later in the Summer, with Ireland being part of a European approach – European certificate system. Coach tour business such as the American markets are unlikely to open up in the short term. It will most likely be next year before it recommences.

In relation to the rollout of electric charging bays, the Minister informed the Committee that €20m investment with ESB will assist in the accelerated rollout out of charging bays nationwide. He confirmed that the Department would revert with regard to the design criteria (specifically the accessibility factor) for charging bays and acknowledged the need for meaningful consultation on

the matter. The Minister indicated he looked receiving the advice of the Advisory Committee on the operation of eSPSVs in urban and rural settings.

George O’Keeffe informed the Committee that the electric vehicle grant scheme had received 400 applications to date. The scheme would be reviewed at the end of the year and tweaked if necessary.

The Minister, Mr. Éanna O’Conghaile and Mr. George O’Keeffe left the meeting

4. Summary of COVID-19 State supports relevant to the SPSV industry.

Ms. Thompson gave a presentation on the COVID-19 supports relevant to the SPSV industry that have been put in place since March 2020.

5. Public Consultation on Draft Small Public Service Vehicle (Emergency Measures COVID-19) Regulations

A public consultation is currently ongoing, following NTA Board approval, on draft COVID-19 emergency regulations to support the SPSV industry. The draft emergency regulations seek to extend the final operation date of vehicles due to reach their end of life in 2021. This proposed regulations combine the two previous COVID-19 emergency regulations and provide further protection in relation to the 516 vehicles now due to reach their *amended* maximum permissible age during 2021. 86% of responses to the consultation received to date support the proposed emergency regulation and the deadline for submissions is 11 May.

6. NTA update.

Ms. Craven gave a SPSV statistical update. In response to a query regarding the return of the Driver Skills Entry Test, she informed the Committee that this will re-commence on May 10th in line with public health advice.

7. Local Authority update – Mary Henchy

The Local Authority Weatherproofing & Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme is a new capital grants scheme that has been developed through collaboration with Local Authorities, to upgrade and enhance streets and public spaces and implement weather-proofing solutions which will facilitate year-round outdoor dining in key tourism centres. Some of the initiatives planned under the Scheme may impact on location of taxi ranks, permeability and location of street furniture. Joan Carthy to discuss accessibility issues with Mary Henchy directly. NTA to provide the contact details it is aware of for Local Authority consultation with the SPSV Industry.

8. Accessibility Survey Feedback

All members of the Committee were encouraged to send feedback on the pilot survey to secretary@spsvadvcomm.ie by Friday 07 May.

Wendy Thompson, Patricia Craven and Carlos Acarreta left the meeting.

9. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th March 2021 and matters arising.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25th March were approved without amendment. All matters arising are being dealt with as agenda items.

10. Transferability – Individual and Company

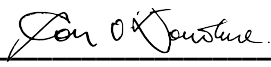
The Chair, with the agreement of the Committee took a decision to defer this item to the start of the next meeting when more time could be allocated to the discussion

11. AOB

The Chair asked the secretary to circulate a link to the public consultation on the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland to Committee members. He encouraged all Committee members to provide feedback on the consultation by the 6th May 2021.

Some Committee members expressed disappointment at the uptake of the Failte Ireland COVID-19 safety charter. The Chair informed the Committee that Failte Ireland will shortly be initiating a new publicity campaign.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 27th May (via video conference)

Signed: 
Chairperson.

Dated: 27 May 2021.