

Transport Committee – 2 September 2014

Transcript of Item 6 – Taxi and Private Hire Services

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Let us move on then to our main item today. This is our second hearing looking at taxi and private hire services. We have split it into two parts today because there is so much to cover and we did not want to have a wall of guests for each session.

The first one is going to be with the Deputy Mayor for Transport, Isabel Dedring - welcome along today - with Transport for London (TfL) supporting you, Garrett Emmerson, who is here.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Then we also have representatives from the trade. Steve McNamara is here, the General Secretary of the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA). Welcome along today. Then Michael Galvin is here from the Licensed Private Hire Car Association (LPHCA).

Our second hearing is going to have borough and police representatives instead of the trade, alongside the Deputy Mayor for Transport and TfL, so we can get a look at some of the real issues. We are also going to be having a sub-panel of lead Members on the Committee meeting other trade organisations to make sure that we have had much evidence as possible.

I am going to kick off the questioning. I do not know whether TfL and the Deputy Mayor for Transport had time to look at some of the evidence we had last time. We were told at that meeting by our experts from New York that London's taxi service was internationally renowned as the gold standard but the city could be "on the verge of squandering the gold". There was a lot of food for thought at that meeting.

Isabel, could I start with you? Perhaps you can clarify for us. What is the Mayor's vision for taxi and private hire services in London?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): The main point to make is that there is clearly a need and a desire to maintain both the black cab trade and the minicab trade, even though that is not universally the case in cities around the world that you would necessarily have both of those. He fully recognises what you just said, that it is well-known internationally and that the black cab trade is internationally famous and rightly so. Our job is to make sure that we are supporting both aspects of the trade in whatever it is that they need.

There is a whole range of things that we are doing, but it is worth saying that in the 2012 manifesto there were a series of commitments around cabs specifically, so there are those specific commitments that we are pursuing as well. They included doubling the resource on touting through the Cab Enforcement Unit (CEU), which has now been put in place. We have the Cabbies Cabinet. We are working on a ranks action plan because there are concerns about both protecting the ranks and also expanding the ranks in the city. There is dedicated resource on that in Garrett's [Emmerson, Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL] team, but it is just making sure that we are publicly communicating what the issues are, where the ranks are that are under threat, what more we can do, and making sure that we are also talking to the trade more effectively about that question. We are also producing a suburban action plan, which is around some of the issues faced by suburban drivers and indeed making sure that there is adequate demand in the suburbs because there are issues with

that in some locations. We are obviously continuing to ensure that we have trade representation on the TfL Board, which is continuing to be the case.

That is not, obviously, a limited list of things that we are discussing with the trade. It is just to say that there are specific manifesto commitments that the Mayor has signed up to politically.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are going to go into detail on a lot of those issues throughout the morning, but can you just confirm that all the Mayor's commitments in his election manifesto and the Transport Strategy have been met or are being met?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes, very much so. Garrett and I meet every week and one of the things that we talk about is how we are doing on the manifesto commitments. That is very explicitly tracked. Also, in my weekly meetings with the Commissioner, we regularly review the manifesto commitments there. That does not mean they are all done. It just means that they are in train.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): No, they are in progress. Is there any kind of strategy for taxi and private hire? There are lots of odd practical things, but is there a real strategy or a vision? We have had this with river services in the past and we did some work on that. One of our recommendations that then emerged was that you developed a strategy and river services - Richard [Tracey AM] and I went to an event the other week - are going from strength to strength. Is there a proper strategy that could really pull all this work together and have a real vision rather than just a few piecemeal actions?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): That is an interesting question. From my experience from dealing with some of the issues, as long as you say you are trying to protect both of these trades, preserve them and make sure that they are thriving, to me in my experience, that has generated a series of quite practical issues, rather than necessarily saying, "We need to have X% growth in taxi trips", or, "Y% growth in taxi drivers". Those are the kinds of strategic issues that you might want to look at. It is not something where I have ever felt there is a need.

However, I would be very open to considering that if there is a view that we need a fundamentally different level of service out there in terms of supply and demand or to fundamentally review some of the basic tenets of how the trades operate. Let us say somebody thought that there should be a fundamental review of the Knowledge or it should be one year or ten years or who knows what, that kind of issue. If those were some of the issues in the trade, then I would agree that we would need a review of the strategic direction. At the moment, I do not see that but am very open to considering it, sure.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): OK. Finally for you at the moment, Isabel, how do you think the Taxi and Private Hire Directorate at TfL is performing? A lot of evidence we have heard showed huge concerns about. Are you happy with its performance?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): There are probably two issues. One is that there has been a lot of difficulty created by these Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) issues with the Home Office. There have been a number of issues that have been very much created by external pressures, which are well documented and everybody knows about them. Some of that definitely cannot be parked at Taxi and Private Hire's (TPH) door, although in how we dealt with that we could have probably been a bit more fleet-footed and understood how massive this problem was going to be, but maybe nobody really anticipated that. We did try to get on top of it very quickly once it did emerge and there was a lot of correspondence with Ministers from the Mayor and discussions with the Government at a very senior level to unblock some of those issues. There is that set of issues.

Then, separately, I have not been happy with the quality of service that has been provided historically, but I am happy that we are now on track to get that into a much better state. One of the things that Garrett will talk about later is the appointment of Peter Blake [Director of Service Operations, Surface Transport, TfL], his deputy, who is tasked in particular with making sure that the directorate is working very well and we have a high level of customer service, if you want to think about it in that way, from drivers and operators.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Obviously, we understand the problems with the DBS, but things like a shortage of examiners so people have not been able to pass stages of the Knowledge and driver applications taking a long time to process due to information technology (IT) issues; they are serious flaws in the department.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): As I said, Garrett can probably talk a little bit about some of the restructuring that has gone on, some of the reviews that have been conducted, the changes that have been put in place and some of the new personnel that are designed to make sure that we tackle those issues. I am saying we recognise the issues. Hopefully, the things that are put in place now have not yet entirely borne fruit, but they are going to bear fruit over the next 12 - 18 months, certainly. I would rather Garrett spoke in a bit more detail about that because the detail of it is to do with management.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): No, I wanted your take on the department rather than TfL's take, if you do not mind.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): No. Clearly, waiting 18 minutes for somebody to pick up the phone is not something that in this day and age we would consider to be acceptable across any service and certainly not this one. If you look at that, for example, that has been improved drastically and is back down to a one to two-minute waiting time. That is acceptable. Because that is what I would expect if I called my bank or something like that, it seems to be within the bounds of normal, whereas 18 minutes clearly is not. It is those kinds of issues, but it does not mean that we are going to stop there and that is the nirvana that we have attained. It is just saying that there have already been some substantial improvements to some of the most egregious issues. As I say, Garrett can talk a little bit more about the kinds of measures that we have put in place.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We will probably pick that up later. I wanted to bring Steve and Michael in, to get the trades' response, as it were, to the Mayor's - I cannot call it a 'strategy' because there is no strategy - vision for taxi and private hire services and some of the thoughts you have on this.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Obviously, we agree totally with Isabel that historically the TPH has performed abysmally. We had situations where you just could not get an answer on the telephone. This went on for months. They integrated a thing called their Surface Integration Programme (SIP), where they got rid of a lot of staff and they computerised the system. Then, for probably three or four months afterwards, we just could not get through on the telephone at all. It was to the extent that we actually had to employ two extra people purely to deal with our members who were calling us, saying, "What do we do? We cannot get through to TfL. I have no licence. I am out of work as of Monday. What do I do? I cannot get an answer on the phone. Nobody answers my email. What do I do?" It was obviously a major concern and a major problem.

That was further worsened by the problems with the DBS. We did suggest alternatives. What happened with the DBS was the system changed. It was the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). It became the DBS - the Disclosure and Barring Service - and there were enormous delays in getting CRB checks. We suggested to TPH

what they should have done. The way it works is you are licensed for three years. You apply for a taxi licence, you get a CRB check and you are licensed for three years. For two years, 11 months and 29 days, you are safe to drive a cab because you have been CRB checked. However, because the CRB check is due on the thirtieth day or the third anniversary, you are no longer licensed and you cannot get a DBS check. What we were saying to TfL is, "It is a crazy situation to put someone out of work. What you should be doing is issuing a temporary licence until the DBS check comes through". Obviously, if it came through and there was a problem, you could revoke the licence instantly. They refused to do that and as a result we had many, many members who were out of work.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): We have had case work on that. I think all of us have had case work on that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): It was a situation that with a simple bit of forethought could have been solved. Unfortunately, it never happened and lots of people were out of work. Some families suffered considerable hardship as a result.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): I agree with some aspects of what Isabel has said, but not all. In this situation of what has gone on in the past, if we do not learn from it, really, we are just going to continue to have problems in the future. We have three areas of real concern and they are around governance of TPH, communication and service delivery, and decision- and policy-making. Underneath those are a load of issues, for instance the ones that Steve has just outlined.

It would be useful for the Committee to understand, if you do not already, the size of this industry. I am talking about the taxi and private hire industry. This is a significant industry. There are 60,000 private hire drivers. There are 25,000 taxi drivers. There are about 170 ancillary workers who depend on the industry for their living. The turnover of the industry is about £3 billion a year. We pay £18 million a year between the two sides of the industry in licence fees to TfL. Our view is that the service we get for that money is appalling. We also carry around 300,000 passengers every day around London. Compared to buses and the Tube, that is small beer, but we think we are an important industry. We feel that we provide an important service to people across London. We feel that we are a very important part of the safety at night and safer travel campaigns that go on. Often, there is very little transport late at night in some areas of London. Also, there is the whole last-mile-home issue. If you take the last Tube, you will end up at the station and you still have to get to your front door. Between us, taxis and private hire fill that gap.

If we take the example that Steve raised about the DBS, we were not consulted about how we could resolve the situation. We were constantly on to everybody from Sir Peter Hendy [Commissioner, TfL] down, nonstop during this period. The company that I happen to work for had 100 drivers at its peak out of work. These were people who were continually licensed and were out of work for eight weeks. Can anybody here imagine having no salary for eight weeks? That is the situation they were in. It was appalling.

We think that what has to happen here is that we have to examine the past and probably there has to be a proper formal investigation into what has gone on. The elephant in the room that has not been mentioned is the cowboy apps [mobile device applications], which have really disrupted the whole --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We will cover all sorts of things this morning.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): We will, yes. That has disrupted the whole relationship over the last year with TfL.

Our dissatisfaction with the performance of TPH goes back to 2011. We constantly complained about the way the directorate was run. We sent in a report to the Mayor called the *Dissatisfaction Report*, which came from across the private hire industry. In fairness to the Mayor, he commissioned Deloitte to carry out a review. The review was a complete and utter whitewash. The report we saw was 12 pages, seven of which were blank and five meaningless. Since then, we have started to have meetings with Isabel and Garrett on a quarterly basis, which started off OK until the cowboy apps raised their ugly heads and then they have been a complete and utter waste of time. In fact, I would go so far as to say that they have been disingenuous to the industry.

Therefore, we are in a situation where we have to examine what has gone on in the past, but we also have to set out and agree some terms of reference about how we work in the future. An industry of this size and of this importance in London cannot lumber along in the way it has done for the last three years, specifically the last year. There has to be major change. We welcome Peter Blake [Director of Service Operations, Surface Transport, TfL]. He comes untarnished, I guess, from the past. However, we have to have proper terms of reference, proper engagement, proper consultation and proper governance at TPH.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): What one thing do you think is needed to restore trade confidence in TfL as both the licensor and also the regulator of the trade?

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): We could start with honesty, but really what we need is proper terms of reference about how both sides of the industry engage with TfL and how we deal with decision- and policy-making and service delivery. Many of the people in this room run call centres, small businesses and all the rest of it. We would all be out of business if we provided services like those that have been provided to us. We are not saying that we need an answer within ten seconds, but we must have proper access. If people have problems or licence renewals or whatever, we need proper access.

If we had proper terms of reference about communication, service delivery, governance and decision- and policy-making, then we could move forward quite well. We need that kind of engagement. What has happened with TfL - TPH in particular - is they have tried to move from being a proper regulatory authority to just a mechanical licensing function. It has all been pushed down. It is just about licensing. Everything else that goes on is either by dictate when the odd TPH notice comes out or something like that, but there is no real engagement. We need to be able to get together and talk about some of the things that need to be improved, changed, and really, to move the industry forward.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Steve, would you like to come in on that? What do you think needs to be done to restore trade confidence in TfL?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): There certainly needs to be a review from top to bottom. I would agree totally with Mike. They have gone from being a regulatory authority to something that just issues licences and goes through the functions. Many in our industry might remember back to the days of the Carriage Office, but the reality is that the Carriage Office was a regulatory authority. TfL issue licences. That is the difference. I appreciate that Mike has touched on the cowboy apps, but the whole manner in which that has been dealt with is the best example you can have of the difference between the way something should have been done and the way it was done.

Richard Tracey AM: If I could just follow on from some of what you have been saying. Frankly, you have been really very, very critical of TfL, but we do need a little bit more detail. The two major bodies, are you really representing taxis and private hire?

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): Sorry, Steve's organisation represents 10,500 drivers. We represent the operators in the licensed private hire industry.

Richard Tracey AM: As the two bodies, do you work together to represent these views to TfL and indeed to the Mayor? As I recollect, in 2012 the Mayor had a plan. I think he called it a 'Cabbies Cabinet'. Has that worked out or not?

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): I will let Steve comment on the Cabbies Cabinet because private hire was not involved, but I have to say on your question about whether we work together, we never used to. We used to spend our time scrapping. However, now we definitely work together because what has happened is that TPH has managed to unite taxis and private hire in a way we never thought possible in the past.

What we have ended up in is a situation where both sides of the industry are really dissatisfied with the way in which the industry has been administered and the lack of proper consultation and engagement on policy-making and communication with the industry. It just does not happen and we are both completely dissatisfied with it. We do not actually have formal meetings together, to be honest, but we certainly do keep in touch. For instance, there was a meeting some time ago with the greater TfL Surface Transport. The next day in the *Evening Standard* appeared a press release to say what a constructive meeting it was. I immediately phoned my counterparts in the taxi industry because the meeting we had had was not by any means constructive. They had had exactly the same meeting as we had had.

What has happened is that TPH in particular and TfL Surface Transport in general have certainly pushed the two industries together. We are not moaning, whinging people. We do not want to spend our lives criticising and making personal attacks and making accusations about people at TPH and TfL. It is not really the space we are in. Probably in the main, they are very nice people. However, what we want is an infrastructure that we can actually work in. Isabel hit the nail on the head when she said that what she feels is that both industries have to thrive. At the moment, that thriving is actually stalling and in danger of falling away a bit. What we need is to get back to a situation where we have got proper engagement, proper discussion and proper policy-making.

If we take the recent debacle with the cowboy apps and just one particular small example of it, for years, destination was a requirement for private hire. Private hire is a pre-booked service. The drivers do not do the Knowledge. Therefore, the idea of the legislation was that when a booking was made, the operator took the pick-up, the customer's name, the contact details and the destination. The driver then had time to plan his route, sort out where he was going and then pick the customer up. Operators have been chastised and the company I work for personally has been chastised about the number of bookings when destinations were not taken and people just said they were going as directed or would tell the driver when he arrived. A TPH notice was issued about destinations and then, overnight at a meeting, destinations was never an issue. We should not have been taking them at all. Why is nobody taking them? Nobody was told to take them. Yet we could point to individual examples. This is like policy-making on the hoof. It is not a best-practice approach, in my view, to regulation and licensing. That is the kind of example. We have lots of examples, but that is the kind of example of things that have happened.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): I can only endorse everything Mike has said. If I had said to my members three years ago that I was going to be talking to the minicabs, I would probably have been lynched. The scenario now is that many of the people I talk to say, "We need to talk to the private hire industry", because, as Mike has pointed out, the operation of TPH has forced us together, really. The most unlikely union ever has been created by inefficiencies and bad policies at TfL.

