

## **Press Release**

### **Commission for Taxi Regulation Welcomes Submissions on Vehicle Standards**

**(16 March 2007)** The Commission for Taxi Regulation has welcomed the submissions received on Consultation Paper No. 4 'Vehicle Standards' which was published on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006. The closing date for the receipt of submissions was Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

This Consultation Paper proposed reforms across a wide range of areas within the Small Public Service Vehicle (SPSV) sector. The proposed reforms relate to; vehicle condition, size, capacity, safety, security, accessibility and comfort for taxis, hackneys, wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys and limousines. Reforms will be implemented on a phased basis from 2008 for new licence applicants, 2010 for existing standard vehicle licence holders, and 2012 for existing wheelchair accessible licence holders.

Deputy Commissioner Kathleen Doyle commented, "We have received a large volume of submissions from the industry, consumers and a variety of other interested parties including organisations representing people with disabilities and vehicle suppliers. This is very welcome and will assist us in drafting the new vehicle standards.

She continued, "We will now begin to review the submissions and consider all views which will assist the Commission in providing a solution that balances overall quality, accessibility and safety improvements to enable all passengers to embark, travel and disembark with safety and comfort. It is essential that the final specifications enables service providers an element of certainty to encourage maintained investment and to balance supply and demand, as well as sufficient advance notice to enable future business planning. They must also provide passengers with the appropriate level, quality and safety of service."

The Commission for Taxi Regulation will publish its new vehicle standards in the final quarter of 2007.

## **Ends**

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## **Editors Note**

Consultation Paper Number 4 'Vehicle Standards' set out the current situation, issues for consideration and the Commission's proposed solution in relation to a range of vehicle standards. Unless stated, the timescale for the changes is 2008 for new entrants and 2010 for existing licence holders. Changes proposed included;

- A maximum age limit of nine years old for standard taxis and hackneys.

- Definition of a standard taxi/hackney as; a minimum four-door, mid-range saloon/hatchback/estate/MPV with a permanent roof, separate luggage compartment of 420 litres and seating for four adult passengers plus driver.
- New category of wheelchair accessible hackney. (Timing subject to new standards published separately in 2007)
- The interior and exterior of the vehicle to be clean and tidy (with due regard to weather conditions), with no repairs in progress. Overall, vehicles should meet a standard similar to a recently valeted vehicle.
- Taxi roof signs to be synchronised with taximeters so taxis show clearly if they are available for hire (illuminated) or not (not illuminated). (Proposed 2008 for new entrants and to coincide with fare review for existing licence holders)
- Vehicles should carry a fire extinguisher, first aid kit, warning triangle, high visibility safety vest and a torch.
- Temperatures inside the vehicle should be capable of being maintained at least 20°C
- Annual SPSV suitability test.
- Allowing in-car security shields or transparent divisor and/or in-vehicle CCTV cameras. (At driver's discretion)
- Provision of new in-vehicle signage.

In addition to the proposed changes above the Commission will carry out a number of Pilot studies commencing in 2007 to investigate;

- The possible inclusion of a 'swivel' passenger seat capable of rotating a seated passenger 90° for greater accessibility, for all vehicles and/or wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Possible inclusion of an induction loop in wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Possible inclusion of an audible taximeter.
- Effectiveness of in-vehicle security shields or transparent divisor.
- Effectiveness of in-vehicle CCTV cameras.
- Establishment of a 'Quality Mark' awarded for a high levels of service.

Proposals specifically relating to Wheelchair Accessible Taxis and Hackneys will be subject to standards published separately in 2007 (with implementation dates of 2008 for new entrants, 2012 for existing licence holders). Proposals for this include;

- Consistent accessibility requirements for doors and provision of access steps (where the vehicle is higher than 230mm from the ground), ramps or lifts.
- Provision of a forward or rearward facing (not side facing) space exclusively available for at least one wheelchair and occupant, plus seats for three additional adult passengers. Separate wheelchair and wheelchair occupant restraints should also be provided.
- Provision of handholds/rails and non-slip flooring.
- The Commission is making an application to the Minister for Transport requesting that a subsidy be put in place to assist with the purchase of wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys.