

**London Assembly Transport Committee
Note of Site Visit: Taxi and Private Hire Issues at Heathrow Airport**

Date: 25 June 2015



Figure 1- Valerie Shawcross CBE AM with taxi drivers

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM, Chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee, visited Heathrow Airport on the morning of 25 June 2015 to investigate taxi and private hire issues at Heathrow Airport. She was accompanied by two officers from Secretariat: Alison Bell, External Relations Manager and Reece Harris, Project Officer.

We met with Mark White and other taxi drivers at Terminal 2, before being taken to Terminals 3, 4 and 5 and Bolton's Lane/Mondial Way, a mixed commercial and residential street. The main issues that we noted were: illegal parking and use of drop-off points, a lack of effective signage, uninsured/improperly insured vehicles, an uneven distribution of enforcement officers and passenger safety.

Illegal parking and use of drop-off points

We were able to see many examples of private hire vehicles plying and touting for trade, or waiting for extended periods of time in drop-off areas. This is illegal as private hire vehicles are not allowed to ply for trade and Heathrow does not allow passengers to be picked up from drop-off areas; passengers must be picked up from the car park. For example, at Terminal 2, we witnessed one silver car that remained parked for almost the full forty-five minutes that we were there, while an Addison Lee car and a member of the public were also there for a



Figure 2- Private Hire Vehicles waiting at drop-off point at Terminal 2

significant amount of time. We saw one vehicle illegally pick up passengers. We also saw similar scenes at Terminal 4, where one of the drivers actually offered a trip to us. Despite this, it was clear that many drivers were using the drop off point perfectly legally, dropping off passengers before departing. The taxi drivers with us believed that the lack of cameras and enforcement officers was responsible for the infringements of the law. This situation

has meant that taxi drivers can end up waiting for five to six hours in the airport's holding area for trade.

We were also shown a nearby residential/commercial street called Bolton's Lane/Mondial Way, where large numbers of exclusively private hire vehicles were parked, some on double yellow lines. We spoke to a local traffic warden for the London Borough of Hillingdon, who confirmed that the problem is prevalent across a number of local streets. The local McDonald's fast food restaurant car park was also full of vehicles that appeared to be private hire vehicles.



Figure 3- Private Hire Vehicles in McDonald's car park

Lack of clear signage

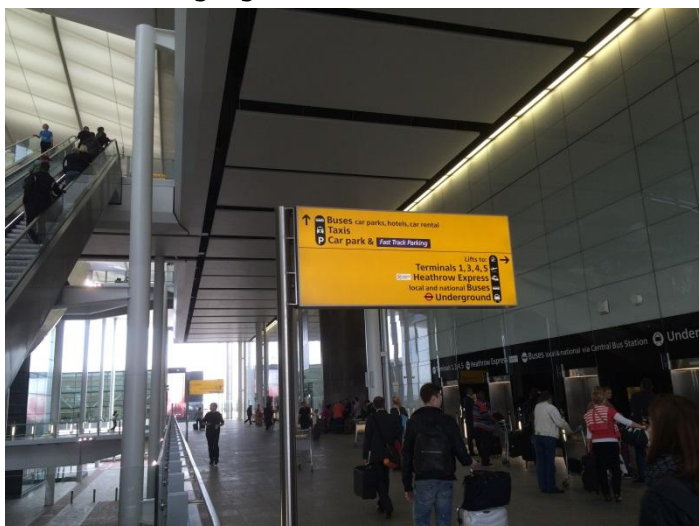


Figure 4- Signage at Terminal 2 below drop-off point

At Terminal 2 there was a sign which appeared to direct people up an escalator towards the drop-off point rather than to the taxi rank. We saw a taxi driver volunteer ferry lost people to the correct location three times. The taxi rank itself was also nearly invisible when leaving the lift down to

it and was obstructed by pillars and barriers. The taxi drivers present were concerned that Heathrow refused to allow the taxi drivers to provide their own marshal, and had to use a car parking marshal as provided by Heathrow, who was not able to provide effective advice for customers. This meant long queues (especially at night) which we witnessed while we were there, despite the fact that the airport was not particularly busy. They were also concerned about disabled access to the rank, due to the barriers.

Uninsured drivers

The taxi drivers we were with reported that there were some minicab and Uber drivers who did not have private hire insurance. The taxi drivers suggested that the Automatic Number Plate Recognition System (ANPR), which is designed to detect whether a car is insured or not, did not determine between personal insurance and private hire insurance. They proposed that private hire vehicles should be made to display their insurance prominently in the same way that taxis must by law. They also claimed that the ANPR system was not actually present as claimed in some places and that an inadequate number of cameras overall were leading to misuse of the drop off points.

Enforcement Officers and Passenger Safety



Figure 5- Valerie Shawcross CBE AM speaks to TfL enforcement officers

We saw around 17 TfL enforcement and police officers on the day, with ten located at Terminal 3, and around five at Terminal 5. However, the officers were unevenly distributed, as there were no officers at Terminal 2, and only two police officers at Terminal 4, who claimed that they were

unable to issue tickets as they had not been given the correct ones. The officers were mostly focused on ensuring that the vehicles at the drop-off points had the appropriate insurance.

The officers noted concerns about foreign touts speaking the language of some new arrivals, drawing people away from the safer alternative of taxis or registered private hire vehicles. They were worried about passengers becoming locked into some vehicles, unable to escape, unlike in purpose-built taxis/private hire vehicles, where the doors unlock when the vehicle is stopped. They believed that the number of vehicles illegally picking up trade or without the correct insurance had risen by at least fifty per cent over the past few years. Both the taxi drivers and the enforcement officers agreed that their priority was passenger safety.