

# Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles

Thursday, 25 January 2023, 10.30am, Meeting Room 1

## MINUTES

### Present:

Chairperson	Mr. Cornelius O'Donohue
Representing:	
Small public service vehicle and driver interests	Mr. John Murphy, Mr. Shajedul Chowdhury, Mr. Alan Cooley
Local Authorities	Mr. Brendan O'Brien
The interests of business	Ms. Ann Campbell
The interests of tourism	Mr. Paul Keeley
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:

Small public service vehicle and driver interests	Mr. Francis Doheny
An Garda Siochana	Superintendent Tom Murphy
The interests of persons with disabilities	Ms. Joan Carthy
The interests of older persons	Ms. Mai Quaid
The interests of consumers	Ms. Michelle Reid
Special interest or expertise	Mr. Paul Gregan

Attendance: Ms. Jackie Mullen, NTA (Secretary)

Partial attendance: Ms. Wendy Thompson, Director of Transport Regulation, NTA

### 1. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, were approved with no amendment.

### 2. Advisory Committee Membership Changes

The Chair welcomed Harpreet Singh who was recently appointed to the Advisory Committee by the Minister for Transport. Mr. Singh will represent the area of special interest or expertise in matters relating to the functions of the Authority, the Advisory Committee or related matters. The Chair informed members that Ms. Fiona Brady has resigned from the Advisory Committee. The Department of Transport is in the process of filling the remaining vacancies on the Advisory Committee.

*W Thompson joined the meeting.*

### **3. NTA Update**

The NTA update had been previously circulated. There were no queries raised. The Chair encouraged Committee members to send any queries to the Secretary in advance of each meeting so that the responses could be adequately prepared.

The profile of SPSV driver licence numbers from 2007 to 2023 was circulated noting the 5-year licence renewal cycle and various key dates which brought changes to the industry, most particularly the change from the SPSV Driver Licence renewal fee from IRE3 (from 1977) to €250 in 2009 and the consequent non-renewal of licences not being used by the holder. The movements in insurance and the economy across the period was also discussed.

NTA met with the Taxis for Ireland Coalition recently. The members of this new group include the Restaurants Association of Ireland, Vintners' Federation of Ireland, Licensed Vintners' Association, Irish Tourism Industry Confederation, Bolt and Uber. The current night-time economy issue regarding the preference, for safety, health and welfare issues, of many SPSV drivers not to service key demand pinch points was discussed.

The Advisory Committee agreed that the number of SPSV drivers in Ireland is not the issue, given that it is significantly higher per capita than other countries and cities; however, the availability of those drivers to provide services particularly at the midnight to 4am, Friday and Saturday demand period needs to be addressed. Driver surveys repeatedly cite public order and concern for their personal and vehicle safety as the main determinant in not providing late night services.

NTA again confirmed that unregulated SPSV services are not under its consideration and cited the mirroring in many Western European countries of the Irish legal situation. The Chair also confirmed, for the information of the NTA and the new appointee to the Advisory Committee, that the Committee was well informed of the trends in relation to the regulation of SPSV services, the benefits of a regulated service such as that in Ireland, and that the Advisory Committee was not considering issuing any advice to change the current regulatory regime.

Local Area Hackney licences and the subsidised pilot were also discussed. The meeting expressed its disappointment and lack of understanding as to why the uptake of this community transport service by local communities and the hospitality industry itself has not been greater with only 26 such services around the country. NTA will circulate information on the licence and the pilot. It was noted that the Maximum Taxi Fare Review was underway, with driver and user surveys taking place up to the first week in March. NTA encouraged driver representatives to urge their members to engage with NTA surveyors to ensure fully representative and accurate information is provided for the preparation of the Taxi Cost Index which forms the basis of the operating costs comparisons used in the Review.

NTA opened the WAV24 Grant Scheme on 2<sup>nd</sup> January with over 3,000 applications received to date. The Department of Transport anticipates that the eSPSV24 Grant will open in mid to end February with similar grant levels as those in 2023 and a return to the three month offer period.

*W Thompson left the meeting.*

#### **4. Workplan 2024**

The meeting agreed some of the work areas that the Advisory Committee will focus on in 2024:

- Driver Training – Paul Keeley to provide Secretary with possible dates for meeting of sub-group;
- Maximum Taxi Fares Review; and
- Smart taximeters and technology in relation to supply and demand analysis.

It was agreed that a representative from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media be invited to a meeting to give a presentation on the nighttime economy. Paul Keeley to liaise with the Secretary regarding contact details for Department representative.

#### **5. AOB**

None

**The next meeting of the Advisory Committee will be in person on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 10.30 at NTA's offices.**

**Signed:**

**Dated:**