Richard Tracey AM: Even given that you two bodies are working together, there are still drivers, and indeed the trade unions represent some of the drivers. Are they part of these discussions that you have or not? How do you communicate with them?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): There are various groups in the taxi trade. We are the largest. The second-largest group is the London Cab Drivers Club (LCDC). Their Chairman is over there. We work very closely with the LCDC. We also work very closely with Unite, which is the third-largest group in the trade. Between us, we have 14,000 - 15,000 members. The reality with the taxi trade is that taxi drivers are all self-employed individual shopkeepers and none of them need to join anything. You can be a taxi driver and go to work for 40 years and never join anything. The fact that we have 10,500 members and the others have substantial memberships tells you that there is obviously a need. Our membership and the others are growing. Again, I think I can thank TfL for my recruitment drive.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): We also engage with GMB (trade union) on a regular basis.

Richard Tracey AM: You keep referring to 'cowboy apps'. These 'cowboy apps' that you are complaining about, frankly, the London public that I talk to, seem to rather like them. Are we going to deal with that elsewhere, Chair?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): It is coming up in the next couple of questions about the markets, yes.

Richard Tracey AM: I will leave that because, frankly, we do need to ask Isabel and Garrett what their response is to these really very serious criticisms of TfL's performance.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): I just wanted to clarify one thing. Garrett, correct me if I am wrong, but there are roughly 22,000 taxi drivers in London?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): About 25,000.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): And about 45,000 or has that gone up?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): It is about 60,000 or 70,000.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): There are about 25,000 black cab drivers and 60,000-ish minicab drivers. Out of the 25,000, there are three main bodies that represent taxi drivers, of which the LTDA is by far the biggest. Is that right, Steve?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): It is.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes. Steve is not representing all taxi drivers or even just under the majority. It is just worth saying that there are other associations that represent them.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We have the figure of 55% of taxi drivers are not affiliated to any particular group.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): In discussing the Cabbies Cabinet there was a whole debate about whether you could reflect the 55% who are not affiliated. Anyway, after a long discussion, the end result is that the Mayor meets with the three key trade associations within the black cab trade, but it does not include Mike [Galvin, Licensed Private Car Hire Association] and his colleagues. It was just to make sure that we are clear it is the black cab trade, not the minicab trade where Garrett and I have a quarterly meeting with Mike and his colleagues. Some of the key operators and some of the biggest operators in that industry are part of that discussion. That was just to make sure we are all talking about the same thing.

I have two other things to say. One is on the two trades talking more together. It is something that I have certainly been keen on. In fact, in the Law Commission response, one of the things that we had suggested to both trades was that it would be very useful in lobbying the Law Commission and in putting forward a view from London to the Law Commission, is that it would be much more powerful to have a joint private hire and black cab trade view that was put across to the Law Commission.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): Particularly on the apps.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Garrett is just saying particularly on the apps issue. Whatever the derivation of the closer joint working, I think we can all agree that that is a good thing and is something that we have actually actively asked the trade on a couple of occasions. We thought it would be good if they could work on some of the issues where they do have joint interests that they should work more closely together.

Fundamentally, on the question that you asked, Caroline, Mike's idea about the terms of reference is a really good idea. I would like to make sure that I am clear on, strategically, the things that you are expecting from us and what ways of working we have that is not a 50-page document and is not about the gory detail of the operations of TPH necessarily, but is about the high-level nature of the relationship and the expectations.

I absolutely agree with, I am sure, probably everyone in this room, that the relationship between, let us say, the Greater London Authority (GLA) generally and the trade generally has deteriorated over the last year; in large part because of some of the issues around the apps and the DBS issues as well, even though we have tried to really get on top of those. As soon as they became clear, there was a lot of activity on our side to try to do something about it. I am sure some people would say it was not quick enough and was not enough, but we did try to tackle those issues. Whatever the derivation of it, we are not in as good of a place as we were, say, 18 months ago. Something like what you are suggesting, Mike, would be a really good idea.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): Quite a lot has been said so it is difficult to come up with a concise response to everything.

The first thing I would say is that what you have heard so far is difficult to relate in some ways to what you heard at your first session around the way that the taxi trades in London are regarded around the world as being the gold standard and so on. You will have to ask that question. Why are you getting such a different view internally to what you are externally, so to speak, from around the world?

In my view, why is the taxi trade in London - and that includes private hire in that - recognised around the world as being of such a high standard? It is down to three things. It is partly down to the drivers themselves and the industry and the business and so on --

Richard Tracey AM: The past reputation, perhaps.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, it is partly down to the specification of the service, particularly things like the vehicle with the iconic London taxi and the accessibility of it and so on. Of course, it is down to things like the requirements of the Knowledge and so on. Actually, it is down to a combination of what the two trades provide and what TfL provides in terms of an ongoing licensing and regulatory service. I am sure we can debate what that should constitute going forward and what it does constitute and I entirely in agreement with Isabel about perhaps the need for a review and a clarification of what the terms of reference are going forward. That sounds like a very good idea.

In terms of the more operational issues, there are two big things that have happened over the last 12 months. One has been the issue around the efficiency of the licensing function and here we are talking about the licensing function, not a wider regulatory role. Here we should remember that actually the business has been in the process of bringing the whole system of licensing of private hire vehicles, drivers, operators and taxi drivers from a very arcane - I hesitate to use the words '20th-century' so I will use the words '19th-century' system - of paper-based recording and so on into, hopefully, at least the 20th if not the 21st century with the introduction of IT and so on that has never been there before. That, it is fair to say, has not been without its problems - there have been teething problems with that. There have been problems and we have been very open with the trade about that. Also, to be fair, the trade has been very tolerant and understanding of the problems we have had.

That was compounded last year by the DBS issues that we have heard about and that were foisted on us with very short notice. We had just two weeks' notice from the Home Office around the change in systems, which meant that we had to completely reshape the way we renewed licences in particular, sending out information and renewal packs much, much earlier. That took its time to work through the system because we are having to issue renewal packs four months in advance of renewals now, which we certainly were not before. That takes time to catch up. In that time and along with the issues that we were having anyway with the IT, we got into a position where we had an unacceptable backlog and we had unacceptable delays in answering the phones. Of course, that is cumulative because if you cannot get through to get your problem solved, you are going to try again and that is going to block up the phone lines. I can quite understand what Steve was saying and we will hold our hand up to the fact that it was a big problem last year.

I am happy to say that we have now brought that back. Licensing applications and renewals are now being dealt with as well as, if not better than, they have ever been done before. The backlogs have been eliminated. The times on the telephones are now significantly above the two-minute standard that we set and publish. We have brought that back. It has taken a lot of hard work and a lot of effort last year I think is a combination of those two things. I would not seek to disagree with my colleagues, as I said, on that issue, other than that it was an issue that we saw and we addressed. We might not agree on the way we addressed it, but we certainly tackled it.

On the second wider issue, which is the whole question about disruptive technology, apps and so on, that has been a very difficult time for us to get through. This really revolves around what has been custom and practice and the way both primary and secondary legislation has been interpreted by us and by the trade has been fundamentally challenged by some of this disruptive technology. Whether that is a good thing or a bad thing is not for me particularly to say, but it is certainly a fact that the advent of companies - let us mention the name - like Uber, but there are others, have challenged the way things have been interpreted. They have challenged the interpretation of taxi meters.

They have challenged the interpretation of the way the legislation was written around, as Mike says, the requirement to provide a destination in advance. We do not believe that we have changed any policy or done anything differently. Indeed, the TPH notice that Mike referred to being issued was a statement of exactly the wording, word-for-word, that is in the legislation. That is still the case today. The difference is that it is being interpreted differently and we cannot find any reason to disagree with that interpretation because, frankly, it is capable of that interpretation. We have chosen to address that in the case of the secondary legislation, which is the regulations - which although they were not made by the TfL in the first place are now within our gift to amend - and to have a review of those regulations and to consider the issues around whether the wording now, in the light of technology that clearly was not imagined when they were written not that long ago but certainly a while ago, needs to be changed.

On the question of taxi meters, which is the other big issue of this, it is question of primary legislation. Frankly, the only way we are going to sort this out, and we have said that very clearly, is through a declaration in the High Court as to the meaning of the legislation. At the moment, we would like to get on with that and we are actually being held up on that because the LTDA is insisting on taking private prosecutions against individual drivers, which means that we at TfL are unable to go straight to the High Court. That will delay the process and that will mean there will be a longer period of uncertainty before we resolve that. We do not think it is in the customers' interests and we do not think it is in the industry's interests, but we are powerless to do anything about it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Steve wanted to respond to that.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): On the subject of us issuing private prosecutions, as Garrett is aware, the issue was first raised with TfL. We raised it with them back in November last year. Having had no response, we decided that we would look at taking proceedings ourselves. For the summonses that we have actually issued, the evidence was gathered in February and March. Garrett invited me to a meeting at the end of May when he suggested that TfL would be keen for us to partake in a judicial declaration.

The difference between a judicial declaration and criminal proceedings, as any lawyer in the room will tell you, is that when you go to a judicial declaration you go neutrally. You go to a judge and you say, "This is what the law says. This is what is happening. Where do we stand?" That certainly was not the case with TfL. They were issuing press releases galore saying that, as far as they were aware, it was not a meter and it was not illegal. They were constantly stating their position. Obviously, if that is their position, why would you be seeking a judicial declaration?

Secondly, the issue is that when you get to the Court of Appeal, which is where these things all wind up if you go through the criminal route, the route that we have decided to take, all the evidence submitted in the lower courts is admissible. The evidence that will be given at the Magistrates Court, which we think is particularly relevant and particularly telling on this issue, will be admissible in the Court of Appeal. All of this evidence would not be admissible had we gone down the route that Garrett wanted us to go down. That is the reason we did not take that.

The other thing I would say, making a comment on what Garrett said, is that he referred to the taxi trade in London as setting the gold standard. Somehow he seems to want to claim credit for that via TfL. What I would say is that the taxi trade in London has the gold standard not because of TfL but despite TfL's efforts to lower the standard.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Garrett, I wanted you just to respond to something that Steve said earlier about the idea of issuing temporary licences and whether that was something you had considered, particularly given the huge delays there have been. This is people's livelihoods and we have heard the evidence in respect of both private hire and taxi drivers. Had you considered that?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): We did consider that. We looked at it very hard and we discussed it with both trades.

However, the issue for us is that a criminal record check, a DBS check or whatever, by its very nature is only actually accurate on the day of its issue. You have to take a decision in licensing as to how long you are going to license somebody on the back of a point-in-time check on their suitability. That has been - and has been for a long time - three years. At the end of those three years, that DBS check by its nature is three years out of date. It is a sad fact that in both trades there is a very small, admittedly, but significant number of people who when that check comes back are no longer suitable. The reality is that they have probably been driving a vehicle when not suitable for anywhere between one day and just short of three years, depending on the nature of the activity they have been involved in. You have to take a decision as to whether it is appropriate to go beyond that period of time.

We took the view that even if there was just one case where we had licensed somebody on an extension and there was a lack of a new criminal record check after three years, we as the regulator would be held in a very poor light in terms of our duty to ensure that the people driving London's taxis and private hire vehicles are safe and appropriate to do so. We had to make a decision. We recognised that the trades had a different view. We recognised that, indeed, some authorities outside London actually took a different view of it. However, that was our view and those were our reasons.

Darren Johnson AM: Garrett, it seems to me that you are never going to really be able to enjoy meaningful and constructive engagement with the industry unless TfL gets the absolute basics right of renewal of licences and so on. Are you confident now that TfL does have the basics right?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): I agree with you, absolutely, and I am confident that we have the situation back under control. I do not think my colleagues would disagree with me now. However, I accept that it was not good last year.

Darren Johnson AM: Steve and Michael, you may disagree on lots of things, but are you happy that they now have the basics under control?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Mostly.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): I will perhaps be slightly more generous than Steve. In the main, the licensing functions are back under control, as such. The rest of the issues that I raised concerning governance, engagement, consultation and so on, it is nowhere near.

Darren Johnson AM: Unless you get the basics under control, you are never going to have the constructive engagement on other issues.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): No, I agree with your point.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): It should be pointed out also that during this crisis - and it was a crisis - certainly if you were one of the people who were out of work, there were individual officers at TPH who really went the extra mile to try to help. They really did.

Unfortunately, the decision that was made further up the food chain not to issue extensions was the killer decision. As a result of that, as I said, I actually know personally of people who lost houses as a result of these decisions. I understand what Garrett says, but if someone has been licensed for three years, would another eight weeks have honestly made any difference? It was a risk-averse decision. It was a wrong decision. As a result, many people suffered and suffered quite badly.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Let us move on to looking at choice for taxi and private hire passengers.

Tom Copley AM: First of all to Isabel, you mentioned in your opening remarks about the importance of maintaining both a taxi service and a private hire service. What is the Mayor doing to encourage diversity in this area?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): As defined by what? In the drivers? Amongst cab drivers, the diversity?

Tom Copley AM: In terms of services.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): I am not sure what you mean by 'diversity'.

Tom Copley AM: As opposed to private hire and taxi.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Making sure that people have both options available to them?

Tom Copley AM: Yes.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): To me, having both industries being strong and, as Mike was saying, thriving industries is the way to do that. People feel they have both options and they are able to access both. Maybe I am not understanding your question.

Tom Copley AM: I suppose it is the market itself.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Is it not the point that Londoners and anyone coming here and businesses are able to easily access whatever service best suits them?

The strength of the overall industry in London is that there are so many different choices that people have. If you want to walk onto the street and get a black cab and have a certain level of service, you can do that. If you want to call your local operator, you can do that. Most of us will probably use several of those different services depending on what we are trying to do.

Tom Copley AM: Yes, as Val has just pointed out, it depends where you are. If you are around here, it is pretty easy --

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): That is why I was asking for clarification of the question. It is fine to smirk, but I did not understand the question.

Tom Copley AM: -- to get a cab around here, yes, but going beyond zone 3 --

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes, that is the reason that we have suburban cabs. Are you talking about black cabs, then, particularly in outer London? Is that what you are referring to?

Tom Copley AM: Both private hire and taxis.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): As somebody who does not live in central London, I do not think there is a major issue with access to the private hire trade outside central London. If there is, it would be good if you could expand on that. In terms of the black cab trade, it is true that only a small number of cab drivers are actually purely suburban drivers. Clearly, the all-London drivers are able to operate outside of central London, but the purpose of the suburban drivers is to make sure that there is adequate supply in the suburbs as well.

One of the things that they are also responding to is the fact that there is not as much demand in some of those locations. One of the things that the ranks review is looking at, amongst other things, is whether there is more we can do around ranks. The implementation of the night Tube is also going to lead to some interesting changes around what options people have when they get out of the Tube. Is there a rank there? How do people access cab services in terms of the onward journey? The suburban action plan, which was a manifesto commitment, is very much specifically looking at this issue of suburban services. What can we do? If one of the reasons that people find it difficult to get cabs outside of central London is because we are not providing adequate support to those people who are licensed as suburban drivers, what else can we do to support them?

