

LONDON ASSEMBLY

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

London Assembly
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SE1 2AA**Isabel Dedring**Deputy Mayor for Transport
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15 July 2015

Dear Isabel

London Assembly Transport Committee, 8 July 2015

I would like to thank you for attending the Transport Committee meeting on 8 July 2015 to assist the Committee in following up its investigation into taxi and private hire services in London. As I indicated in the meeting, it is very disappointing that commitments and promises about taxis and private hire services made by the Mayor and Commissioner of Transport, Sir Peter Hendy CBE, seem not to have been followed up by TfL, and that such senior officers from TfL seemed insufficiently prepared for the meeting to be able to answer questions to the Committee's satisfaction.

I am copying this letter to Leon Daniels and Garrett Emmerson, who I hope will be in a position to respond to the Committee's requests for further written information.

We are concerned that, despite assurances from the Commissioner, TfL does not appear to have progressed plans to develop an over-arching strategy for the taxi and private hire trades. This was a crucial recommendation from our investigation and it is difficult to see how TfL can begin to tackle the deep-rooted problems within these industries without a clear and unequivocal roadmap for how it will work to ensure that the interests of both trades are secured. We therefore seek your written confirmation that a comprehensive taxi and private strategy will be produced by the end of the year. We would also welcome an update on progress against each of the nineteen recommendations in the Committee's Future Proof report, together with robust timescales for when these actions will be implemented.

We are particularly concerned that TfL's function as the regulator of these industries may be being compromised through poor governance and decision-making processes. It is worrying to hear that there is no clear audit trail for interactions between senior managers and licensees. We therefore strongly urge that a full management audit of TfL's regulatory function is carried out by its internal auditors and the full results made available to the Committee. We would also strongly urge TfL to take immediate steps to ensure that all further interactions with PHV operators are noted on file as part of its regulatory function.

The Committee also noted TfL's plans to conduct research on the mix of traffic in London, to determine the extent to which private hire vehicles are contributing to current congestion levels. We have asked TfL to provide further details of how this research will be conducted, when it will be completed, and confirmation that these findings will be made available to the Committee.

We have stressed the importance of ensuring a robust and visible complaints process for private hire passengers. This will not only give passengers greater confidence in the services they use, but will also provide a crucial evidence base in determining whether licensees are, and remain, fit for purpose. We were particularly concerned to hear that TfL does not have a mechanism for storing complaints about individual operators in a manner that will allow for these complaints to be reviewed collectively

to establish whether a licensed operator remains fit for purpose. The Committee shares your view that TfL should have a single place where all of these complaints are recorded and a record of action that has been taken. We would therefore be grateful for written confirmation that TfL will address this issue as a matter of urgency and will provide the Committee with details of its plans to consolidate its complaints records.

During the course of the meeting, a landline number for Uber London was cited by Leon Daniels. Subsequent investigation by our officers indicated that the line was not intended for the use of public bookings and was not clearly available to customers. We would be grateful if TfL could clarify the existing requirements to have a publicly available landline *for the purpose of taking pre-bookings*. We would also welcome TfL's views on how operators are expected to handle customer complaints without a publicly advertised landline staffed with trained people.

The Committee is also asking for clarification on TfL's policy regarding licensed operators who are found to have repeatedly breached regulation. As discussed in the meeting, we would therefore be grateful if TfL could provide the Committee with the record of correspondence between TfL and Uber London in relation to a fine of £10,000 for permitting a vehicle without insurance, and an explanation of what happens if there are further breaches, and Uber's response to this letter. We would also welcome further clarification on the existing requirements for private hire operators concerning the collection, evaluation and retention of insurance records.

During the course of the discussion the Committee also requested written information on the details of measures to deal with taxi demand in Twickenham during the Rugby World Cup. We would be grateful if you could include this in your response to the points raised in this letter.

The Committee will continue to press TfL strongly on these important issues and trust that all appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that TfL honours the commitments made by the Mayor to safeguard the future of both taxi and private hire services in London.

Thank you once again for your attendance at this meeting. We would be grateful if TfL could provide a written response by 15 August. Please copy the response to Lucy Brant, Scrutiny Manager, at Lucy.Brant@london.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Valerie Shawcross CBE AM
Chair of the Transport Committee

cc. Leon Daniels, Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL
Garrett Emmerson, Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL