

**Minutes of the Advisory Committee on SPSVs Meeting**  
*Video conference, Thursday, 31st of March 2022*

**Present:**

Chairperson	Mr. Cornelius O'Donohue
Representing SPSV and driver interests	Mr. Kevin Finn, Mr. John Murphy, Mr Shajedul Chowdhury, Mr Francis Doheny
Local Authorities	Ms. Mary Henchy
Consumers	Ms Michelle Reid
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
Special interest or expertise	Mr. Noel Ebbs, Mr. James O'Brien, Ms. Fiona Brady

**Apologies:**

Representing interests of persons with disabilities	Ms. Joan Carthy
An Garda Síochána	Superintendent Tom Murphy
Consumers	Mr. James Cawley

**NTA Staff in Attendance:**

Ms. Wendy Thompson (Director of Transport Regulation)

Ms. Lauren Markey (Deputy Secretary)

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**1. Minutes and Matters Arising.**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February were approved with no amendment.

**2. Covid-19 Update.**

The number of infections relating to Covid-19 has significantly increased. The wearing of masks seems to have reduced quicker than expected. Mask wearing is advisory on all public transport and is advised for Small Public Service Vehicle usage.

**10.45am Advisory Committee and NTA.**

**3. NTA Update**

All statistics were updated to the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2022.

NTA took an action to provide data on the SPSV Skills Test and candidates to the next meeting.

The eSPSV22 grant will be paused for 3 months from 31 March 2022 as the allocation of €15m has been exceeded. This will be reviewed during Q2 with a view to reopening in Q3 when provisional grant offers have lapsed and funding is released.

#### **4. Maximum Fare Presentation**

The objectives of the National Maximum Taxi Fare review are to estimate the average activity level of taxis by kilometres travelled, update each element of the Taxi Cost Index, including the annual fixed and running costs of an average taxi based on the activity levels, together with labour costs and assess the appropriateness of the current fare structure.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2020, the NTA Board approved the National Maximum Fare increase of an average of 4% with a 1% provision for cashless payment facilities in each taxi. The market conditions at the time showed strong economic growth and unemployment rates falling, with a positive future for Ireland and globally. Unfortunately 7 days later Covid-19 arrived to Ireland and with recommendations from the Advisory Committee and industry representative groups, it was decided by the NTA and the Department of Transport that this National Maximum Fare increase would be postponed. NTA began rolling driver and consumer surveys in 2020, 2021 and 2022 to access supply and demand data together with SPSV operator cost changes. The situation remained under review.

The National Maximum Fare Review 2021 commenced in November 2021, and the Maximum Fare Review report is due next week. This will go forward to the NTA Board for approval to publish for public consultation to open for one month for submissions from all stakeholders. All information will be posted on the NTA website and advertised. For context, NTA shared the recent public transport fares 20% reduction data.

Committee Members supported the presentation. There was a consensus that all work around the National Maximum Fare review be evidence based and that it is important to reach a good balance for drivers as well as consumers as the industry does not want to push consumers away from taxi usage in the current volatile financial environment. It was suggested that the National Maximum Fare be revisited in a year, if appropriate.

#### **5. Cashless Payment Presentation**

A further public consultation may be approved by the NTA Board, at its April meeting, on the proposed mandatory in-taxi cashless payment facilities regulations.

The regulation is currently in draft stage but the cashless payment mandate will state that for any journey, the driver of a taxi shall ensure that they: are in possession of an operating device that facilitates cashless payment; accept cashless payment as a method of payment of a fare; and display certain signage. The driver of a taxi shall not record the payment card details of a passenger. Fines attaching to the regulations will range from €100 to €200. It is imperative that drivers issue a printed receipt from the taximeter to each passenger under SPSV regulations.

Committee Members are supportive of this mandate and believe it is a positive step in the right direction.

#### **11.45am Advisory Committee**

#### **6. Advisory Committee 2021 Work Plan**

- **Local Area Hackneys**

There was a brief discussion around local area hackneys and the NTA confirmed that the designated local area hackney pilot will be trialled again in collaboration with TFI Local Link.

- **Roof Signs**

Time did not allow for discussions around Roof Signs however, the Chair will look to get further information on GPS policies with a view to maximising the use of technology, and including the ability of the NTA to more accurately measure supply.

- **Transferability & Revocation**

The Committee discussed the issue around transferability, a perceived shortage of drivers and the correlation of supply and demand. The NTA does not believe there is a shortage of licenced drivers. In Ireland, we have 4 drivers per 1000 population. Great Britain is the only country with more at 4.4 per thousand population. In Dublin, we have eight drivers per 1000 population. There is an issue with the availability of those drivers at peak times. Geographical discrepancies were highlighted by the Committee.

If GPS devices were located in roof signs, providing aggregated information to feed into policy, this could possibly assist with a geographic licensing solution. NTA will provide a breakdown of drivers nationwide and the supply and demand data from the February surveys when same is to hand, together with opinion on perceived driver shortages.

NTA is currently reviewing further the legalities of the revocation of licence on change of control of company. The Committee recognised the concerns attaching to shell companies distorting the market.

## **7. Dublin Airport Permits**

The Committee enquired whether with the DAA only issuing permits to Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles would cause supply issues in other areas of Dublin. NTA noted that the ranks and holding areas in the airport are numerically constrained, with taxis from the airport dropping off elsewhere, making Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles available in other areas of the city. NTA believes this will encourage more Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles into the fleet in combination with the grants available.

## **8. AOB**

There were no items raised under AOB.

**Date of next meeting – Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2022 at 10.30am**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dated** \_\_\_\_\_