Those are some of the things that we are doing. However, if I understand the issues a little bit more that you are specifically trying to tackle, then I am happy to comment on those.

Tom Copley AM: Could I ask you specifically about Uber and what impact you think apps like that have on the diversity of services that are available?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): From a personal perspective, fundamentally, on the idea that there is an app, obviously, we all want all the apps to be operating within the confines of the legal setup that we have in this country and in London. I think everyone on this side of the table would agree with that. We just have had a lot of debate about what we would all define as "operating within the legal confines".

However, leaving that question aside about what a legally constituted app is, fundamentally, the advantage of apps is that they are expanding customer choice. It is a fundamental premise. In fact operators such as Addison Lee have a great app. The fundamental concept of an app is a good thing for customers. It means that it is expanding your ability, for example, in a setting where there is not a black cab coming down the street every ten seconds, to be able to access a wider range of services.

Tom Copley AM: In the case of Uber, it actually blurs the line between taxi and private hire, does it not? That is what the issue is.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): This is the point about whether it is operating within the confines of a statutory system that is designed to protect and preserve both trades. We could hopefully all

agree that as long as it is operating in that way, it should be enhancing both sides of the trade. There are many apps that do that.

Tom Copley AM: Do you think that the issue at the moment, though, is that there is this grey area and there does not seem to be a level playing field and Uber seems to be operating in this gap in between where it does not fall under the proper regulatory framework on either side?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): There are two different questions there, a grey area versus a proper regulatory framework. There is clearly a grey area at the moment because digital media is changing the face of human existence across a whole range of areas.

Tom Copley AM: Yes, and you cannot un-invent things, obviously.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): By definition, it is challenging legal structures and the way we interpret laws very significantly. That is not unique to this industry. It is true across the board. How we respond to that challenge collectively both as regulators, policy-makers and as the industry itself is a joint challenge. How do we come up with something that is going to work for customers and is going to enhance choice but is still going to make sure that we have the well-recognised and globally admired system that we have in London? It is a huge challenge. I do not think anybody on this side of the table would say that is a super-easy question, that we know the answer and that there is an obvious path there.

Tom Copley AM: If I could bring Michael and Steve in here, is what you want a level playing field? Is that your goal here?

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): Yes. First and foremost, our argument is not with Uber. We are quite used to competitors. There are nearly 3,000 private hire companies in London. There are 25,000 taxis. A number of the people around this table will have heard me say this many times - we fight like cats and dogs over every journey and we are well used to that. We quite enjoy it and we actually think the competition - and there is a lot of healthy competition in London - has driven up standards and has driven up the availability of the service and the quality of the service. We do not have any problem with competitors. In the words of John Griffin [founder and former Chairman, Addison Lee], who used to sit at these types of things, "Bring it on".

What we do have a problem with is the playing field, as you say. These terms like 'disruptive technology' and all the rest, there are companies in London - big companies and small ones - that have had apps for years, this is nothing new. The disruption, if you like, is to come in and just ignore all the regulations. Helen Chapman [General Manager, TPH, TfL], who is here in the audience, had somebody at TPH looking into this across 50 apps that had come into London. They were carrying out a detailed investigation. Our concern with the apps, as I say, is with TPH, not particularly the app companies.

I had a guy who runs an app company based in Denmark who told me that what he does is get drivers to apply online. They scan their licences and email them over to him. Then he gives them the password or whatever for the app so they can take bookings in London. I said to him, "There is no way you can do that. That is totally against any regulations. That is just not allowed". He said, "It is funny you should say that. We had a TPH visit the other week and the examiner who came around said that he thought it was wonderful and he could not understand why every other private hire company in London does not adopt the same system". There is Photoshop and there are all these types of things that can go on. You can substitute photographs on licences and things. It is just very wrong and it is what TPH has allowed to happen.

As far as the uneven playing field is concerned, meters are not our argument. If they have meters in the vehicles, from our point of view, good luck to them because we compete on fixed prices. The Mayor thinks it is a meter. The taxi industry thinks it is a meter. Uber in its own instruction manual calls it a meter. The only people who do not think it is a meter are from TPH. It is staggering.

On destinations, I really take issue with this, Garrett. Mary Dowdye [former Head of Standards and Regulations, TPH, TfL] was the person who sent the TPH notice out. Steve Wright, who is the Chairman of this association [LPHCA], spoke to Mary Dowdye and asked why she sent the TPH notice out following Garrett's assertion that it was just mimicking what was in the **Private Hire Vehicles (London) ? Act 1998**. That was because she wanted private hire operators who were not taking destinations to take destinations. This is a fact. They came to the company that I work for and found that some of the journeys only had "as directed" on them and they said, "You cannot have more than 10% of your journeys without a destination". This is absolute fact. I am not making this up.

I was a magistrate for years. When I took my oath, it was to administer justice without fear or favour, malice or goodwill. What happened was that they took decisions based on whether they were going to end up in the High Court with one of the big app companies, probably Uber. It was just wrong. What they should have done was look at the regulations and look at the law. This was settled regulation. This was not something dreamed up a week ago. This has been in place since the Act came in and just reversed it.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Everything Mike said is absolutely right. The decisions that were made by TfL were made on a cost basis. They worked out that they were more likely to get taken to the High Court by Uber and lose. What has happened is that they have licensed Uber without really looking into it. A few months down the line, when we found out what was going on and how the system was being operated, it was pointed out to them that they were using this meter.

Incidentally, TfL constantly refers - and you will have heard Peter Hendy [Commissioner, TfL] refer to it and you will have heard Garrett refer to it - to the device that Uber uses as a 'smartphone'. It is not a telephone. You cannot make phone calls on it. You cannot text your wife. You cannot ring anyone. It looks like a phone, but it is a pre-programmed device that does two things. It works as a meter and it lets you accept and clear journeys. It is not a phone. Leon Daniels [Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL] has just spent £50,000 of licence fee-payers' money writing to everybody in the taxi and private hire industry to tell us that it is a smartphone. They are unbelievable sums of money, £50,000.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): Is it not an iPhone? It says 'iPhone' on it.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): It is a locked-down phone.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): I will tell you what I will do, Garrett. I will bring one into your office this afternoon and you make a telephone call on it. I do not know what the legal definition of a smartphone is because I am not a lawyer, as I keep saying --

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): My iPad is a smartphone. I do not think I can make a telephone call on it.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Your iPad is what, Garrett?

Tom Copley AM: Shall I bring Garrett in to respond?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): There are an awful lot of issues there --

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, LTDA): Sorry, can we just finish on the meter issue? As I say, we are getting into definitions here. Garrett says it is a smartphone. I say you cannot make a phone call on it, how can it be a phone? You will make your own decisions on that.

The reality of the situation is that by the time they realised what was happening and realised that we were right and they were using a meter, they had to take a decision as to what to do. Had they then revoked Uber's licence, or insisted on changing their operating procedures having realised what was going on, they would have wound up in the High Court. Uber, as you know, is one of the most heavily financed companies in the world. It has lots of money and lots of lawyers. TfL took the decision that if it was to revoke Uber's licence, they would be in for an awful lot of money if TfL lost. Uber is going to say, quite rightly, "You licensed us a year ago. We are doing nothing different now and now you are saying it is wrong". TfL was going to lose a lot of money. That is the reason every decision they have made since has been trying to avoid that sort of litigation. That is the only reason they have made those decisions. Make no mistake about it.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): I am not sure how I can be accused of avoiding going to the High Court when I am the only one here who wants to get there and get there quicker.

There are a number of issues here and I will start with what Mike said. Mike used the phrase 'level playing field'. Let us take the sporting analogy a bit further. I think we would agree on that. We want a level playing field. We would all agree that there are grey areas at the moment and, as a result of what has happened, we need to clarify them. Our view is that we want to clarify these issues as quickly as possible. There are different routes depending on different issues.

As I said, with the whole issue of destinations, we think the most appropriate route is for us to review our regulations because it is in our gift to change those regulations if we think they are no longer fit for purpose. That is exactly what we are doing. They have been fit for purpose for years. They have been used by the players on the playing field, who were playing within the rules as they understood them. A new player has come along and has a different interpretation of the rules. It happens in sport now and again when somebody comes along. The Fosbury flop, I think it was, when Dick Fosbury [United States athlete] came along in 1968 and changed high jump forever. Everybody said, "Wow that's terrible isn't it?". This is the same sort of thing.

What you have to understand is that there are two views, one from the private hire trade and one view from the taxi trade. There is another view from the disruptive operators, to give them their collective name, who would put a different view to you. At the end of the day, what we as a regulator have to do when presented with a challenge and when presented with two different versions or interpretations of the rules is to decide which one we think is the most appropriate interpretation. That is what we have done in both these cases and we recognise that in, again, both those cases there is room for interpretation and grey areas and we seek to clarify that. We are attempting to do that as quickly as possible. We are taking entirely the appropriate course of action, as a regulator should do.

The other thing I wanted to point out is in terms of exactly what is or is not allowed here. We just need to remind ourselves about what you can and cannot do as a private hire operator in particular. I am alarmed, Mike, if my compliance officers are going to Denmark to do compliance inspections because it is quite clear in the regulations that we have for private hire operators that they have to have an office in London to be a

licensed private hire operator. There is no cause for us to go and do a compliance inspection of anybody outside London because you simply cannot be a licensed private hire operator. Therefore, clearly, what they are doing is illegal.

Uber and these other companies that are operating, we think, subject to the clarifications we are talking about, within the regulations and within the law are operating as licensed private hire operators in London. They have offices in London. We go and do compliance checks. It was pretty well publicised that we did a very large compliance check on that company recently and it was found to be pretty much 100% compliant. We do actually have one outstanding case with it going through the courts where it was prosecuted as a result of, we would allege, a lack of insurance. We will see whether that gets upheld in court. It was found to be a compliant operator. In many, many ways, it is a very good operator. It has very good systems and very good technology. It operates very efficiently and very professionally and we would not doubt that.

The question is, of course, that they are not operating to the interpretation of the rules that Mike and his colleagues or Steve and his colleagues think is the correct interpretation of the rules. We have to clarify that. That is the issue that has to be resolved here. Until we resolve those issues, we are not going to get past this. We are going to have a debate that will go on for a very long time.

Tom Copley AM: Was it Michael who raised the point about accepting scanned documents or forms? Is that true?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): Not if they are operating legally, no, it cannot be, certainly not out of the country.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You have to see the original documents?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): You have to be a licensed operator in London --

Tom Copley AM: Apparently, this is going on.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): First of all, we are 100% behind a two-tier system. You mentioned that in the first place. We are 100% behind it. We have no desire for our cars to be picking up off the street or challenging the two-tier system at all.

Our argument here is about process. What appears to us is very clear - that you now break the law or breach the regulations, and TfL, if you are big enough, will change the rules. That is our issue.

Tom Copley AM: Chair, someone has just tweeted me to say that Uber has just been handed a nationwide ban by a federal court in Germany.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): All over they seem to be. Very interesting.

Victoria Borwick AM: I just want to go back to the different regulations. We are obviously concerned that the taxi industry, as we have said, has its gold standard and has had these regulations, which Garrett summarised briefly so I will not go back over all of that again. As a result of that there are certain standards out there and then we have newcomers who come in, as you say, with different regulations that try to flout all the work that you have all put in or appear to.

Should you be looking as a taxi industry at saying what flexibility and what changes you want to bring forward? In other words, perhaps you should be ahead of the game as opposed to, so to speak, fighting the competition, but you can only do that if you can have a working relationship with TfL that would enable you.

I am a bit concerned that TfL have said, "These are the rules and therefore people are complying", when they are not complying with them. Actually, what makes the taxi industry special are the things that you went through earlier, but those are things that concern regulation and safety. You know when you are getting into a licensed taxi the amount of precautions and things that have been taken. We have gone through those again this morning. The real question is, is there some way, if you have got this requirement to, pick up perhaps special needs or disabled people; you have statutory fares that you cannot change, but we all know that people like Uber can come in and charge whatever they like. However, your fares and everything else that you do is regulated by TfL.

Is there an opportunity here for the taxi industry and TfL to look at a strategic way forward and saying, "Is there some flexibility"? I am very worried that Uber will go on undercutting people. That will therefore put taxi drivers out of business and in the end we will all suffer. Right at the very beginning, you outlined the number of people's jobs that are dependent on this industry. What opportunity is there between TfL and taxi drivers to talk about flexibility?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): The first thing I will say to you, Victoria, is to reiterate what Mike said. Technology is no stranger to us. The taxi industry in London adopted data dispatch back in the early 1980s. In the taxi industry, we had apps around the same time the minicab industry did. You will know the big names. We have had these apps. The technology is not the issue, as Mike said. In fact, we compete with the minicab industry and thousands of minicab firms and most of the minicab apps are actually better than Uber, if the truth is known. The problem with Uber is, as Mike pointed out, they came in and just do what they want.

Very interestingly, I liked Garrett's analogy that he drew of some sort of sporting event. The analogy that I would draw is of Mike and I on a village green somewhere in our cricket whites playing cricket and Uber has turned up like the National Football League (NFL) and Garrett, as the umpire, has said, "Fine, play on". That is the reality of what has happened, if you look at it.

Victoria Borwick AM: What needs to happen? At the moment, what you can charge is agreed on an annual basis. It rises each time to some agreed figure. Taking it forward on the strategic point, as the Chair said earlier, what needs to happen? It is almost as if you are over-regulated because you are playing by the rules on your village cricket pitch and actually they have come in with entirely different rules. Is that part of the work that could go on that would fit in with the --

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): We are the most regulated taxi industry anywhere in the world.

Victoria Borwick AM: I am well aware of that, which is why I am suggesting that maybe that is another opportunity --

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): There is, however, moving on to the technology aspect, an app that is going to launch next week. I do not think I am letting the cat out of the bag. They are going to launch this sharing app. It is a completely new concept whereby people are going to be able to share a taxi. You are going to be able to book in that you are going from here to wherever you

are going and somebody else will be coming along the road in a cab already. It is obviously going to be very competitive price-wise. It is going to be run like a sort of bus service. The technology take-up by the taxi industry continues to be there. We are very, very keen on it. I understand that TfL has somehow been involved in the production of this sharing app and I understand that you have been involved as well, Isabel. Is that right?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): If it is the people I am thinking of, I have had some indirect discussions with them.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Maybe that could be the first example, Victoria.

Victoria Borwick AM: What I am trying to say is that at the moment I think you are restricted, perhaps in the village green example. What could be done strategically with TfL to take that forward?

Michael Galvin (LPHCA): Victoria, if I could just respond, obviously the regulation of private hire has a lighter touch than that of the taxi industry. We have deregulated fares, choice of vehicle and that kind of thing.

What I would say is that we are accused by these disruptive people amongst other things of being dinosaurs and so on. I welcome the approach that you are suggesting and that is where we were, in effect, with TfL. We used to have proper engagement. We did not always agree. You would not expect us to. We had various arguments, papers back and forth and all the rest of it. However, ultimately, I think we came to some good policy decisions and that is exactly where we need to get back to. I do not feel happy to commit to it until what has gone on has actually been rationalised and that we understand where the process failures were and what actually the problem was and that we put proper terms of reference or a framework in place so that we can work together to take things forward.

