

Minutes of the Advisory Committee on SPSVs Meeting
Video conference, Thursday, 24th February 2022

Present:

Chairperson	Mr. Cornelius O'Donohue
Representing SPSV and driver interests	Mr. Kevin Finn, Mr. John Murphy
Representing interests of persons with disabilities	Ms. Joan Carthy
Representing the interests of Business	Ms. Ann Campbell
Representing the interests of tourism	Mr. Al Ryan
Special interest or expertise	Mr. James O'Brien, Ms. Fiona Brady

Apologies:

Representing SPSV and driver interests	Mr Shajedul Chowdhury, Mr Francis Doheny
Representing the interests of older persons	Mr. Peter Fleming
Local Authorities	Ms. Mary Henchy
An Garda Síochána	Superintendent Tom Murphy
Consumers	Mr. James Cawley, Ms Michelle Reid
Special interest or expertise	Mr. Noel Ebbs

NTA Staff in Attendance:

Ms. Lauren Markey (Deputy Secretary)
Mr. Eddie Fullerton (Compliance Manager)

1. Minutes and Matters Arising.

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th January were approved with no amendment.

2. Covid-19 Update.

The Committee had a brief discussion on the challenges currently facing the industry in relation to Covid-19 and the return to work for drivers. Correspondence was received from the Department of Transport as well as industry representatives in relation to a code of practice or guidelines for mask wearing now that government mandates have been lifted. A number of questions were raised in relation to drivers and passenger's personal choices when it comes to wearing masks. It was noted that soon, the public will no longer carry facemasks and that it would be important to give advice to drivers as well as users within the industry. The Committee agreed that the best option would be to encourage mask wearing and it was agreed to advise the NTA to consider issuing guidelines to the industry and public to be respectful of people's choices.

3. Advisory Committee Work plan

- **Local Area Hackneys**

The Committee agreed that Local Area Hackneys is a difficult market to service with a low take up, even with incentives, and it is still proving difficult for drivers to earn a living due to low levels of demand and the absence of longer distance journeys. The Local Link bus service is filling a gap by

providing a very useful service in these areas. Discussions around the importance of Hackney licenses as part of the supply chain took place and their role into the future. The Chair is to prepare a draft document in relation to Local Area Hackneys for the NTA.

- **Roof Signs**

The Chair stated that he had received some submissions from members on roof signs. The Chair recommended that the Committee dedicate time to discuss Roof Signs at the next meeting. Roof Signs is an important element of vehicle standards for which a broader review may be required. Industry representatives mentioned that vehicle standards is important but the maximum fare review is top priority with the increase in running costs and the general cost of living, and drivers need to be kept up to date with the fare review process.

4. NTA Update

Mr. Eddie Fullerton joined the call to give a NTA update. Mr. Fullerton shared a presentation with the Committee; he discussed licensing statistics from March 2020 to date. Active vehicle licenses at the end of January 2022 were 18,779 with 3,392 inactive vehicle licenses. 553 wheelchair accessible vehicles are inactive, this raised concerns within the committee and they have asked the NTA to look into this as a priority. Active driver licenses accounted for 25,369 at the end of January 2022 with 1,478 inactive licenses. New licenses that joined the fleet in 2021 was 444 with 12 entering the fleet in January 2022.

Mr. Fullerton spoke about new licenses and the skills test. 2,754 skills tests were completed in 2021 and 541 drivers received new driver licenses. This raised concern among the Committee members that there is interest in the industry but very few are receiving licenses. Many discussed a gap between testing and licensing. Committee members also discussed disability awareness and the need to consider its inclusion in the driver licensing process.

In 2021, 379 WAV grants were issued. 271 new vehicles were added to the fleet and 108 vehicles replaced existing vehicles. "WAV22" opened on 1st January 2022 and has received 109 applications so far (76 new licences). 89 applications are at 'provisional grant offer' stage, totaling €450,000. There have been an additional 4 non-grant-aided WAV licences issued since the beginning of 2022.

eSPSV21 launched on the 4th of February 2021. Total applications received: 1,487 (1,204 scrappage; 99 New vehicles; 172 COVs; 12 incomplete). Electric vehicles added to the fleet was 606 (567 in respect of scrapped vehicles, 39 COVs), value €11.7m. 580 Grant assisted licences were issued in 2021, while 26 were licenced in January 2022 as the scheme was extended for applicants who were affected by delays in the delivery of their electric vehicle. eSPSV22 opened on 4th February 2022. €15 million has been allocated for grants this year to enable owners of small public service vehicles to buy electric vehicles. The grants can be up to €20,000 for a new BEV/FCEV or up to €25,000 for a new Wheelchair Accessible BEV/FCEV or €15,000 new Wheelchair Accessible PHEV with 'scrappage'. Without scrappage, these grants may be up to €10,000, €12,500 and €7,500 respectively.

5. Compliance

In relation to compliance, the Committee were given statistics on checks, audits, fixed payment notices and court days for 2021. 185,585 checks, 5,068 audits, 157 fixed payment notices and 31 court days were completed in 2021. Compliance are also investigating vehicles that were raised as a concern by the committee at previous meetings.

6. AOB

- **Wheelchair Accessible Limousines**

The Committee discussed concerns about the licensing of wheelchair accessible limousines. It appears a limousine adapted for a wheelchair user cannot fulfil suitability requirements. The Committee asked the NTA to look at this and brief the Committee at its next meeting.

- **Transferability**

With transferability, the issue is supply and demand combined with driver availability/shortages. The NTA is ultimately responsible for this and the Chair has asked for the NTA's view on this. The below table is provided in relation to the driver statistics and the issues around supply and demand will be examined in Consumer and Driver surveys later this month.

Active Driver to Vehicle links	Total Active In Portal	Vehicle Licences	% Completed Driver to vehicle link
Hackney	548	1005	54.53
Wheelchair Accessible Hackney	86	135	63.70
Limousine	678	1799	37.69
Taxi	11313	12743	88.78
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi	2704	3115	86.81
Grand Total	15,329	18,797	81.55

A concern was also raised by a Committee member around drivers who are suffering with medical issues and are medically unfit to sign nomination forms, take out insurance etc. The advice to the Committee member was to seek independent legal advice and to note that enduring power of attorney may be an option.

Date of next meeting – Thursday 31st March 2022 at 10.30am

Signed: _____ **Dated** _____