

Private Hire Board



by **EDDIE TOWNSON**
Chairman Private Hire Board

With another stage of Private Hire Licensing in London finished, and some 34,000 vehicles now licensed, it is very obvious that Private Hire is the big player in the small vehicle public transport service in the capital.

Some amazing results have blown away the myths that have surrounded the trade for years. You all know the one "Minicabs are all old wrecks and fit for scrap". Now we know the truth is that 40 percent of vehicles meet euro 2 emissions standards and 40 percent meet euro 3 standards for emissions and that 80 percent of our vehicles are under six years old.

The fanfare and publicity which had previously been promised to rectify some of the dire previous TfL advertising has been done!! Oooops! No it hasn't!

Once again something has stood in the way of the promised, positive publicity campaign. Amazing as it may seem it was because of the General Election! So once again Public Safety took a back seat to politics!

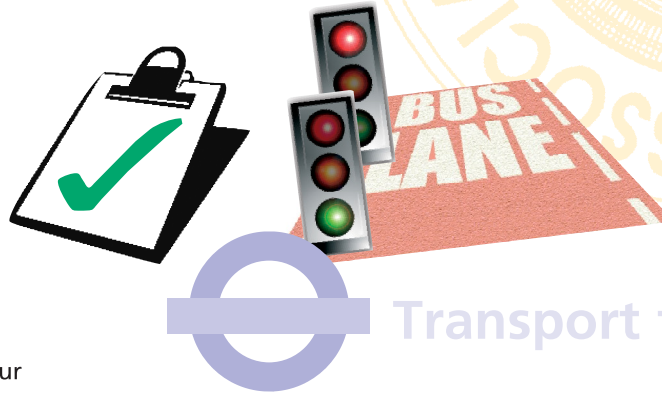
The good news is that it still going to happen, (or so I am lead to believe) and once again we have been eagerly consulted about the content of this advertising! Oooops! I got that wrong again! It should read 'we could have been consulted but no one bothered'.....again!!!!

I am perhaps being a bit harsh to TfL as they do consult with us occasionally. Bus lanes are one of the consultation items at the moment! Oh no got it wrong again!!! I mean is it a delaying tactic by TfL to come up with some way to keep us out? I ask the question to TfL.

Private Hire is now doing Dial a Ride jobs (Dial a ride vehicles are allowed in bus lanes). Private Hire is doing Taxicard jobs (Taxi's are allowed in bus lanes). However those same passengers who are taken in a licensed minicab have to sit in traffic because they could not provide the service in a taxi or a dial a ride vehicle, (paid for or subsidised by TfL).

This is ludicrous when right beside the licensed PHV there is often an empty or under used bus lane. Passengers must watch with dismay as their luckier fellow users that got a Taxi or a Dial a Ride vehicle go sailing past them.

So back to the question – TfL do you really believe that is just and fair? Parity is a word that has often been used in our discussions; well the modern, newly licensed fleet of low-



Transport for London

polluting Private Hire Vehicles in London are looking for some parity on bus lanes.

Congratulations to SGS for completing the first year of vehicle Licensing. Overall you don't score too badly however some areas of improvement are still required.

We are concerned about the time it takes to get an appointment for a new vehicle. Some Operators complain that the promised ad-hoc arrangement simply does not exist. This sometimes puts a driver who has had an accident or mechanical fault out of work for up to 2 weeks.

Whilst we are grateful that SGS extended its hours for the pre-closure date backlog the trade needs fast response appointments, after all we were promised that you could turn up ad hoc before the tender was awarded!

Now a slap on the wrist for the trade. Sorry guys but sometimes we don't help ourselves. Latest statistics alarmingly show that only 51 percent of offices get a first time pass at PCO inspection visits.

I know sometimes that inspections have been a bit overzealous! But the truth is we could do better. The PCO are starting to streamline the way in which these checks are being carried out and the need to keep getting out planning permissions and the like at every inspection are going to be a thing of the past.

This will allow more time to check the more important documentation such as Insurance, Driver Licenses, Mot's and Journey records. So let's help them help us and get those bits right.

If the PCO spend less time looking at the good companies it allows them more time to look at the bad ones.