I agree with you. Life does not stand still. Most of my working day - and probably most of the working day of the people in here - is taken up with managing change. Change happens all the time. What I really object to is that we are playing on our cricket pitch or whatever and the rules have changed mid-game. What we want is a process. If somebody wants to do something different, fine, let us consider it. Does TPH even have the powers to change it? If they have, let us have a proper, grownup, professional debate about what should change.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I want to bring Isabel in and then I really want us to move on.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): I just want to really endorse what Victoria said. It goes back to Mike's point about the terms of reference and the strategic engagement that he made right at the outset, but I totally agree. Clearly, it is nobody's intention, whether it is City Hall or TfL, to create a not-level playing field. Of course, that is not what anybody is trying to do. Other people might say that that has been the unintended consequence, but clearly it is not the intention.

Mike, correct me if I have this wrong, but to give an example of how that could work, one of the ways that Uber has set itself up is that its app requires very few clicks in order to make a booking, whereas Addison Lee's app, if I remember rightly, had 11 stages.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): It had 11, yes.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): It was designed to be what they interpreted to be fully compliant with TfL's processes. As a result of some of the discussions that have happened since Uber came into the market, you have now restructured your app and it has three or four clicks. Is that right, Mike? In other words, there has been that dialogue but nobody would say that should not have happened in that way. If you have that strategic dialogue you can say, "Wait a second. For whatever reason, what has gone on before was that there was an interpretation that we needed to have these 11 steps. Let us leave aside whose fault or who said what". Now, through this dialogue, that has now been drastically reduced and they are able to then play in a more equal way with Uber, as an example. That was a good, very small example of how some of that strategic dialogue can actually unpick some of those issues.

Victoria Borwick AM: Would you look at a different way of helping the black cab trade? Again, the slight problem is that the rules seem to be different for each participant.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): The two parts of the industry are different and the rules are different because they are regulated differently but, clearly, one does not want to disadvantage any side of the industry. Uber is clearly, initially, playing in the private hire market. There has been a debate about whether it would enter into the black cab market, but I am only commenting on Mike's side of the shop because that is where they have been playing. Clearly, one of the ways that the black cab industry, as Tom [Copley AM] pointed out earlier, can continue to be relevant and on the front foot is through, for example, the app that Steve has just mentioned that is coming into the market. There are many other things that one can and should do. Hailo is another operator that has been out there. Clearly, the set of issues is relevant to both sides of the business, yes, absolutely. I am just giving an example from Mike's side.

Victoria Borwick AM: A strategic review seems --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, seems good. I really want us to move on.

Garrett Emerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): I just want to say that had we been changing the rules, I would have agreed with a lot of what has been said, but the fact is the rules are not changing. What has changed is the interpretation of the same rules and there is a difference.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): The interpretation, yes. You made that very clear earlier. Thank you. We want to move on to supply and demand issues.

Darren Johnson AM: This is, firstly, about the Knowledge, which we heard some evidence on at our previous session on this. Is TfL looking at reviewing or updating the Knowledge, given the view that it is acting as a barrier to new entrants and new taxi drivers into the market?

Garrett Emerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): No. I do not think we believe that it is acting as a barrier. The trade will have their own views on the Knowledge, but you heard in your earlier session about the regard that it is held in around the world and the contribution that it makes to the standard of taxis in London is probably fundamental. It is something that we continue to be proud of. I think the whole trade is proud of it. We can all claim different levels of responsibility. However, the one thing I would say is that the Knowledge examiners themselves, of course, are actually taxi drivers. It is very much down to taxi drivers regulating and developing and maintaining their own standards. In that regard, I would agree with what Steve was saying. It is down to taxi drivers to do that. No, we have no plans to review it.

Darren Johnson AM: That is very, very clear. You have no desire to lower the standards. Is there a need, however, to look at the Knowledge in the light of new technology that - never mind 50 years ago - did not even exist 10 or 20 years ago?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): Had you had only a single-tier system and had only taxis in the city, I might have said yes. Maybe you have to look at that. However, the reality is that the two trades are very different products and are about supplying different types of services. The taxi trade services are at the core of it and I accept that obviously there is an element that is booked or worked through apps and so on. It is about hailing on the street. That is the fundamental difference or one of the fundamental differences between a taxi and a private hire vehicle. It is about that instant ability of a driver to be able to speak to a customer, know exactly where he needs to go and take him there by the most efficient and effective means. It has been proved time and time again through others looking at what we do that that is the most effective way of ensuring that. It continues to be as relevant today in the world of technology as it was 10, 20, 50 or 100 years ago.

Darren Johnson AM: What do you think does act as barriers to new taxi drivers entering the market?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): I am not sure I see any particular barriers. The standards are very clear. They are very onerous. I would accept that. There is nowhere else in the world that has the levels of knowledge requirement that we have in London, but equally there is nowhere else in the world that has the standard of taxi drivers that we have in London. I do not see that is necessarily a barrier, is it?

Darren Johnson AM: Your view is that the standards are very onerous and very high but are not acting as a barrier?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): I do not quite follow you as to how they act as a barrier if you are committed to maintaining the standard of service that we have.

Darren Johnson AM: I am just basing it on the evidence that we have had in and that we heard last time.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): I agree with what Garrett said. If the trade had a very strong view that it wanted to see significant changes to how the Knowledge is set, operated, etc, then clearly that is an ongoing dialogue. I know there has been some debate for example, around whether computerising some of the training could be an approach that you could take and it has been decided that we are not going to go down that road. As far as I understand it, it was a joint decision between the trade and TfL. As far as I am concerned, we would respond to anything that the trade would want in that respect, but at the moment, if they are happy, we are happy.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Could I just interject? One of the key issues is that it now takes on average 50 months to complete the Knowledge, whereas in the 1970s it was about 11 months. If it is taking someone four-plus years to get through the Knowledge, that could be a barrier.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): It is a huge barrier.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That, to us, is why we are asking this.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): It is for Steve more to say whether they see that as an issue.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Statistics are very misleading. There are two reasons that the Knowledge takes 50 months on average.

When you pick an average, it is very difficult. There are people doing the Knowledge still in 18 months and there are other people taking literally 10 years. I think 10 years was the limit at one point. It all comes down to how much effort you put into it and whether you are doing it full-time or part-time. Back in the 1960s and 1970s, most people did it full-time. They were not working for a year or 18 months, they went out, they did the Knowledge and they got a licence. It is very different now. As we all know, with two working people in the family, people tend to do their Knowledge part-time and thus it takes longer. That is the first reason.

London is a more complex place than it was in the 1960s. Just think of the number of restaurants. If you were to think of the number of high-quality restaurants in London in the early 1970s, you could probably write them on a single sheet of A4 and now you would need a telephone book. London has changed. Canary Wharf was not there, nor the massive developments. London is a more complex city than it used to be, not a less complex city.

Garrett is actually putting himself down here. We have actually had discussions on minor ways in which the Knowledge can be improved, not necessarily speeded up. The Knowledge was changed. Quite small issues were changed about two or three years ago. They used to have an introductory talk and they used to tell the candidates what was expected of them. That was replaced with a mail-out. They were given a mailshot. What we found was happening is people would get the mailshot, put it aside, ask someone they know who tells them how to do the Knowledge and they go and do it. It is not until they come to be examined that they realise they have learned it all wrong because they did not read the pamphlet that was sent to them. People do not read pamphlets. Men do not read instruction books. We put them to the side. As a result of that, Garrett has been actually quite proactive insofar as they are going to reintroduce the introductory talk.

There were other minor issues that the trade did not like. They changed the system. When you pass the Knowledge, it is a big sense of achievement to some people, especially because at the moment a large number of the people taking the Knowledge in London are recent immigrants. For them to learn their way around a city that they were not born in and perhaps have only lived in a few years, it is a massive achievement, especially for a lot of them English is a second language. They have come here, they have learned the language and they have learned their way around better than anybody else in this room, possibly with the exception of the cab drivers here. It is a major achievement. What was happening was they used to have a ceremony and they were given their badge and somebody shook their hand and it was all great. That was scrapped in favour of the badges being posted out. The Knowledge schools did not like it and we did not like it. As a result, Garrett is reviewing that. When they move to their new building --

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): Faith Lawson House in Westminster.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): They are moving to Westminster and they are going to reintroduce that, so that is a real positive and is probably a good example of TPH engaging with us. It took a bit longer than I would have liked, but the bottom line is it is happening and that is quite good.

The Knowledge of London is not a barrier to entry into the trade. Anybody can do it. As I said, it can be done in 18 months and people do it in 18 months. The reality is it is part-time.

Before we start somehow linking the Knowledge of London with supply and demand, you need to define is there a shortage of taxis in London, is there a supply and demand issue. I have only brought four copies [Taxi Availability Survey, May 2007] with me: we had Ipsos MORI do a supply and demand survey of the taxi industry. I think that one was 2007/08, but I would argue that because of the recession that London has been through, pretty much those figures will stand today. If there is some sort of perceived shortage of taxis in London, as a result of the Knowledge or otherwise, I think before you can make that assumption you would need to undertake a survey similar to that.

Darren Johnson AM: Yes, OK we will have a proper look at that as part of our investigation. Just in terms of as London has become more complex, as you say, in terms of new developments, new types of businesses, more things to know, as our population grows massively in the coming decades and London gets more and more complicated, does the Knowledge just get more and more onerous and harder and harder to do, with more and more things to remember?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Central London has pretty much expanded all it could. The Surrey Docks and the Millwall Docks, now Canary Wharf, would obviously have been in development in the 1980s, transformed the East of London as we all know.

When I first started driving a cab back in the 1980s, you would go to Canary Wharf, there would be boats there and there would be nobody else there. That was only the middle 1980s. We are not talking 1950s - we are talking the middle 1980s. Now, as we all know, there are massive industries there. I do not think London is going to expand; the density might increase but the actual available land to expand in central London, there is not any left, is there? There are the odd bits here and there down at Battersea that are being developed, so there cannot be any more restaurants than there is. I do not think London is going to get any more complex. It will change - it changes all the time, one-way system changes. I think we are pretty much where we are now.

As I said, as far as the changes are concerned there are still minor things where we have been engaging with Garrett where we think the Knowledge could be changed, possibly to speed it up. An example being, when you undertake the Knowledge of London, when you have finished the Knowledge and you have got the Knowledge of central London, you have to do something called a suburbs test, whereby you have to learn where Enfield is and where Bexleyheath is and Croydon is and so that if someone wants to go late at night, you might not know all the roads in Croydon but you know how to get there, you know where it is. We have some issues where we think that could be slightly changed, because we think that takes three or four months, that knowledge, and it could be done in eight weeks, is what we think, but these are minor changes. None of these changes that we suggest reflect the quality that it imposes and the standards that it creates.

Darren Johnson AM: You could simplify, for example, what you are saying about the suburbs without undermining their standing.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Absolutely. The fact is at the moment, as an example, somebody doing the Knowledge to Croydon has to know the name of every road all the way to Croydon, or Bexleyheath, or something. You have to know, and really we would argue that as long as you know that Bexleyheath is down the bottom of the A2 and Enfield is up the A10 you do not really need to know the names of the streets on the way, once you get out of central London.

Darren Johnson AM: Michael Galvin, has the LPHCA got a view on the Knowledge or do you just keep quiet and are pleased that your drivers do not have to do this?

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): I did the Knowledge myself in the mid-1980s. I was a black taxi driver as well and it took a year then. As Steve said, it was pretty much 50/50 part- and full-time, before I crossed to what people here term the 'dark side'. I also did my doctorate which was centred on the Knowledge and the sense of achievement and so on that Steve talks about that people get from undertaking the Knowledge.

We do not have a policy on it, but what we do have, we get a great benefit from it, because we estimate about a third of the drivers who work for the company I work for are actually on the Knowledge. So, there is a choice nowadays. When I did the Knowledge really you became a black cab driver. There was a minicab side of things, it was unlicensed, it was all pretty yucky and it wasn't very attractive as a professional full-time job. Whereas, you know, black taxis were.

Darren Johnson AM: Whereas, now that there is an overall industry where you can graduate from one part to another.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): Well there is that, but you have also got a choice of two professions really, both licensed. Both very different but both licensed. The graduation is a good point. I think about a third of our drivers do graduate to go on to do the Knowledge and some of those will obviously pass out as taxi drivers, so there is a benefit to the licensed private hire industry as well, of the Knowledge, I think.

Darren Johnson AM: OK, that is useful. Then a question for Isabel. Coming back to all Steve's points about supply and demand and the study that the LTDA did, what steps are being taken by TfL to assess supply and demand, for taxi and private hire services, particularly in the context of wider changes to public transport, such as 24-hour Tube and so on, which could well change the dynamic?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): For sure, to take that example on night Tube, there is a proper strategic exercise going on to look at what the implication is in terms of the public transport network, and including the industry that we are talking about here today, in the context of night Tube. We are also looking at the bus network, for example. What you clearly do not want is people jumping out of the Tube network and then they can't get to their ongoing destination.

In that kind of a context there is a pretty major review going on to look at that set of questions. Apart from that there is not any, as I said earlier, meta exercise about do we need more taxis, fewer taxis, etc. That is not going on at the moment because I have not picked up that there is a need out there. Again, if that was something where people did think there was an issue, I would always be happy to look at that kind of question.

Darren Johnson AM: What we have had previously, in our last meeting we had, that there was an oversupply of vehicles and drivers in some boroughs and an undersupply in others, particularly in outer London.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes, Garrett might want to comment more on what they have picked up more operationally, from that perspective. What I would say is that we are regulating a private market, and hopefully supply and demand operate and drivers who want to earn an income will tend to go to where they think they can find business and so, broadly speaking, we should expect that to operate. That is why it is a regulated private industry, not a public industry. It would be difficult to imagine how you might go about rectifying that, if you felt there was some major market failure there, you clearly cannot force people to go and work in areas where they do not want to work. It is hard to envisage a set of incentives that could be made to work effectively. (a) I do not think we are in that business and (b) I am not sure I see major problems. Very clearly there are these issues.

My own view is that some of the digital media stuff we have been talking about earlier is the obvious solution to some of those problems. Are there things that we can unblock in terms of, say, ranks in certain locations etc.? Clearly there are individual locations where we need to look at that.

Darren Johnson AM: That is certainly what we heard from Mark James [San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency] and Matthew Daus [President, International Association of Transportation Regulators] our international representatives at the previous session, that technology could really be used far better to match supply and demand across the city.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes, which is why getting the sort of level playing field, what are the rules, right is so important, because by creating certainty in terms of our role as regulators that is how you can lead to a flowering in that market. You are seeing an explosion in terms of probably every week there is somebody new who wants to come and see us and is bringing a product in the market. There is a clear proliferation of all those different kinds of products. There is also now, Steve was alluding to that earlier, more and more of these sort of cross-modal platforms that want to effectively try to make use of taxis as share devices, but also using people's cars - car sharing technologies, to integrate those with taxi, private hire, so that people have a seamless experience irrespective of what mode they are using. There are all these opportunities that digital brings forward and it is just making sure that we are handling them in a fair way.

Darren Johnson AM: Garrett, did you want to add anything to that? Particularly in terms of is TfL doing anything to review the geographical licence boundaries in which different licensed drivers can work?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): I agree with everything Isabel said. The only thing I would add is of course the suburban review, which she already referred to earlier on, is one of those commitments that is doing exactly that among other things. It is looking at what the issues are in suburban areas. We have received a very large number of responses to the consultation that we have just concluded and we are going through that. So, yes, we are looking at that and in due course we will inevitably come to some conclusions about what, if anything, we should be doing differently in the future.

