

Draft Minutes
Advisory Committee on SPSVs
Hybrid Meeting, NTA Offices and MS Teams
Thursday, 27th October, 10.30am

Present:

Chairperson	Mr. Cornelius O'Donohue
Representing SPSV and driver interests	Mr. John Murphy, Mr. Shajedul Chowdhury, Mr. Francis Doheny
Special interest or expertise	Mr. Noel Ebbs, Mr. James O'Brien, Ms. Fiona Brady
Representing the interests of tourism	Mr. Al Ryan
Representing the interests of older persons	Ms. Mai Quaid
Representing the interests of business	Ms. Ann Campbell
An Garda Síochána	Superintendent Tom Murphy

Apologies:

Special interest or expertise	Mr. Paul Gregan
Representing the interests of consumers	Ms. Michelle Reid, James Cawley
Representing the interests of Local Authorities	Mr. Brendan O'Brien
Representing the interests of persons with disabilities	Ms. Joan Carthy

NTA Staff in Attendance:

Ms. Wendy Thompson (Director Transport Regulation)
Mr. Eddie Fullerton (Compliance Manager)
Ms. Jackie Mullen (Secretary)

1. Minutes and Matters Arising.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 29th September were approved without amendment. In relation to driver shortages it was noted that there has been a gradual increase in the number of drivers entering the market. The Committee agreed that the Chair would draft a note to the NTA recommending that there should be no change in the rules governing transferability.

(Wendy Thompson and Eddie Fullerton join the meeting)

2. NTA Update

Eddie Fullerton gave a presentation on the statistical update to the end of September. The Committee raised a query in relation to cashless payments and the monitoring of driver compliance with this. Eddie Fullerton informed the Committee that this was being done via the compliance officer's audits. During the first month NTA has received a total of 177 complaints, with 66 of these complaints relating to the absence of cashless payment facilities or driver refusal to accept cashless payments.

In relation to the taxi meter recalibration NTA informed the Committee that approximately 2,000 drivers have not initiated the process. At present if a meter has not been verified and sealed a driver will be given an advisory fail. This will change shortly to a straight fail.

NTA informed the Committee that the number of fixed penalty notices is increasing and the NTA has a high success rate through the court process. However the NTA believes judgements in court do not always reflect the severity of the breach with drivers been given the probation act and required to give a donation to charity (usually around €200, together with a contribution to the NTA's costs – no conviction) The Committee suggested that perhaps NTA could give a presentation on compliance to the Judges Conference. Wendy Thompson agreed to explore this proposal.

Wendy Thompson gave an update on the recent maximum permissible age of vehicles public consultation. Approximately 2,000 responses were receive with 94% supporting the extension of vehicle age. In relation to the public consultation on driver licence validity period and increase in fixed penalty notices a total of 58 responses were received with between 60% and 70% in favour of the proposed changes. The matter will now go to the November meeting of the NTA board.

In relation to the eSPSV grant scheme NTA informed the Committee that there will be a scheme in place for 2023 but the details have not been finalised yet.

In relation to local area hackneys NTA informed the Committee that in line with Government policy (Our Rural Future:Rural Development Policy 2021-2025) the NTA will be required to carry out a pilot study and will need to identify suitable areas for this pilot. The Committee's feedback has been taken on board.

3. SPSV Driver Application Process - Conversion rate / timeframe / pinch points

NTA informed the Committee that on average an individual will sit the test 2.6 times. On passing the test an applicant can pay the €200 application fee and go straight onto the garda vetting process. Once An Garda Siochana complete the vetting process and provide the NTA with the driver licence the applicant can be on the road in 3 days. The majority of applicants pay the fee within 2 weeks of passing the test. The speed at which an applicant moves through the application process is in the hands of the applicants themselves. Drivers are encouraged to pay the fee on the day they pass the test. The Committee suggested that the NTA put advice into the driver pack that the applicant should have all of their paperwork ready to go in advance so they can progress their application immediately once the test is passed.

Superintendent Tom Murphy advised that all applicants be encouraged to be as open and honest in their vetting application as this will save time in completing the process.

The Committee suggested that NTA and An Garda Siochana issue a guidance note for applicants on how to apply. NTA and An Garda Siochana to liaise on this.

Noel Ebbs informed the Committee that based on post-test interviews with drivers the follow issues were raised

- Lack of online facility to book test
- In relation to the tax compliance piece many drivers are unaware that they must apply in the self-employed category and not as a paye worker. This should be made clearer to the driver.
- Lack of online payment facilities
- Some confusion around where to submit the application with many drivers going to the Carriage Office and not An Garda Siochana

- Some drivers felt that the Area Knowledge test was confusing particularly the negative type questions such as which of the following is not?
- Some drivers also found questions about the meter tricky

The Committee suggested that it might be useful to organise a workshop with dispatch operators driver representatives and the NTA to get some additional feedback on this.

Wendy Thompson and Eddie Fullerton left the meeting

4. Advisory Committee Work Plan

Roof Signs

The Chair agreed to pull all of the feedback from the Committee together and draft an advise note for the NTA.

Data Capture / Technology

It was agreed that the November meeting of the Committee will focus on this specific issue. The Chair suggested that the NTA should circulate their monthly update to the Committee by email and there would be no need to have a presentation on the day of the meeting to allow time for a full discussion on Data Capture and Technology.

5. AOB

A query was raised in relation to pre-booked taxis. If a driver drops a pre-booked fare to the airport are they permitted to pick up a fare at the airport and drop to another location. Area 18 in the airport is the designated area for pre-booked taxis.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 24th November at the earlier time of 9.00am. It will be a fully remote meeting.

Signed: _____ **Dated** _____