

Meeting of the Advisory Committee on SPSVs

Thursday, 23rd January 2025, 10.30 am

CEO Meeting Room, Haymarket House, Smithfield, Dublin D07 CF98.

Minutes

Present:

Chairperson	Mr. Cornelius O' Donohue
Representing:	
Small Public Service Vehicle and Driver Interests	Mr. Shajedul Chowdhury Mr. John Murphy
Special Interest or Expertise in Matters Relating to the Functions of the Authority, the Advisory Committee, or Related Matters.	Mr. Harpreet Singh Ms. Aisling Dunne Mr. James O'Brien
The Interests of Business	Ms. Ann Campbell
An Garda Siochana	Superintendent Tom Murphy
The Interests of Persons with Disabilities	Mr. John Fulham
The Interests of Older Persons	Ms. Mai Quaid

Apologies:

The interests of Tourism	Mr. Paul Keeley
Small Public Service Vehicle and Driver Interests	Mr. Francis Doheny
Local Authorities	Mr. Brendan O' Brien
The Interests of Consumers	Mr. Adrian Cummins

NTA Staff in Attendance

Full Attendance – Mr. Jakub Szydal, *Secretary to the Advisory Committee on SPSVs.*

Partial Attendance – Ms. Roisin Cullinan, *Head of Licensing.*

Advisory Committee on SPSVs

28th November 2024 Minutes

The Chair welcomed the Advisory Committee on SPSVs to the first meeting of 2025.

The minutes from the 28th November 2024 were discussed, with a small change being noted regarding the Bus Eireann school runs.

NTA Representative joined the meeting.

NTA Update

NTA gave an update on the 2024 end of year statistics, highlighting that nationwide SPSV driver license numbers have surpassed pre-covid numbers in 2024. The WAV24 and eSPSV grants had the highest level of payments made since the scheme commenced.

The WAV 2025 grant was discussed. The first portal opened in January, reaching full capacity shortly after opening. The next portal will go live in July. NTA noted the opening had been very successful notwithstanding that many applicants were disappointed at not getting through due to the popularity of the Grant Scheme.

Last year's conversion rate stood at 34%, similar to previous years, in some part due to donor vehicle and supply issues, but also due to applicants not progressing applications for unknown reasons. NTA outlined their recent efforts to ensure applicants only applied when they were fully informed of the Grant Scheme requirements and confident of their ability to complete the process. NTA also outlined the enhancements put in place to support applicants in 2025. This included PGO's being extended from 3 months to 5 months, allowing drivers more time to fulfil their WAV Grant offers.

It was emphasized that the [terms and conditions](#) should be read and understood before applying for a WAV grant.

The upcoming eSPSV grant was discussed, noting an opening date is not available yet.

An update was provided on the SPSV Driver Entry Area Knowledge Test review.

NTA presented the Advisory Committee with graphs depicting the age profile of drivers, which will be circulated to the committee after the meeting.

NTA noted that all inspection centres will be closed on Friday, 24th January due to the red status weather warnings.

NTA Representative left the meeting.

Advisory Committee on SPSVs

News media over the holiday period was discussed, noting that the taxi industry was portrayed as impeding public safety due to the absence of taxis. It was emphasized that the taxi industry is not responsible for public safety, and that the resolution of public disorder will require a whole of government approach.

The Programme for government was discussed.

The implementation of CCTV in taxis was discussed, with some Members noting that it would be challenging due to the complex nature of CCTV within a legal context. New codes of practises would have to be introduced.

Article 19 of the UN Convention was discussed. The Chair has written to the Department of Transport for legal advice regarding this.

DoT and NTA's requests for advice were discussed, and with all the insight from various organisations which attended the Advisory Committee meetings in 2024, work will commence on drafting these advices.

One challenge noted was the lack of data available in terms of SPSVs, as well as lack of data on the number of wheelchair users in Ireland. It was suggested that consideration should be given to include in the advices - NTA should ascertain access to certain data from dispatch operators and taxi apps and aggregate it; The national census should include questions on the number of wheelchair users within a household; Solid data is required for effective policymaking; NTA should do a feasibility study into smart taxi meters.

Research may need to be carried out to assess the low uptake of WAV passengers by WAV drivers. The Advisory Committee queried if it was a matter of confidence and training. It was also queried if WAVs could potentially become PSO vehicles. It was suggested that a study should be carried out on the amount of time a driver might spend helping a WAV passenger entering and exiting the vehicle.

The cost-of-living crisis was discussed, emphasizing that recent changes in consumer habits need to be analysed in terms of SPSV availability. It was noted that consumers begin social nights earlier nowadays to avail 'early bird' deals in hospitality and tend to leave earlier to secure a taxi or other means of transport home. The Government's proposed hospitality VAT cuts were discussed.

The Chair requested that all members submit their thoughts and suggestions on the advices to NTA and DOT and submit them to the secretary by the 7th of February. These will be compiled for the next meeting and work will commence on putting the advices together.

AOB

The Chair had asked the Advisory Committee on SPSVs if there was any other business, there was none.

The next meeting will be held on the 27th of February 2025.