Darren Johnson AM: OK. Quickly, Steve and Michael, have you anything to add, particularly on the issue of the suburban review?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): We have made submissions. Our views are that there should be moratoriums on certain areas where there is oversupply. We are of the opinion that issuing licences where there are no ranks, I think Wimbledon is an example, I think there is 19 rank spaces and something like 400 people have got a licence, it might be more. It is those sorts of figures. We have got concerns over that and we are actually in agreement again, this is the second time today, with Garrett, because, as I say, they have frozen licences in those areas until the review is complete and we think that is the right approach.

Darren Johnson AM: You accept that there is a mismatch in some areas compared to others on the supply and demand.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Inevitably. I know of not a single example of undersupply in the suburbs. Everywhere that I am aware of there is oversupply.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are going to have to move on. I am just conscious of time actually, Michael, if you do not mind. Is that OK? Just because that was about taxis.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): OK, thank you, Chair.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are going to have to really speed up questions and answers. We are way over already on where we wanted to be at this point. I want to talk about accessibility.

Victoria Borwick AM: One of the gold standards is that we have a black taxi service here, that of course as we know is fully disabled-compliant which I think we should be very proud of and I think it is one of the iconic things about London and TfL is working increasingly to make all of its network [accessible]. I think one of the special things is that things that are part of a public vehicle, therefore a part of TfL, are in the main trying to be disabled accessible and obviously I am very keen on that, because I think we should realise that disabled is not just a wheelchair, it is obviously a pram, it is tourists with suitcases. As you know, TfL is spending a lot of money to making sure we are a friendly, accessible city. I am very keen on that.

What can we do? Because I think the problem is, at the moment, again it is restrictive that TfL say, "OK, a black taxi driver has to be disabled accessible and, therefore, we will licence them and in return they can ply on the street". The problem is that that is great, but it means that people who are not black cab drivers are not providing a service to the disabled. That has come up in some of our other research, so what should be doing? Should TfL be saying that if you want to be licensed by TfL you have to be a black cab driver?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): I clearly agree with the importance of black cabs being, you know, fully accessible, that is one of the tenets of what makes black cabs different. Coming on to your point, you were using the word 'restrictive' but I think to me the whole point is that if you want a certain quality of service and a certain set of standards you will take a black cab, and one of those is accessibility, the other is the fact that the driver will know the street that you are going to, etc, etc.

I am not sure that necessarily that implies that it is restrictive. It is about protecting the identity of the black cab trade. Within the private hire trade I think it would be inconceivable really to imagine saying all of those vehicles, if that is what you are saying, must be wheelchair accessible. It would be a dramatic change for that part of the industry. If you do want a wheelchair accessible vehicle many of those exist within that trade, obviously, and there is a whole range of services that are offered within the market in order to provide that service.

Victoria Borwick AM: Certainly I have to believe that if you are going to be licensed by TfL then black cabs are of course the best vehicle because they are the vehicle that are obviously disabled accessible, which I think fulfils TfL's views on passenger accessibility. So this is where I have a slight divide between our guest here, and therefore I have a total divide against Uber and other people who want to come into the market who are not providing the gold standard that the taxi industry are. OK, it may be confrontational this morning but you could say that you do have this standard and, therefore, what are we doing to make sure that the vehicles that we as TfL licence and what we are doing here --

London is a city that wants to be accessible, so I am really holding up the disability banner here because of the research and the input that we have had from other people. We have had disabled people saying that private hire vehicles will not take them. Obviously other people will not take them but obviously the people who will take them and look after them, hopefully, and something we should encourage is the black cabs. Why, as TfL, should we not be making more about how special the black taxis are? What should we be doing to be forcing those same regulations and saying, as you are taking it forward as TfL, "Why don't we make sure that if you want to be part of the TfL licensing, then you will have to improve your service?"

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, TfL): Again, just to broaden it out and put it in the context of the whole public transport system. Yes, we have made and we are making great strides to make it more and more accessible across the network. All of our buses are accessible, all of our taxis accessible, but not all of our Tubes are accessible. The cost, for instance, in making 100% of our Tube stations accessible I think would be beyond the reach of most of us in terms of cost. I think probably similar is true for the private hire trade. As Isabel says, you are perfectly able to get a disabled accessible private hire vehicle, but the idea of making them all accessible I think would be a huge change and a huge cost to the industry. Mike may have a different view

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): I have got a long background in dealing with mobility issues. I ran the London Taxicard Scheme when I worked for Computer Cab for 19 years and carried out a disability review when I worked for TfL. We find little demand for wheelchair accessible vehicles at the moment. I fully accept every bus is accessible, every taxi is accessible, Dial-a-Ride is free, the London Taxicard Scheme has a budget of £19 million a year and there is Capital Call, there is community transport and there are local borough schemes. Funnily enough, we have just ordered this week 30 more wheelchair accessible vehicles, because we have seen a slight pickup in demand, but there is little demand in the commercial sector. By that I mean people paying full fare for their journeys for wheelchair accessible vehicles. I suspect in London that it is because of the prevalence of the schemes that are available.

If there is a demand, as demonstrated by the vehicles we have ordered, we would buy more vehicles. I was in the taxi industry when wheelchair accessibility was first mooted, with your [Victoria Borwick AM] husband I think! We were trying to a percentage of quotes and all the rest of it because there was something like 0.4% of journeys actually involved wheelchair travel. I think at the time we were probably wrong, because nowadays you walk around and you see people are using wheelchairs and getting out a lot more because of the buses, the taxis and so on. I think from the private hire point of view we feel that we are satisfying the demand. We feel that, more demand, we are quite happy to invest in more vehicles. It is not a big premium to have a wheelchair accessible vehicle, there is plenty of choice of vehicles, but we are not really seeing a great demand. If we are proved wrong, I mean I am fairly regularly in contact with Transport for All, and if we are wrong and there is a latent demand that we are just not seeing we would be interested commercially to try to 'exploit' it, if you excuse the term.

Victoria Borwick AM: Certainly Transport for All were one of the submissions that we have received who said that they were disappointed in the service they were receiving from private hire firms. That does not necessarily mean it was yourselves. They obviously were reasonably happy, other than a few isolated instances.

I just think the point is we either have a vision in this capital city of having a public transport system that is fully accessible. It is not going to happen overnight, and we have to decide if that is one of the criteria that we want to have as our gold standard in London. That is really the advocate I just want to make sure goes on the list.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Of course we agree. I think all those services that Mike is enumerating show, and the fact that there is a lack of appetite for this in the commercial sector, show the range of services that are available within this industry, for what you are describing. I just would not want anyone to come away with the idea that there is not a gold standard, as far as I am concerned, in this industry for the issue that you are describing.

Victoria Borwick AM: OK, just a final quick question because it comes under disability is, are we going to touch on pedicabs?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I am not sure we are today. We are so behind, Victoria, I do not want get into that now.

Victoria Borwick AM: I appreciate that, but could it be noted for the minutes that there is huge concern there on disabled accessibility.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Yes, we are concerned about it.

I want to move on to fares and payment, but I want to say one of the other accessibility issues is drivers in private hire refusing to carry assistance dogs, and we have had lots of evidence on that, so that is something, Michael, you might want to take back as well.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): Yes.

Victoria Borwick AM: That is sensible.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Fares and payment, if I could just move on that, we have done a massive survey of passengers in London and we have seen 77% would like to have the option to pay by credit or debit card; 58% said that they would like cashless transactions through things like smart phones. Passengers are demanding there is more cashless transactions. What are you going to do to meet that demand and will drivers be happy to accept credit and debit cards in the future, or is that going to become a huge battle?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): As you say, lots of other cities have done this. I think we need to at least look at it. If we were looking at bringing something forward, it will be subject to consultation with the industry. I know there is a lot of very strong views within the industry, but as you say the majority of customers are very keen on it and experience in other cities has shown that when it is introduced there is a huge uptake in terms of people using those kinds of technologies.

Fundamentally if it is expanding choice for customers and going to lead to an increase in usage of black cabs, for example, then I would have thought the trade would want it fundamentally. I know there are a lot of thorny issues around it. I would like to bring it forward but subject to consultation with the trade, clearly.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): At the moment, the figure I was given last week was 58% of drivers now take credit cards in one way, shape, form or another. There are various methods in which they can accept them. There is fixed terminals, some of them have mobile terminals, some of them use devices on phones. Our view is that it is something that will just carry on increasing, because all taxi drivers are self-employed businessmen, as I have already told you. Obviously if there is a demand there then they are going to accept cards, and we are seeing that gradually. There is a gradual increase in the number of drivers taking cards. The card acceptance rates are very high. At the airport it is virtually universal now that drivers accept credit cards, and that is rapidly becoming across the --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Supportive of it.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Yes, I mean the talk of mandating credit cards, as far as we are concerned is a non-starter. It is yet further regulation on, as I have already told you, the most regulated industry in the world. If there is the demand for people wanting to use cards then more and more drivers will take it. You only have to be on the rank two or three times and lose the

job to someone who takes a card and then you are going to think, "Well, what am I doing? I'm going to take cards" and that is gradually what is happening.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): Most private hire companies now accept cards and we are seeing a diminishing amount of cash transactions. The number of credit and debit card payments are moving up significantly.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Great, thank you for that.

John Biggs AM: Prior to today's session I would have expected any session like this to be dominated by questions on enforcement.

Both sides of the trade would complain about the failure of TfL to have adequate enforcement and areas where there were lapses. With the impossible caveat that we do not have enough time to talk about this, I wanted to ask the two of you from the trade side about your anxieties currently about enforcement, whether it is about touting, illegal plying for trade, the unenforceability of satellites on private hire companies - this may be an area where the two of you profoundly disagree. There may be other areas I suppose. Pedicabs is an enforcement area that is causing anxiety.

With the caveat you have got about 35 seconds to answer this, what are your current anxieties on enforcement?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): As far as compliance or touting enforcement goes there was a TV programme last night [*Inside Out*], you may have seen, on the BBC that highlights it. As far as we are concerned touting in London is endemic, it is virtually out of control. The responses to it, we totally disagree with the way the police are doing it, we constantly tell them how we think it should be dealt with, but the police being the police do it their own way. They are constantly setting themselves performance indicators and targets and that is not the way to deal with touting. The touting problem is out of control, it is not being monitored. We disagree fundamentally with the way that TPH fund their licensing system.

What happened, when the private hire industry was licensed, around the inception of TfL, the way it was worked out was they worked out the licence fee, what they thought that the licence fee payer should pay, and then they worked out what they could afford for enforcement. We think that is the totally wrong way of doing it and what you should do, you should look at the figures: we have got 60,000 private hire drivers, we have got 25,000 taxi drivers and we have got 24,000 vehicles, all your licence fee payers. This is the number of people paying a licence fee, London is this size, there are this many people in it, this is the level of enforcement that you need. You work out the number of enforcement officers that you require and then you work backwards as to what the licence fee should be.

John Biggs AM: You would be happier with a higher licence fee?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): If a higher licence fee resulted in the touting issues being solved, and many of what we would argue are the non-compliance issues with the private hire industry were resolved by a higher level of compliance then, yes, we would be prepared to accept a higher license fee, to an extent.

John Biggs AM: OK, and that is your biggest concern, touting?

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): Our biggest concern is touting. You briefly touched on rickshaws. There are two issues with rickshaws. Currently at the moment in London there is an explosion of electric rickshaws. If anyone has seen them, they have electric motors fitted. Once again, we are absolutely dumbstruck at the police. An electric rickshaw is an unlicensed motor vehicle, it is above a certain weight, the construction and use regulations make it a motor vehicle - it is not a rickshaw. As such, it is instantly seizable on the spot and yet this evening if we all take a trip up to Selfridge's there will be a line of 25 of them parked outside Selfridge's. The police are doing absolutely nothing about that.

Whilst on the subject of rickshaws, there is lots of stuff that you should know. We did a report [*The Solution to Public Transport Problems*] –

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Lovely, thank you.

Steve McNamara (General Secretary, Licensed Taxi Drivers Association): When TfL were considering licensing rickshaws back in 2006 that again the information in here is very, very relevant. We undertook all sorts of tests on rickshaws at the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL). I am now told these motorised ones can achieve 30 miles an hour, but the non-motorised ones, TRL would not allow their people to test them at more than 9 miles an hour. They said they were unsafe. Even as recently as Saturday night one overturned in the West End. The reason that you will not find the accident statistics for rickshaws, if you delve into them, is because they are recorded as bicycle accidents. The police use an accident book, and as the police now will confirm, there is no box to tick for rickshaws, so invariably it is recorded a cycle accident, not recorded as a rickshaw accident.

If you get the time I would recommend you read these as well.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you very much.

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): I agree totally with what Steve says, I have no argument with any of it. The association's view is it is the most serious public safety issue in this industry. It is a clear public safety problem.

John Biggs AM: It is touting, yes?

Michael Galvin (Licensed Private Hire Car Association): It is touting. There is a lot of revenue to the legitimate trade, which is a big impact. I think it tarnishes London's reputation. As far as rickshaws are concerned they are a clear public safety issue, there is no argument about it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): That is very helpful. Lovely, well that ends our first session, slightly over but so much information. Thank you very much indeed. If there are any other things that you think, "I wish I had said that" please write to us. We are very keen to hear anything in addition you have to say. Thank you, Michael, thank you, Steve.

Isabel and Garrett are going to stay and we will bring up our next guests. We have Inspector Julian Collinson, from the Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit (CEU). We have Martin Low, who is the Transport Commissioner at the City of Westminster, and Jason White, a Project Manager from Croydon Council.

Welcome to our new guests. Thank you very much for coming along today. I hope you have enjoyed listening to the first half, lots of food for thought. We are going to start off with the issue of taxi ranks and pick up points. John, you are going to cover that.

John Biggs AM: Yes.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): Chair, it is worth mentioning, might we not want to hear from the Metropolitan Police on that last issue around enforcement?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are coming on to enforcement, Garrett.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): Oh, you are?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): We are. That was just to get the trades' views before they left, so that we could move on.

John Biggs AM: I am following through on the question I did not ask, if you know what I mean, which is about taxi ranks. This is to everyone. I do not know where it is best to start but the survey is finding 55% of respondents in central London and 71% in outer London do not feel there are enough taxi ranks. Obviously everyone would like to have one in their perfect location, outside their hairdresser, or the shopping centre or whatever. Whereas my preference might be somewhere else, I don't know, outside the dog track or something, whatever it is. Are there enough ranks? We can start with Westminster, which arguably has too many ranks, doesn't it?

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): We have a large number of taxi ranks in Westminster and they provide space for about 800 taxis on the street. The taxi ranks that are provided are provided for a variety of reasons. They are provided partly for customers to go there as a passenger to get in a vehicle and drive away, but they are also being provided as rest ranks for taxi drivers to have a refreshment break or toilet break.

What we have done is work very closely with the industry and with businesses that value the benefits of having private licensed taxi driver ranks close to their businesses. What we have also sought to do is to try to look very carefully at the demand for on-street parking and use the space in a shared way. So, for example, some locations in the City of Westminster we have night time ranks that serve the night time economy, but they can operate as pay by phone [parking] bays during the day, or loading bays during the day. We think that flexible approach is a very good one which would be worth pursuing.

I think one of the frustrations we have is about the funding of taxi ranks. At the moment there is often a surplus in the money that TfL collects from licensed taxi drivers for their licences. TfL's regulations do not allow them to spend any of that money for the benefit of those drivers. One sensible thought that you might like to think about, within the TfL family, is whether you should change the regulations, with the consent of the drivers, so if there is a surplus, instead of that money not being spent at all, it is actually invested in helping the taxi trade by providing more ranks.

