

## **Meeting of the Advisory Committee on SPSVs**

**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024, 10.30 am**

Board Room, NTA, Haymarket House, Smithfield, Dublin D07 CF98.

### Minutes

#### **Present:**

<b>Chairperson</b>	Mr. Cornelius O' Donohue
Representing:	
<b>Small Public Service Vehicle and Driver Interests</b>	Mr. Francis Doheny Mr. Shajedul Chowdhury Mr. John Murphy
<b>Special Interest or Expertise in Matters Relating to the Functions of the Authority, the Advisory Committee, or Related Matters.</b>	Mr. Harpreet Singh Ms. Aisling Dunne Mr. James O'Brien
<b>The Interests of Consumers</b>	Mr. Adrian Cummins
<b>The Interests of Business</b>	Ms. Ann Campbell

#### **Apologies:**

<b>The interests of Tourism</b>	Mr. Paul Keeley
<b>The Interests of Older Persons</b>	Ms. Mai Quaid
<b>The Interests of Persons with Disabilities</b>	Mr. John Fulham
<b>An Garda Siochana</b>	Superintendent Tom Murphy

#### **NTA Staff in Attendance**

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

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

#### **TDORA Representatives**

Der Calnan

Eric O' Brien

## **10.30 am – Advisory Committee on SPSVs**

### **31<sup>st</sup> October Minutes**

The Chair welcomed the members of the Advisory Committee to NTA's new office in Haymarket House, Smithfield.

The minutes from the meeting held on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 were agreed with no amendments.

### **Advisory Committee on SPSVs**

The Chair noted that the Advisory Committee on SPSVs will be moving forward with the advices for the Minister and NTA in the new year.

WAV availability was emphasized, with the Advisory Committee agreeing that incentives might be needed to improve uptake of WAV journeys.

The Chair gave a summation of the meeting with Minister Ryan, noting in particular the dedication to achieving a 100% accessible fleet.

## **10.45 am – Advisory Committee + NTA**

*NTA Representative joined the meeting.*

### **NTA Update**

NTA began their presentation by addressing the question of whether WAV grants have contributed to increasing WAV costs, as enquired at the previous meeting. NTA stated that vehicle costs in general have been affected by vehicle supply, Brexit, supply issues for imports and increased costs of ICE vehicles. The grant was increased from 7,500 euro to 17,500 euro in 2023 to account for the increasing costs of WAVs to that point and projected future increases.

The WAV grants were discussed. NTA noted that in response to recent feedback, the grant will be issued in two rounds in 2025 and some assessment criteria may be updated.

Driver statistics were discussed, noting positive growth again in 2024.

The Maximum Fares Order was discussed. NTA noted that the fares are going live on Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> December and that NSAI are opening slots for booking taximeter verifications.

It was raised by industry representatives that some installers apply an additional charge for calibration/installation where payment for the calibration/installation is made by card, and

some don't offer card payments at all. Surcharges for card payment are illegal however enforcement of this is outside of NTA's remit and those affected should contact the CCPC and consider other suppliers.

The Committee requested that NTA provide a graph comparing population growth against driver numbers and vehicle numbers, historically and projected into the future. **NTA agreed to provide this for future meetings.**

The industry representatives noted that there have been reports of drivers undertaking the SPSV Driver Entry Test with poor understanding of English having been provided with an interpreter who allegedly did not simply interpret, but who also provided the answers to the Test. NTA stated certain candidates can have supports, but that interpreters were not provided. **NTA stated they would revert on the supports that were available** in case these were getting mixed up with interpreters.

*NTA Representative left the meeting.*

### **11am – Advisory Committee + Taxi Dispatch Operator Representative Association**

*TDORA joined the meeting.*

#### **TDORA**

The Chair introduced Der Calnan Eric O'Brien from TDORA, explaining the functions and remit of the Advisory Committee on SPSVs.

TDORA stated that there is no shortage of taxis in Ireland, and that numbers are continuing to grow. It was noted that consumer habits have changed over the past few years and that drivers have a responsibility to be aware of popular events. TDORA do groundwork to assess events and changes to public transport and how they may affect demand. It was noted that if extra services are put on for trains, TDORA are not informed by NTA or any public transport provider.

Pinch-points were discussed. TDORA noted that pinch points have always been an issue for drivers and consumers. They also raised that nowadays, many drivers turn off the apps during late night social hours. The taxis are on the road but they are not visible on the apps.

Driver safety was discussed, noting that there is a public order issue in Dublin. It was emphasized that a collaborative, whole of government approach will be required to tackle the public order issues.

WAV grants were discussed. The WAV journey forms were also discussed, with TDORA noting that they can be easily falsified. It was queried if there are ways to ensure that the journey forms are filled out correctly and honestly.

It was queried if the WAV grants have caused taxi vehicle costs to increase. The Chair noted that NTA have been asked to investigate this.

Unfulfilled journeys were discussed, noting that taxi apps have this data available.

WAV training was discussed. It was raised that drivers can drive WAV vehicles and not undertake the training. The Advisory Committee and TDORA agreed that assisting WAV users into WAV taxis requires training and familiarisation. It was suggested for this to be part of the Driver Entry Test.

Drivers not taking on WAV users were discussed. It was suggested that if the grant is not helping, another more viable approach should be sought.

Taxi demand in suburbs was discussed.

Taxi demand in rural areas were discussed. TDORA highlighted that there are areas across Ireland that are more 'rural' than others, and that they are often underserved by transport means.

It was raised that agencies need to work together to provide maintenance to small rural towns, ensuring development and opportunities for small businesses. TDORA noted that if there is planning permission for rural areas of the country, there should be an expectation for these areas to have basic services and maintenance.

*TDORA left the meeting.*

## **AOB**

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

The next meeting will take place on **Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January** in the **NTA Board Room, Haymarket House, Smithfield, Dublin 7, D07 CF98.**