

## Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles

Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024, 11am-1pm.

Venue: Meeting Room 3, Dún Scéine, Iveagh Court, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2

### Present:

Chairperson	Mr. Cornelius O' Donohue
Representing:	
Small Public Service Vehicle and Driver Interests	Mr. John Murphy, Mr. Francis Doheny, Mr. Shajedul Chowdhury, Mr. Alan Cooley
The Interests of Tourism	Mr. Paul Keeley
An Garda Siochana	Superintendent Tom Murphy
Special Interest or Expertise in Matters Relating to the Functions of the Authority, the Advisory Committee, or Related Matters.	Mr. James O'Brien, Mr. Harpreet Singh

### Apologies:

Local Authorities	Brendan O'Brien
The Interests of Older Persons	Ms. Mai Quaid
The interests of Consumers	Ms. Michelle Reid
The interests of Business	Ms. Ann Campbell

### NTA Representatives:

Attendance: Mr. Jakub Szynal, NTA (Secretary).

Partial Attendance: Ms. Wendy Thompson, Director of Transport Regulation

Ms. Roisin Cullinan, Head of Licensing

Ms. Fiona Brady, Head of Regulatory Compliance

## **1. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the last meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024, were approved with no amendment.

## **2. Committee Membership Changes**

The Chair introduced Jakub Szydal as the new secretary for the Advisory Committee.

The Chair informed the meeting that Mr. Paul Gregan has resigned from the Committee and Ms. Joan Carthy is in the process of resigning. Ms. Michelle Reid will be finishing her term at the end of March 2024.

To fill out the remaining vacancies, the Chair liaised with the Department of Transport regarding a possible advertisement package on their website.

***NTA Representatives joined the meeting.***

## **3. NTA Update**

Fiona Brady is the new Head of Regulatory Compliance with NTA following her success in Open Competition.

The NTA update slides, which were previously circulated to the Advisory Committee, were discussed. The eSPSV24 and WAV24 grants were noted as achieving the highest numbers of applications ever received in either.

Extra slides were presented (to be circulated post meeting) in relation to the driver age profile in Ireland, with particular emphasis on the substantial increase in the under 30 and 31-40 years olds passing the SPSV Driver Entry Test in recent years. This indicates a significant change to historical industry attractiveness to younger applicants and a shift in the age profile of drivers. The meeting discussed the pass/fail rate of the SPSV Driver Entry Test. NTA informed the Advisory Committee that the question bank for both modules of the SPSV Driver Entry Test undergoes a full formal independent review every five years with a global test provider, an internal formal review every two years and ad hoc review as matters arise on an ongoing basis. It is intended that NTA will arrange an independently facilitated, cross-sectional workshop on the sufficiency and efficiency of the SPSV Driver Entry Test in the operating environment in the latter part of 2024.

SPSV driver representatives and the meeting in general emphasised the significance of retaining high standards and the AGS vetting process. NTA confirmed its view of the critical importance of proper and thorough vetting of any potential SPSV driver by AGS, together with ongoing review of personal suitability to perform the licenced services at renewal or as required, in the interest of public safety. Concern was raised regarding the length of the

timeline involved in managing the vetting process and getting an SPSV licence to operate. It was agreed that the particular examples of delay referenced would be provided directly to Superintendent Murphy for follow up.

Service pinch points were discussed, particularly 1am-4am on weekend nights servicing the Night Time Economy. Most SPSV drivers are self-employed and choose their own hours. It was noted that supply of licenced drivers is not the issue, being significantly higher than most jurisdictions with no caps on driver or vehicle licences, but rather the availability of drivers willing to work those hours for fear of antisocial behaviour. It is important that the concerns of drivers be addressed and NTA is working with AGS to try and improve the situation. It was recognised as a multiagency and provider issue, including those on the Taxis for Ireland Coalition, the restaurateurs, vintners and hospitality service providers.

The Uber and Bolt reports in the media recently were discussed. It was clarified that that surveys quoted in the media related to those specific Booking App clients and affiliated drivers only. It was noted that FreeNow, the largest Booking App, had publicly advised that its driver and trip numbers had grown year on year and did not follow the experience reported. Street and rank work remains brisk, as well as being preferred by drivers as it does not attract commission payments.

The Advisory Committee discussed the new Dublin Airport permit required to pick up pre-booked passengers. It was noted that this is a matter for DAA and operators alone and outside the remit of NTA.

NTA encouraged driver representatives to urge their members to participate fully in the Maximum Fares Surveys ongoing and have their say in the policy and strategic plans to be formulated for the future of the industry.

***NTA Representatives left the meeting.***

#### **4. Night-Time Economy**

The Advisory Committee discussed smart taxi-meters and technology in relation to the supply of drivers available at night time pinch points. It was agreed that drivers need to be incentivised to operate at these hours, especially with growing concerns amongst drivers about the safety of the city at night. The Chair asked that members bring forward suggestions as to how the availability issue might be addressed.

#### **5. Work Plan 2024**

The meeting discussed driver training, querying the possibility of training in driver customer service.

## **6.AOB**

The Chair asked the Committee if there was any other business, there was none.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2024 at 10.30 at NTA's offices.