I think we would be very happy to share more detailed information with TfL and the Committee about what we have done in Westminster. We think in other parts of London some of the things that we have done in Westminster, because of the huge competition for curb-side space, would be of huge value in other parts of London.

John Biggs AM: Curb space in Westminster is probably the highest demand of anywhere in London, I would guess.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): Yes.

John Biggs AM: If you are making space for ranks and you are sacrificing space for other things as well, do you find it is a big issue in your borough, or generally people are happy?

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): I think because of the way in which we approach things, and there is a lot of consultation with interested parties, but I think the secret to success has actually been working very closely with the taxi industry. We work with all three main taxi bodies in Westminster, alongside TfL. We find that type of working relationship has been extremely helpful, because the taxi drivers will point out potential locations which can then be investigated in detail.

John Biggs AM: I looked down on my notes and counted there are apparently 12 ranks in Croydon, which is quite a lot for an outer London borough. How do you deal with the demands for the supply of ranks?

Jason White (Project Manager, London Borough of Croydon): That is quite a few for an outer London borough. Most of them are fairly small ranks and all centred around the Croydon town centre and the other town centre areas. The main one is at East Croydon Station, where we are currently carrying out, or due to start early next year, a major public rail improvement project to improve the integration between all the transport modes there. Obviously through Croydon we have got the tram system as well. As far as taxis are concerned, the highest peak for taxis in Croydon is on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, when you have the people coming out from central London going to East Croydon and West Croydon Stations and then wanting to get a taxi home, as opposed to walking home late at night.

Similar to Martin, we are looking at areas where we can double-up ranking, so at night time it is a taxi ranking area and during the day it is either parking or loading bays, or other services.

John Biggs AM: I would have thought in an outer London borough one of the problems would be about the supply of taxis and ranks, which would be very tidal, which means although there might be a rank and people might expect you could turn up there and pick up a taxi, they might not always be able to do so. Do you have a problem with that?

Jason White (Project Manager, London Borough of Croydon): Certainly not around the main Croydon area at the moment. Certainly in some areas that have been regenerated recently, particularly the South Croydon area with the restaurant quarter, as we call it, there is quite a number of restaurants just gone in down there, and again there is a public realm scheme which is looking at all transport modes, obviously, as well as parking and deliveries, and that includes taxi ranks down there.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): It might worth just briefly mentioning the Golden Fares Scheme which we introduced for the night time ranks. Again, the LTDA do lots of surveys of where their taxis are moving around at night, and there were a phenomenally large number that were actually coming through Trafalgar Square on their way home. Initially there was a night time rank in Cranbourne Street which had a martial facility to it. That really was not coping with the demand, so we introduced the Fixed Fares Scheme, which TfL took through the TfL board several years ago, so we had a five zone scheme and passengers could get in with a fixed fare. The advantage to the taxi driver was he or she knew they were going to get the money, there was not going to be a problem at the other end of the journey; the passenger had the

confidence they knew the fair was fixed. The poor people in a cab going out to Purley Cross would pay £50. Quite a good deal for that time of night. It is a great scheme. The only reason it stopped was because of the costs of marshalling. I am not blaming TfL for that, initially LTDA put a large sum of money in to actually provide the marshals for the ranks, TfL then took it on.

I think you need to work with the business industry, the night time industry, to actually get them to fund marshalled ranks. Again, not just in Westminster but in other parts of London where it is an issue. I think the Fixed Fare Scheme was a real success, it is a shame that it had to be abandoned.

John Biggs AM: Most ranks are sort of self-marshalling, but the busy ones have marshals. In Croydon do you have marshals?

Jason White (Project Manager, London Borough of Croydon): We do not have marshals in Croydon, no.

John Biggs AM: In Westminster obviously.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): We had some marshal facilities, but in terms of the TfL funding of marshal facilities it is very difficult, so most of them now operate on the basis of just being a night time rank. They do not have marshals.

John Biggs AM: I was tempted to ask the TfL end of the elephant, if you like, about their part of the rank operation. You have £100,000 earmarked for rank provision in 2013/14 to 2014/15. Can we ask how you are planning to allocate that? Whether you feel the rank system is adequately managed? Obviously you do.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): A few points to pick up. Martin is absolutely right when he says we are unable to use licence fee payers' money to support the development ranks. That is enshrined in legislation, we do not have any choice about that.

However, he is not right to say that there is a surplus of licensing fees, because by law we cannot make a surplus. By law any surplus that is made has to be reinvested in the following years licensing function. The licensing fees are altered accordingly and that is published annually by TfL, so there is not a surplus that could be --

John Biggs AM: The question would be then there is a ring-fenced account there is a possibility to allocate some of the resources to help drivers --

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): There is a fund, as you say, it has increased in recent years. I think there are some figures in our earlier submission as to just how that has increased. We work very closely with the cab trade around identifying and prioritising areas for future ranks through the Cabs Rank Committee. There is a prioritised list and we have a commitment to work through that and work very closely with all the boroughs to get ranks where they are needed.

I think the point about supply and demand was touched on a little earlier on, in that it may be a case of a shortage of ranks in certain areas. It may be the reverse. The point that Steve [McNamara] made around Wimbledon is that there is an oversupply of taxis compared to an undersupply of ranks. It is about getting the balance between the two. That is the job that we try to do, working with the taxi trade and working with the boroughs and with the budget that we have.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): I am not quite sure where the money is being spent, because none of the taxi ranks in Westminster have ever been funded by TfL. The only thing they might be doing is paying for the blue signs that indicate the type of rank that is there that relate to the TfL facilities.

John Biggs AM: To a naïve person like me, funding a taxi rank cannot be a very expensive operation in the first instance.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): £2,000 and £10,000 per rank.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): It actually varies by borough quite a lot, depending on what is charged.

John Biggs AM: Right.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): Traditionally taxi ranks were appointed by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and then they were transferred to TfL. In the old days, what happened was the Commissioner would appoint a rank, there would be a notice on the street which would simply say, "This is a rank with five bays for taxis and they have to point in this direction between these hours". The Highway Authorities across London, the boroughs, sometimes protected those facilities from use by others, sometimes they did not. What has happened in Westminster is every taxi rank in the City of Westminster is protected by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), depending upon the needs of the frontages, there is either a no stopping activity taking place during times when it is necessary to protect the rank, or there is a no waiting facility in place, which will then allow some loading and unloading to take place.

The cost involved in appointing a rank may simply be a carriageway marking with the word taxi rank on it, but no change to the traffic controls that protect that street. In Westminster's case, and Croydon's case and many other places, they go further than they are required to do.

John Biggs AM: What could TfL do more of that they are not doing then?

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): I think making sure that the signage is really good and accurate and actually taking steps when some taxi drivers flout the taxi rank and overstay for long periods of time; actually perhaps looking at that. So, for example, in some parts of London, and indeed some parts of Westminster in the past, we had the ludicrous situation of taxi drivers parking up and going home by public transport and coming back the following day to the taxi rank to carry on their business. It does not happen very often but I think it is important because it denies space for the genuine taxi drivers. We find all three trade associations are very concerned about that and they support action taken either by TfL or the relevant London borough, when they are trying to stop drivers behaving in an inappropriate way.

I think they could do more by making sure that the signage is good and accurate and clear, as the budgets for those were not there years ago when we were working with the taxi and private hire team. Making sure all the taxi ranks are properly marked in terms of what TfL is requiring the taxi driver to do.

John Biggs AM: You have raised a very important question, which we probably have not got time to deal with right now, about rest facilities for taxi drivers. Particularly if they are working in the West End, because it is a private business and yet people should have the ability to rest, not least to maintain their safety and their sanity as well, I suspect.

Maybe we need to take that another time.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): I just wanted to say that the Mayor has a clear commitment to increase the number of ranks working within the trade. That is the fundamental purpose of the ranks work that is going on at the moment.

You asked what TfL can do. Clearly many of these ranks are not on TfL streets, but we can lobby and advocate for those ranks on behalf of the trade and jointly with the trade with the boroughs. There is a question about protecting existing ranks that can come under threat through development, but also advocating new ranks coming in. Part of the purpose of the Ranks Action Plan is to help identify where those locations might be. We cannot force the borough to do it, but it is working with some of the boroughs where we particularly see the need and lobbying them. Our commitment on that is very clear, and that is the purpose of that work.

John Biggs AM: If I come in with a final bullet point which is about Crossrail is an example of that. Are you doing work on planning for ranks as a consequence of Crossrail opening?

Is a range of what are called Crossrail complementary measures being developed and run from within Surface Transport that cover the range of implications of Crossrail in terms of stations and accessibility and that will obviously include taxis in a way, and buses and pedestrians and so on.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): We can get you the current state of play. It is still in flux because, if I use the station I am pretty familiar with, Ealing, there is a whole debate going on about what the outside of the station looks like and where the buses stop and all those kinds of issues about the surrounding area. It is still fluid, so there is not a definitive answer but we could get you some further information.

John Biggs AM: There may be some physical issues about construction of the sites but otherwise it is largely about management of the existing highway.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes, but it depends. There are some quite significant changes planned around some of those stations.

John Biggs AM: Right.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): So there are opportunities there as well of putting in the ranks based on potential sites.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): Certainly in Westminster with Crossrail stations in our area we are looking at changes to traffic management to help movement of taxis so they can get close to the new stations. That includes making some streets two-way, like Brook Street, which we are working on at the moment.

John Biggs AM: There is a risk of this being ad hoc and reacting to historical circumstances and so on. There may be an opportunity with Crossrail to integrate far more thoughtfully the taxi business.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): There certainly is. It is being very well planned and co-ordinated closely with TfL, so there is a very good working relationship between TfL and Westminster Council in the case of Crossrail in our area, and the businesses that have a big interest as well.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): There is a fund that has been created within TfL on Crossrail complementary measures, because it is not funded through Crossrail what happens around the station. It is £30 million, and that helps give us the opportunity to influence what some of those measures might be. Because, as we are discussing, in many cases those will be borough roads, so potentially you do not have control over it. By having this fund it is a way of influencing what happens.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Can you just give us a date when we are going to get this ranks plan?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): I do not think there is a definitive date.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Of course not. Are we talking autumn, winter, summer?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): Autumn.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Autumn this year?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): Yes, we are in the process of --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): What is your definition of autumn, Garrett? November, December?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): I would say the end of the year.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): End of this calendar year.

Victoria Borwick AM: Just so that we have all understood, I am just a bit concerned where the planning for a taxi rank comes in the hierarchy. Certainly, for example, going back to the Olympics -and this is back to the strategic work - I am a bit concerned that when you talk about the Olympics many taxi drivers said, "Gracious me, there was insufficient planning for taxis". In the end, after the Olympics you have got the new station at Stratford International, where are the taxi ranks? I just want to quite understand how you decide, or how you listen to the black cab industry to actually say, "OK, where should there be more taxi ranks?" Because every taxi driver I meet says the process is very slow. We have talked about this earlier on this morning. It has come up at different times. How do we sort this out? We have talked about Crossrail stations. We have understood that those are being dealt with in Westminster, but when they were redoing Paddington what on earth happened to the taxi rank, it is miles away? People come off the trains with their families, with their prams, with their suitcases and they really need access to a black cab. Can I just go back to the overall planning and strategic process, where does planning for taxi ranks come in?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Garrett might want to come in. I think there are two different things. One is Crossrail and the Olympics, these are kinds of major interventions.

Victoria Borwick AM: The strategic point.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): It is worth making the distinction really, briefly, because with those kinds of things at least there is an opportunity to think strategically about it. There is at least one person in Helen's [Chapman, General Manager, TPH, TfL] team whose fulltime job it is, within TfL, to find out about all the changes that are going on. Because part of the problem here is that the vast majority of ranks do not fit into that category. They are subject to small changes in planning, they are on borough roads. Even just knowing that some of these ranks might potentially be under threat because of changes going on at a very

local level, that is part of the issue. Which is the purpose of the Ranks Plan which is trying to elevate some of those small scale issues that go on every day and try to have a strategic view. At one level it is not possible to have a Crossrail-like view of all the changes happening in ranks across the city.

Victoria Borwick AM: If you take Paddington the end result is the taxis are much further away.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): What I am saying is that the vast majority of ranks do not fall into that category. The issue is how you protect and enhance the small-scale changes that are happening on the ground and make sure that those are not leading to an erosion in ranks and, where there are opportunities, are creating ranks. Most of those opportunities are not happening at the Paddington and Crossrail, Olympic type level. That is all I am trying to say.

Victoria Borwick AM: I think what we feel reassures the Committee, that as part of the strategic planning is that taxi ranks are always in that checklist of things that are gone through.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): From my experience on the Crossrail stations I can say for sure they are. Not everybody is going to be happy with the outcome necessarily.

Victoria Borwick AM: No.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Certainly that is heavily debated around all of the stations.

Victoria Borwick AM: I do not want only talk about Crossrail. What I want to talk about is the overall strategy.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes, but as I say, on the strategic interventions we might not agree about the outcome, but there is an extensive discussion about those issues.

Victoria Borwick AM: This list of places that I understand are waiting for taxis.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): 77 places.

Victoria Borwick AM: Yes, 77. Who has come to you about the taxi issue? What is the system and how do you know that those places are waiting for taxis?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): They are identified and prioritised through the work of the Cab Ranks Committee, which is run by the trade and attended by TfL, and we work to that and we ask them to prioritise and again, as I say, work closely with the boroughs to deliver as much as we can.

Victoria Borwick AM: This outstanding rank provision list comes from the trade and is fed through to you?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): Yes.

Victoria Borwick AM: Fine.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): Some of the suggestions are excellent and get implemented very quickly, others are more difficult because of the conflicting and competing demands on the kerb-side space. There is a dialogue and it is a very healthy one.

Victoria Borwick AM: We just want to make sure there is a checklist of things actually being done.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): I think the other safeguard, Victoria, is that when any local authority consults on a change to the traffic order they would be consulting TfL and maybe consulting the taxi trade, so they would have an opportunity to comment and they would make --

Victoria Borwick AM: The borough would be consulting the taxi trade?

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): The borough would be the traffic authority for the majority of the ranks but TfL obviously would be also in relation to the TfL road network. We, Westminster Council, make traffic orders for facilities for taxis on the Transport for London road network in Westminster.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): The vast majority of taxi ranks are of course not on the TfL road network.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): There is about 500 and only 37 of them are on the Transport for London Road Network.

Victoria Borwick AM: Again, I accept that, I just want to make sure that there is a proper process.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you. I think lack of strategy in this area is surprising. Some taxi driver has tweeted at us saying that the Ranks Plan has been scrapped and that we are being misled, I think is how I would put it. Can you confirm?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): No, it has not been scrapped.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): You said we are going to see it by the end of this calendar year.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): We are preparing a draft for consideration by the Mayor's Office as we speak.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): It will be out by the end of the year. Right, let us just get that on record. Let us move on to enforcement.

Richard Tracey AM: This really very knotty matter of enforcement, and I am sure you will all be well aware that last night BBC television featured this on one of its London programmes [*Inside Out*]. In fact, Inspector Collinson was, I think, one of the stars of the show.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): So was Garrett!

