

Re: CAP1364, Consultation on issues affecting passengers' access to UK airports: A review of surface access at UK airports

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation on surface access to UK airports.

Transport (TfL) is responsible for the licensing of taxi (black cab) and private hire services in London and figure 2 in your consultation document shows how important these modes are for serving the passengers at Heathrow and London City airports and why it is essential that sufficient facilities are provided for both passengers and drivers.

It is vital that sufficient space is provided at all airports for taxis to rank, private hire vehicles (PHVs) to pick up passengers with bookings and also for taxis and PHVs to drop off passengers. Providing sufficient designated space can help prevent issues around non-compliance, illegal 'cab' activity and also anti-social behaviour by drivers waiting in unsuitable locations (e.g. residential areas near airports). It can also help with compliance activities as drivers and vehicles using the designated areas can be checked by the police and authorised compliance officers.

As you may know there is a charge to taxi drivers using the taxi rank at Heathrow Airport and this covers the management of the taxi ranks, feeder rank and administration of the facility. Drivers pay the fee to the airport but we allow them to recover a proportion of this (£2.80 at present) from the passengers in the form of an extra charge applicable to all taxi journeys that start from Heathrow Airport taxi ranks. The issue of charging taxi drivers to access taxi ranks was considered by the TfL Board a couple of years ago and the Board was of the view that drivers should not be charged to access taxi ranks and that TfL would not approve any new extras or charges being passed on to passengers.

One of the issues created by charging for access to taxi ranks is that drivers race to return to the rank to avoid paying the charge again and this can result in passengers not being taken to their destination, passengers being overcharged for short trips and even passengers being refused when they only want to make a short trip.

Any private hire operator accepting bookings from either airport in London would need to be licensed by TfL and the actual location would be licensed by us as a private hire operator trading centre. Where there are licensed private hire operators at an airport it is important that passengers are made fully aware of the choices available (i.e. taxis and also booked PHVs) so as they can choose which mode to use.

We are keen to explore the potential for fixed or capped fare schemes for taxi trips to and from airports which could offer better value for money for passengers as well as certainty and also help everyone compete fairly against each other.

Regards
Darren Crowson
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Transport for London - Taxi and Private Hire