

May I start by saying thank you to the transport committee for taking time to hear our concerns.

The National Private Hire and Taxi Association have met many members of Parliament at various meetings and most recently in the video room where we made a presentation for your support to extend the age of taxi vehicles.

We are here today to highlight these ongoing issues within our industry. Issues that are impacting on the high professional standards set over previous years. For example! Over 5000 drivers are facing hardship and stress and the possibility of being forced out of our industry because of vehicle age limits. This would mean longer wait times for the public.

Whilst work levels have surged over previous months particularly at night time. Many drivers are not in a position to borrow large sums of money to invest in a new electric vehicle. THATS If they can find one. There are many challenges with the grant scheme and we would like a discussion on how to make it more accessible to drivers.

We have had no input to the present process.

Used cars costs have increased 60% according to car magazines. Fuel costs have reached an all time high. Service costs have risen and use of cashless payments mean less take home pay for drivers despite the recent fare increase. Taxi drivers are facing the same cost of living challenges as all other sectors. These conditions are screaming out for a further extension of age limits to allow drivers time to recoupe losses and build a financial footing to move forward with a newer vehicle preferably electric. Extension of age limits will not and should not lower standards.

Inheritance/Transfer of licence

A driver with terminal illness or maybe a stroke is not allowed transfer his or her license and must keep it "Active" meaning fully licensed and insured. Obviously incurring costs at a time of no income. Possibly dying, maybe over a period of days, weeks, months or sometimes years..Why can Licence holders not transfer the license before death. If a license goes into inactive status it cannot be inherited. An Inherited licence must be availed of within 9 months. We believe this is a time of morning and should be extended to at least 12 months.

All taxis have to have a NCT once sometimes twice a year. They then must wait 48 hours before returning to the same test centre to have taxi suitability carried out by the same person in the same place. It should reduce costs We continue to ask why this cannot be done in the one visit.

Security of drivers is a continuous concern. NPHTA for years have requested a garda liaison officer to work with representative bodies. Our requests continue to go unheard. NTA should also be considering providing drivers with security systems. Assaults are common in our workplace. When was a case taken by NTA on behalf of a driver whether it be non payment of a fare or damages to their vehicle. Generally drivers just have to suck it up.

Passengers Security should remain a priority of lawmakers. Strict vetting of entrants while this could be quicker should not be overlooked and even strengthened. I note there are some legislation changes being considered. Better located properly lit taxi ranks with CCTV monitoring should be a consideration. An example is college Green next to temple bar area. Ride share by unlicensed drivers "Uber style " should not be entertained. The safety record for this type of service shows thousands of sexual assaults by drivers were this service is allowed.

Passenger demands have to be discussed in the context of what Passenger expectations are and how overall transport policy needs adopting and opening times adopted. Free access to port tunnel should be considered as a benefit to passengers and the environment.

Hearing bus transport parking arrangements for Garth Brooks concert. We contacted NTA to ask what provision has been made for taxis and their response was The bus/coach parking and pick up points are outside of the Garda cordon and are approximately a 25 to 30 minute walk from the stadium. Taxis will not be allowed inside the Garda cordon and can operate as normal. This highlights the lack of consideration planners have given to our sector. Taxis continue to get overlooked. No major events should happen unless SPSV are considered in the transport

planning

Thousands of drivers have protested over previous years against the taxi advisory committee . The TAC continues to fail drivers. Throughout covid they were never proactive only reactive it took our appearance before the covid committee to get some supports. Despite minutes now being published it is far from transparent. Lots of the above items the ones that truly affect taxi drivers should have been discussed and presented to the Minister for future support. Now it's like nothing ever happened.

Our association believes representatives of taxi drivers should be meeting with BOTH THE MINISTER AND THE NTA on regular occasions to promote better public transport services. We believe transport providers should have a forum to present to policy makers.

Finally I read in the Sunday Times newspaper the government are to help the challenges of the cost of living and are considering financial subsidies, grants and loans to small businesses. Taxi drivers have been overlooked in the past. Our major operating costs are insurance and purchasing a vehicle. NPHTA have partnered Zego to keep insurance costs down for our members. Along with the vehicle age change this is where a financial intervention would be beneficial.

I ask, Please don't overlook us again.

I welcome any Questions and thank you for your time.