Richard Tracey AM: In our last Committee hearing, when we had the representative from New York and indeed from Las Vegas, or certainly the West Coast, we found it astounding that the enforcement numbers, number of officials and officers involved in enforcement in London was so low in comparison. I mean, New York, as our note says, has 189 intending to increase this to 250; this is against London's 68 officials, which have been doubled up by the Mayor in 2008 from 34 to 68, so that was some improvement. New York, as I say, 189 up to 250 and Las Vegas had 30 enforcement officers for only 2,600 cabs, which is a very small number compared to the number of London taxicabs.

How is this worked out? Can I ask TfL, for a start, because clearly it is an important part of the management of the system? How is it that we have finished up with such few numbers of enforcement officers?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): The point you make here, we doubled the number of enforcement officers.

Richard Tracey AM: In 2008.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): Yes.

Richard Tracey AM: That is six years ago.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): That is part funded by ourselves, TfL, it is part funded by the licensing, it is part funded by the Metropolitan Police themselves. I am sure they would be more than happy to speak for their own activities in this regard, but there is a lot of good work done around enforcement. The statistics in terms of what has been achieved over the last few years are very good. As to whether it is enough and whether we could do more, that --

Richard Tracey AM: Are you going to say, "Not enough"? Can I put it to you that it is not enough?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): I think we would also be looking to ways that we can do more, but I do not think it is just necessarily about funding more Metropolitan Police officers and where that funding should come from. Steve McNamara, at the end of his evidence there actually made a very interesting point that the taxi trade would potentially be supportive of spending more licence fee money on increasing that number. That is not actually a position that we have been led to believe that they have been in previously. Previously they have said that they did not think that they, or indeed TfL, should actually be funding this activity and that it was a police activity because it was around illegal activity, rather than monitoring and enforcing legal licensed activity. That is an interesting thing and so I said to Steve at the end of the meeting, "We should have a conversation and set that up", because we certainly are looking at ways that we can improve further what is done.

I do not think it, as I say, is just about the numbers of police officers and so on, or indeed about the number of full-time officers. One of the benefits that I think will come from the organisational changes that we have made within Surface Transport and bringing all of our compliance and enforcement activity together is that increasingly we will be able to use resources from across our business, not necessarily full time, but we will have access to more resources, access to more officers, and I know that is a change that I think will come increasingly within the changes that are being made within the Metropolitan Police Service.

We will, over time, be able to increase the amount of resource that we have access to and, therefore, the effectiveness of what we do. It will not necessarily relate directly to a quoted number of full time officers, whether they are police officers or TfL officers, but there will be an increase in the available resource to do compliance enforcement activities.

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Can we just clarify the international comparison? I think that we are not comparing apples and apples and it would be good for Garrett to clarify that.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): I think it is always difficult to make these comparisons. I think the number that you are referring to in terms of New York is they are not police officers, they are actually enforcement officers from within New York itself. You have to look at the overall access to resource, whether it is about licensing staff, whether it is about police resourcing and so on. Obviously in different countries people do different activities. I am given to understand that the force you are referring to in New York also do vehicle checks and so on. We have another 25 - 30 people who do vehicle checks solely in our depots and so on, so you have to include that resource too. I think I would be wary of making direct comparisons, but I do agree with you that the whole issue about whether we have the right level of enforcement is one that we continue to look at.

Richard Tracey AM: OK. Can we go back now to Inspector Collinson? Londoners saw last night on television, as if they did not know before, but they saw it again, these rather graphic pictures - particularly in the West End and so on - of young people and older ones too but young ones coming out of clubs and the level of enforcement really did seem inadequate frankly. What do you say to that from your point of view?

Inspector Julian Collinson (Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): I will start by saying that since April last year the CEU, to which we have already referred to, certainly numbers-wise, we have arrested and prosecuted nearly 1,000 individuals for taxi touting alone, with a 90% conviction rate at court¹, highlighted recently by someone who drove off from one of our officers receiving a 12-month prison sentence. That is certainly unheard of for me. Very recently we came away with a £1,800 fine. The maximum fine is £2,500. I think that is indicative of our efforts, our partnership working and also the courts taking what we do very seriously. As regards to the level of enforcement, I do not think, certainly in recent years it has been higher and I certainly feel very well supported by our policing partners in TfL.

Richard Tracey AM: You believe that it is now at a level that is satisfactory? I put it to you that the evidence in the television film, it really did look rather chaotic, frankly.

Inspector Julian Collinson (Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): Speaking of the television programme last night, I do not know if you can cast your mind back to it, certainly the part which I featured on, which was on the street. For those of you who did not see it, it was Albert Embankment and there was a female who had been approached in the street. I do not know whether it was made clear by the programme, but that was one of our police officers. We run that type of operation all the time. We have a cadre of 290 female police officers from across the Metropolitan Police Service who come and volunteer to work with us, so we ensure that our enforcement very much hits our victim profile, which is females late at night.

I strongly believe, and I also believe that the evidence backs up, that our efforts have not been stronger than they are now. As regards to am I satisfied with the level of enforcement; well, touting still exists and I will never be 100% satisfied until it is completely eradicated. However, the evidence which I have is that it is certainly at its lowest that it has ever been. That is not just police data. That is data which I have had from our colleagues in TfL when they go out and they speak to people late at night, and it is the amount of approaches

¹ Following the meeting, Inspector Collinson clarified the statistics given by providing the following additional information:

- At the time the figure quoted was nearly 1,000 arrests for tout/plying from 01.04.13 - 01.09.14. This figure has now been checked against locally held performance data and can be confirmed as 1,078 arrests by the Cab Enforcement Unit.
- At the time the figures quoted for tout/plying prosecutions (caution/charge) rate was nearly 1,000 from 01.04.13 - 01.09.14. This figure has now been checked against locally held performance data and can be confirmed as 921 persons prosecuted (cautioned or charged) by the Cab Enforcement Unit.
- At the time the figures quoted for convictions at court from 01.04.13 - 01.09.14 317 was 90%. This figure has now been checked against locally held performance data and can be confirmed as 82.6%.

by partygoers in the West End and the amount of females who admit to using unbooked cabs, which is where the real danger to public safety lies.

Richard Tracey AM: Can I turn to the two borough representatives? Particularly Mr Low from Westminster. Do you feel that the resources are targeted effectively in enforcement? Are you satisfied with that?

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): A huge amount of work has been done and working closely with TfL and the MPS in joint operations have been a huge success. I think one of the problems that we face in trying to tackle one problem is the touting problem is something that can be addressed by people being challenged and having their details inspected. The biggest problem we have is when we have the cat and mouse game with a civil enforcement officer trying to do their best to ensure that drivers comply with the parking controls. They cannot physically issue a penalty charge notice to a driver in the time following the procedures before the driver drives away. We have lost the ability to use closed circuit television (CCTV) enforcement, which actually in those circumstances would have been quite beneficial. For whatever reason, central Government does not what to allow the local authorities to enforce using CCTV. Big mistake in my view.

Richard Tracey AM: This is the recent change from the Department for Communities and Local Government?

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): Correct.

Richard Tracey AM: That one, right, CCTV.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): I think it has unintended consequences and in an attempt to try to ensure certain things happen, other things happen as a consequence. The biggest one is the cat and mouse game. I can remember going out with Stephen Norris [former Board Member, TfL], as a member of the Transport Committee with TfL Board, with the police and with TfL and going out at 2.00am and seeing the problems first-hand and seeing the difficulties faced by the civil enforcement officers, who can get threatened quite significantly if there are not police officers around. There is work to be done, however I think society needs to think very carefully about sometimes CCTV cameras have a place. I think when you are in the West End late at night, I think CCTV enforcement is appropriate, and I hope that at some point society will change its mind about the deployment of that.

Richard Tracey AM: It is clearly particularly sensitive late at night when there are these young people coming out of clubs, possibly a bit the worse for alcohol.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): Yes. The other problem that we face is, if you like, if you wind the clock back a few years, you had a situation where, is someone was hiring a private hire vehicle or a minicab, as we used to call them, they would be contacting an office and that office would be deploying someone out on street to that club. The problem we now have is that some clubs have minicab offices or private hire offices operating from inside the club and they have people with clipboards outside. Very difficult for enforcement officers to then differentiate between the genuine compliant passenger who has booked their fare inside the club and is coming out and the person with a clipboard is escorting them helpfully to the cab that they booked, versus the inappropriate behaviour by some operators, which TfL, the police, and ourselves, have witnessed and taken action. However it is difficult sometimes to take action where that same clipboard individual is accosting people in the street and saying, "Do you want a cab home?"

Richard Tracey AM: These are the so-called satellite offices?

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): Correct.

Richard Tracey AM: Yes, which clearly you believe that they are wrong?

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): I do not think they are helpful in terms of trying to tackle the touting problem. It was very clear cut in the past when a private hire vehicle went to a club with a pre-booked fare, the booking had been made, the record was there, TfL could see the record had been made.

Richard Tracey AM: Mr White, what about the angle from Croydon? Very different I assume from Westminster?

Jason White (Project Manager, London Borough of Croydon): Yes, obviously very different from Westminster. The night time economy in Croydon is nowhere near as busy or as frantic as it is in Westminster. However, there are still a whole number of pubs and restaurants and bars and other facilities out there that do need night time cabs and private hire vehicles. I am not aware of any clubs in Croydon that have an internal cab office, I do not know if Steve knows any differently, however certainly that there are a number of small minicab offices in and around the town centre and the main transport hubs. As far as touting is concerned, I do not think it is as big a problem in Croydon and the outer boroughs as it is in central London.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): The other important point, from a personal safety point of view, is that someone that has booked a vehicle understands when that vehicle is coming it is their vehicle. When you have a very busy congested footway there are some big problems there. I think it is a shame, and I can understand how it has happened and I cannot think of an obvious way around it, however you can have a licensed vehicle, it has a TfL sticker in it, it is considered to be an official vehicle, safe and secure to use. However, what it does not do is pair up the driver who is actually occupying that vehicle. Therefore, you could have an unlicensed driver in a licensed vehicle. I think it can happen a bit more easily now with the electronic sort of systems that are available. It is very important I think for the passenger to understand, when he or she is getting in that vehicle, it is the vehicle they booked, it is not another one.

Richard Tracey AM: No, I quite agree. I was going to ask you all, the Law Commission of course has come up with some proposals, having studied this whole area, and what suggestions would you make of the particular areas of the Law Commission recommendations that should be picked up by Government and legislated on?

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): I think it is very important that there are very good records kept, so if something happens there is an easy way for the police to find out what went wrong and to take action and hold people to account. I think it is quite important, when someone gets in a vehicle, they understand how much they are going to pay when they get to the end of their journey. They have the advantage in a licensed taxi to know, they can see the meter running and they know how much they are going to pay. However, if someone is a little worse for wear, they do not have quite their wits about them, there is a danger they can get ripped off.

Richard Tracey AM: Yes, and also the identification of the driver, you mentioned that. Somebody certainly suggested to me, some of my constituents who take a great interest in this, that there should be a photographic record and contact details for the driver of the particular car they get into. You would agree with much more precise records of that sort. What about you, Inspector, do you feel strongly about some of these points?

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): Looking at it firstly from my core business around the enforcement and the usage of wider legislation, one of the big issues that is raised, and I am going to assume that the trades, when they talk about touting, they also talk about illegally plying for hire; the offence of plying for hire, it is over 150 years old, and it effectively reads, "It is illegal to ply for hire". There is lots of discussion around what plying for hire means, however it is more defined as to what it is not, and I shall not say anything on a specific piece of legislation. Then we move on to touting, which has certainly come from the mid-1990s, and then the more bespoke legislation covering specifically taxi and private hire.

For me, I would like to see that streamlined into an offence of soliciting or accepting an unbooked journey. I think that would make it a lot easier for my colleagues to understand, among theft, drugs, so on and so forth. It would certainly make the plying for hire element a lot easier to understand because, having worked with it and using it, you will get two or three different interpretations, and I think that would be very useful.

I also think that looking at powers of seizure, which I know was touched on by the Law Commission, certainly for our policing partners in TfL, regulated, accredited, their officers to be given powers of vehicle seizure. We, the police, have them around uninsured vehicles. It starts to get very grey when we look at technical no insurance, which is what it is if somebody is insured, but then agrees to take someone on an unbooked journey, and we have had to seek counsel advice around that. It is not very clear. We can in some circumstances; we cannot in others. If we were to set a precedent of removing people's vehicles for this, I think that would be the biggest deterrent. I am not pushing for prison sentences for touting. I think we need to keep this in some perspective. However, it is the vehicle that allows the touting to take place.

Richard Tracey AM: Certainly tougher than presently perhaps.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): Yes, that is certainly something I would be interested in seeing.

Richard Tracey AM: What is the attitude of TfL and the Mayor's Office to the Law Commission recommendations and some of the things that have been said just now?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): I think we would support quite a lot of what has been said, particularly around stronger penalties, and that is something we have been pushing for, for quite a while. One of our bigger concerns about the Law Commission's proposals are the proposals for national standards for private hire vehicles, which would potentially limit our ability to do some of the things that we have been talking about and limit our ability to specify higher standards than the national minimum. Therefore I think we have some concerns around the Law Commission proposals. We would certainly like to see stronger penalties, as I say.

I think the other thing that has not really been touched on yet, and I do not know whether it falls strictly under what the Law Commission were looking at, but this is not only an issue about enforcement. It is also an issue about raising public awareness and education, the whole Safer Travel at Night programme has done that for a number of years, but needs to continue to do that. As long as we have a situation where nearly half the young women late at night are still prepared to consider getting into an unlicensed cab that either they approach themselves or they are approached on the streets and so on, we are going to have a significant problem, no matter how much enforcement we have, no matter how many officers we have on the street. This is as much about public awareness and education as it is about enforcement and I think that is a really strong point.

Richard Tracey AM: I understand that. What about the Mayor's view, Isabel?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes, I would basically say what Garrett just said. The only other thing that might be worth mentioning is, if I look at the example on enforcement of permitting and road works, one of the things that we did was get that to be part of a wider cadre of officers' jobs. Rather than saying, "Here are a set of dedicated officers", which is clearly important, it is also saying, "Here are another 500 people who are out on the street doing other things", police officers, and other aspects of enforcement, and adding this as part of their tasks as they are out there. Part of the problem, as we all know, is that the second a police officer appears everybody disappears and it is the second before the police officer appears as well, especially with the rise of digital media where they can all text each other and say, "This guy is coming". Garrett was saying earlier, people recognise some of the officers by now as well, because there are only so many of them.

Some of the changes that are taking place at the MPS now, in terms of how the traffic division is going to be better integrated with some of the other aspects of policing, create an opportunity to say that this much bigger pool of people could also be doing some of that. That is all very fluid because it is still being defined over the course of this year. I would like to see some of these issues, not just being picked up by the CEU, clearly they need to continue to exist, however it is also getting that wider group of officers because there are just many more eyes and ears out there on the street who have the power to do something about it.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): It may be worth mentioning that certainly you have touched on the Safer Travel at Night campaign, while that focuses clearly on two key bursts, being September, so when we get our 40,000 new students to the city, and December, to cope with the festive period. We do regularly activate the nearly 2,500 officers within the Road and Transport Policing Command. We take the lead as the CEU on linking in with the 32 Safer Transport Teams that exist on each one of your 32 boroughs. The next phase of the Safer Travel at Night campaign, certainly the enforcement, education and awareness phase, is on our doorstep now and I am personally leading on that. We have operations and activities in each London borough. We link in with the universities themselves and the National Union for Students; we work with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to make sure that we have our message right to victims; and looking at the wider piece we also look to work with the MPS's specialist sexual investigation command and also looking at child exploitation. Therefore, we take a holistic view and we do link in with all of our assets, which forms the wider, was Safer Transport Command, now the Road and Transport Policing Command.

John Biggs AM: I was interested in a couple of things. Firstly, if I was Jenny Jones [AM], who is a Member of the Assembly, I would not hesitate to mention the generally low priority given to traffic enforcement and highways type activity, and this is an example of that I guess. I am just parking that as a comment.

I was interested in what Isabel and then Inspector Collinson said because the Safer Transport Team is funded by TfL, therefore it is part of the police service, you cannot tell them what to do, however they are there for transport-related purposes. Are we clear then that the terms of reference and the contract for the Safer Transport Teams sufficiently covers these sorts of enforcement activities? There is obviously a risk of mission creep if the main job of the Safer Transport Team is to look after people's safety on public transport outside the underground. Are you clear about that or is there further conversation and thought to be given to this?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): I am probably not the best person to comment on this, however the fundamental "Jenny" point that you are saying, I would definitely agree with. It is a broader issue beyond what we are talking about here today.

John Biggs AM: I agree with her as well.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): There has been a disinvestment in traffic policing and that means also just more parochial issues like clearing up accidents, those kind of things; some of the operations that TfL does jointly with the MPS at the Blackwall Tunnel, for example, where you are stopping people for traffic violations and then you discover they have whatever other illegal activity going on. Those are very powerful and one of the things the Roads Task Force concluded was that we needed a lot more of that going on, on the streets. Therefore, what is happening now in the MPS is that the traffic policing division is being integrated, as Julian referred to, and therefore that is an opportunity beyond the Safer Transport Teams to look at how that bigger group of people is going to be tasked basically and what are they told their priorities are.

John Biggs AM: However, it is always this sort of Cinderella service, though, isn't it, within the hierarchy?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes, I agree completely, and also what are they doing, so what does traffic policing mean? It could mean escorting diplomats under blue light; it could mean stopping people for driving and talking on their mobile phones; or it could mean accident clear-up; or it could mean road safety operations like the one we had at the end of last year with all of the officers deployed on the junctions to try to improve road user behaviour across the piece after we had the cycle fatalities and that operation is continuing. Those are all very different activities, therefore what are we saying is the priority for that new group of officers? That still remains to be finalised as far as I know and it is something that I personally am trying to influence, TfL is trying to influence. We might have a different view from the police and that is correct at one level, therefore that needs to be resolved about what are those people doing and what is the prioritised list of activity. Clearly that is a matter for the MPS, however it is something that we would clearly have a view on and seek to influence.

John Biggs AM: All right, and there is a sort of broken window site bug in here, which is that bad people will tend to behave badly on the highways. That presumably accords with your experience, Inspector Collinson.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): Clearly, when things go unregulated and unchecked, absolutely, and we have already touched on New York.

John Biggs AM: What proportion or what amount of Safer Transport Team time is spent on this sort of activity, or is it just once in a while?

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): Are we talking cab enforcement activity now?

John Biggs AM: Yes.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): It forms one of their priorities; cabs, cycles, crime. It would be wrong of me to give you a guess simply because Westminster will spend more time on it than Croydon because the demand is obviously much higher in Westminster. We will call upon our colleagues in Westminster to spend more time on it than we will do in Croydon because there are greater benefits versus costs to be gained by deploying staff there than there would be Croydon, Barnet and other boroughs.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): On the wider enforcement point, I think from a borough perspective, we greatly value the Operation Safeway, which was introduced in response to the concern about the large numbers of pedal cyclists that were getting injured. However, the beauty of that

scheme was it was tackling everyone. There was no one party that was being singled out. It made a huge difference to the safety of Londoners travelling around London. Therefore, we would strongly urge and encourage TfL and the police to continue with that. What we are doing at a local level is feeding concern sites to them. I think again, across London, if London boroughs identify particular sites where there seems to be a pattern of unacceptable behaviour by a particular group of road users, that then helps the police in terms of targeting the resources they have for that. I think Operation Safeway was a fantastic success. I just wish it would continue.

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Just to clarify, it is continuing.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): To the extent it was.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): This is side-tracking from cab enforcement.

John Biggs AM: Can I just ask one tiny final question of Inspector Collinson, which is about all the TV and news headlines about vulnerable people in the West End coming out of nightclubs. I am sure I am wrong in saying that, it will come up in an example where it isn't, however it seems to be. However, there are other areas of concern; for example, a licensed hire driver who touts is I guess, on the hierarchy, seen as less of a villain than an unlicensed vehicle and driver who touts. Within various minority communities in particular there are informal cab networks, which I think this is very common in all large cities. Are those inconsequential areas of activity or are they ones that you look at as well?

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): The answer to the first point raised is, from our aspect, the law is applied evenly across both trades

John Biggs AM: That is the right answer.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): For us we do not differentiate between the unlicensed -- we try and not use that term "unlicensed" because that can imply that one of his tyres might be a bit defective, but otherwise it is OK. It is not OK. If you are unlicensed you are just a person, a man -- it is normally men -- in a car, and that is it. There is no due diligence behind who that person is, therefore it is unsafe.

Sorry, would you mind repeating the second one?

John Biggs AM: Yes, particularly around minority communities where people have informal cab networks and that might be seen as a sort of totally victimless crime that we do not have to worry about.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): I am not aware of that. We have had complaints in the past around Kensington and Chelsea where people have perceived that there have been unbooked journeys picking up from outside Harrods and other well-known top-end stores during the day. We have done some investigation around that historically and often it has been chauffeur services or privately hired, privately instructed drivers.

John Biggs AM: I am interested in this because I know it has been quite an issue in New York with unlicensed niche markets, if you like. However we do not need to delay ourselves with it here today.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you for that. Victoria has the issue of passenger safety. There are some interesting results in our survey.

Victoria Borwick AM: I think the point is that a lot of these questions have been touched on earlier, therefore I do not want to repeat them all. Just a quick question really to the MPS first. One of the statistics things that came up is that you do not differentiate between offences relating to the licensed taxis and the private hire vehicles, if there are instances or reported problems. I mean we have had a report here that London has an average of two cab-related sexual offences every week. It is not clear from that that you actually record whether those are in what we would call a black cab or whether those were in some other vehicle.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): That is correct.

Victoria Borwick AM: One is you have a vehicle that it is absolutely licensed by TfL, and the other, we have just agreed this morning, is absolutely unlicensed, and I think it is obviously difficult for the black cab industry.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): The main difficulty in that is often our victims just do not remember. They often do not remember, they cannot recall, because of either they have had something to drink or just the trauma of what they have been through, as to whether it is booked it is unbooked; whether it is an iconic London taxi, whether it is a 4x4; they simply do not recall. That is not all of the case; I would say that is probably about a third of what we deal with.

Victoria Borwick AM: OK, is there some way of making it a bit easier for them?

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): That is down to the investigators who have that initial conversation. We need to know, because we want to track down the perpetrator.

Victoria Borwick AM: Absolutely, and I have no doubt that everybody here would also like to do something about it too.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): As I am sure you can appreciate, it is very difficult when we get the call. It might be on the evening that it has happened or days or sometimes weeks later, and our victims are, for whatever reason, they are unsure of the nature of the vehicle. Whether it be a black taxi, which you might find quite difficult to believe, not knowing what a taxi looks like. Perhaps at 3 o'clock in the morning after a good night out with friends and then having been through something as traumatic as a sexual assault, unfortunately they are just unable to give us that information. Therefore there would always be a significant gap in that data.

Victoria Borwick AM: What role is there to play between TfL and the MPS to identify and to make it clearer to people as to what sort of vehicle they should get into? I mean we talked right at the beginning, going back two hours, about the gold standard, about the safety, about the requirements, the licensing, I thought the idea of having the photograph in the taxi so that people know it is the same person, even if they are pre-booking, again, I thought it was a really neat idea. There may be other innovative ideas. How are we using our expertise to think of ways of making sure people understand that it is safe to get into a black taxi; it may not be safe to come out of a nightclub, rip-roaring drunk, and then just tip into a vehicle that they have not pre-booked or anything else.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): It is to continue to evolve with the Safer Travel at Night campaign, continue to do lots and lots of research; listen to the trades, what they are telling us, listen to what the public are telling us, and to make sure that the Safer Travel at Night

campaign remains fit for purpose. By putting out that message that it is not safe, it is not a jolly to get in these vehicles, it is not the easy option; by exploding the myths that they are cheaper, they are easier, "it's OK as long as I am with my friend", "it's OK as long as I switch my phone on and I can always get in touch with my friend", "it's OK as long as I send a text message"; these are all untrue. It is not safe to get in an unbooked cab and I think we need to continue pushing that message, along with our policing partners, through the Safer Travel at Night campaign.

Victoria Borwick AM: It worries me sometimes when you come out of a fancy hotel at night. There are people there purporting to be a minicab office, but they are tipping you into some vehicles outside, which of course are certainly not black cabs, and may or may not be part of other licensed operators. I do think it is a concern. People see somebody there, they are smartly dressed, they have a mobile phone, "I will get you a taxi home", they will say. They are not getting them a taxi because we all know what a taxi is, and therefore I think that is going on every single day in so many places across London, and I just want to highlight that. It is really important here that, if we want to make London safe, accessible, friendly, all those things, it is really important for the reputation of London.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): All I can really do is reinforce what Inspector Collinson was saying that I think it is absolutely critical that we carry on getting this message across because of course this vulnerable group of people is changing over time; the student population, 40,000 new students every year or whatever it is. It is not something you can do and be done with, it is something you have to go on with.

I suppose I would just finally give the thought, there is the potential, and this might take us back into potentially controversial territory here, with the development of technology to ease this problem. You can imagine a world where everybody automatically goes to their phone to book a licensed minicab and then touting becomes less of a lucrative trade because, by the time you come out of a nightclub, you already know exactly who you are booking and where you are going into.

Victoria Borwick AM: It would not be a problem if they got out of a nightclub and got into a black cab.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): It doesn't get over the issue of making sure that those apps and what have you are operating effectively and legally and so on. However, potentially, there are some wider solutions to this in the long term.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): Certainly that is what we found when we were going around at 2.00am at night, we would get people coming out, groups; they had been in, had a good time, they were a little bit worse for wear, quite honestly. They were coming out saying, "How do I get home?" We said, "Hail that cab. I will hail it for you." A black cab pulled up, they were astonished at how little it was going to cost them to go home in a licensed black cab.

Victoria Borwick AM: You know, it is very, very easy - do not start worrying about using your phone or not being able to use it - just walk out and hail a black cab, and that is the message that has to go out over and over again.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): I think the interesting thing, which obviously will feed into our report, that 45% of our surveyed passengers found it easy to tell if a minicab was licensed and only 68% found it easy to tell if a black cab was licensed. I think there is a real issue. We assume that people understand it and they clearly do not.

Victoria Borwick AM: It is communication. You need to tell people the best vehicle is a black cab.

Martin Low (Transport Commissioner, City of Westminster): Part of the problem is the licence plate is at the back of the vehicle. When someone has pulled up, you need it on the sides of the vehicle because then it is telling someone something that is a bit more special.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): I think it is probably worth mentioning also that this message is so key because we are such a diverse city. You go up north and there are not iconic black taxis, there is a sign on the top, which may differentiate Hackney Carriage from private hire. Therefore I think that when we accept that we get lots of visitors coming in to work, to live, to enjoy our city, we do need to get that message across and we need to get it across clearly. What the difference is, without going into a lesson on law and legislation, just this is the difference, this is safe, and this absolutely is not.

Victoria Borwick AM: Is that TfL's job?

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): I think it is a partnership. I think it is absolutely a partnership. We will support the message. TfL will obviously support us in enforcement. I think we do a good job of that now and we need to continue to evolve with that.

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): I would just say that, from TfL's point of view, getting into a black cab is certainly one safe way home, however getting into a properly-licensed, properly-regulated private hire car is another.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): OK, we are going to move on to our final area, just an issue that came up in our evidence last time, about ride-sharing.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): It kind of follows on from what Inspector Collinson was saying there about new technology. There is one of these operators that, elsewhere in the world, has a system of using an app to put so-called riders and sharers together. However, of course, one can imagine a situation where that rather too easily blends into something, which starts to look like an informal taxi hire situation. Do you, TfL, have any thoughts about that, the use of ride-sharing apps? Would they fall under the legislation? Are you concerned about it?

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): It is not something that we have to date had a particular problem with, however I can quite see how it potentially could.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): It's coming!

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): From that point of view, yes, we are concerned, because I think it could be an area where it is going to start to expose the legislation we have and various questions as to whether --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): So are you making some preparations for the first of these?

Isabel Dedring (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Steve [McNamara] mentioned earlier that one of these players has come into the market and one of the things that I have said to them is to have some initial discussions with TfL in which context TfL will have to develop a response to your question.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Are you preparing yourselves and you do not have any initial view on it?

Isabel Deding (Deputy Mayor for Transport): Yes, exactly, that is right. Because that discussion will have to be --

Garrett Emmerson (Chief Operating Officer, Surface Transport, Transport for London): Again because the situation's different between the two trades.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes, OK. Can I just ask, Inspector Collinson, you have mentioned some of the challenges facing you in doing your job, are there any more issues around new technology and change that are making life harder for you in your enforcement role for example?

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): We see technology as very much making life easier for us in respect of certainly within the police service where we are going mobile. We will be able to do a lot of stuff on the street that previously we have had to do back at the police station, which only increases our capability and capacity. We are working with our partners in Enforcement and On-Street Operations Directorate (EOS), so on-street enforcement within TfL, where it will take advantage of their technology through their new system of reading the data on people's badges and licences, which we have not been able to do in the past.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Do you think a new business model like this, whereby basically the operator, the company is making money from a ride-sharing app, do you think that would pose some challenges for you?

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): We have not had those challenges yet, therefore it would be very difficult to say. We have, within the CEU, the advantage of working hand in hand with the licensing authority. We are co-located in the same building, therefore, we are right up to date as to any problems or any emerging threats from technology.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): OK, before the Chair wraps up, just one more question I had in mind. Forgive me because I had to leave briefly, I missed my section of questions; however there is one thing I wanted to ask you. Heathrow, I have personally had a lot of complaints in the past about uncontrolled touting going on at Heathrow. Do you have to be invited into Heathrow, either TfL or the police, to manage touting there? If so, how frequently is there an anti-touting operation taking place at Heathrow?

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): Firstly, no, we do not have to be invited into Heathrow. We, as the CEU, go to Heathrow as and when they request us; however, we do not have to have an invitation, permission, or anything along those lines. Heathrow has in the past had its own tout enforcement team. I personally have been on an operation down in Heathrow. I take your point, there are some issues; however, certainly not to the extent that we see in and around central London.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): You think central London is worse?

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): Than Heathrow?

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes.

Julian Collinson (Inspector, Metropolitan Police Cab Enforcement Unit): I would answer yes.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM (Deputy Chair): That is interesting. Thank you.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM (Chair): Thank you very much for your answers. Again, as I said to the first panel, if there are things that you thought, "I really wanted to say", and you have not had the opportunity, please email them in to us, we are very keen to get more evidence. To members of the audience as well, please do take the time to email us details on the flyer by 30 September and let your colleagues and other drivers know as well.

Thank you very much for your contributions. Isabel and Garrett, for your long stint, thank you very much.