



# Plymouth Passenger Transport Strategy

## **Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Strategy**

Plymouth City Council

Local Transport Plan 2

2006-2011



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# 1 Introduction

## Setting the Scene

- 1.1 Taxi and private hire vehicles (PHV) are an essential form of transport in Plymouth. Many people depend on taxis for trips that buses or cars are incapable of making. A recent survey revealed that approximately 25,000 trips are made by taxi every week in Plymouth.
- 1.2 Plymouth's taxi and PHV industry is fairly comprehensive and provides Plymouth's population with a robust service. It is the intention of the Council to build on the industry's strengths and to improve integration with other modes of passenger transport in the City.
- 1.3 Conversely, the Council will seek to address areas of identified weakness to ensure the long-term viability of taxis and PHVs within the City.

## Objectives of the Strategy

- 1.4 The objectives of the Taxi and PHV Strategy are as follows:
  - To better integrate taxis and PHVs with other modes of transport in Plymouth. Taxis and PHVs have the potential to deliver a flexible 24-hour virtual network supporting the objective of a seamless door to door service.
  - To provide a better quality service to help meet latent demand from the public.
  - To reduce vehicle omissions from taxis and PHVs and improve air quality in sensitive streets in the vicinity of taxi ranks.

## 2 PHV and Taxis in Plymouth

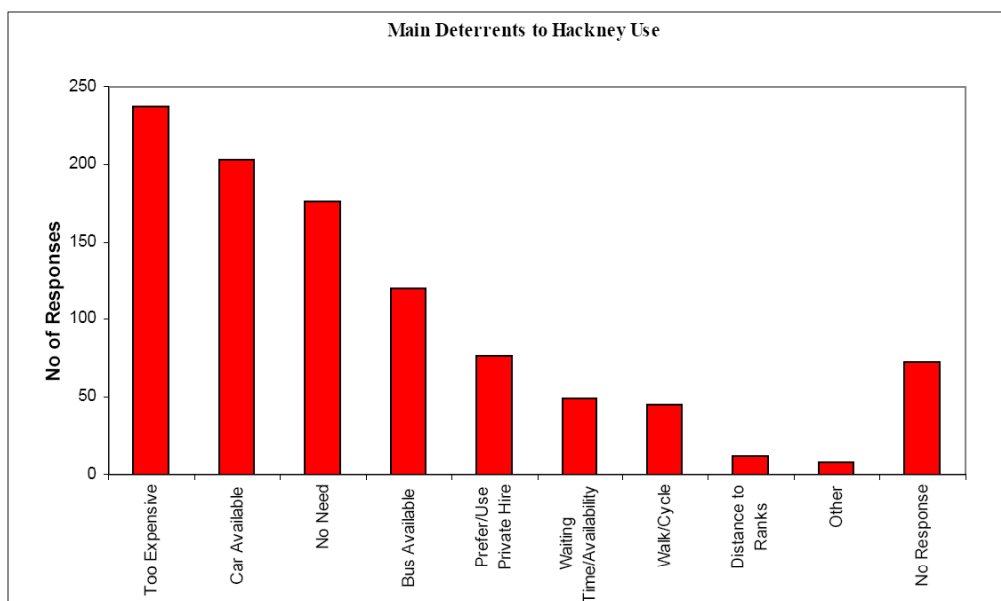
### Current Levels of Provision

- 2.1 Plymouth's taxi and PHV services are run by a number of operators throughout the City. Some of operators currently working in Plymouth are:
- AA Taxis
  - Armada Cabs
  - Barbican Express
  - Central Taxis
  - Crownhill Taxis
  - Dial A Cab
  - Express Taxis
  - Morley Cars
  - Plymcabs
  - Plymouth Taxis
  - Silverline
  - Taxi Fast
  - The Cab Company
  - Tower Cabs
- 2.2 These operators, along with some smaller companies, operate a total of 359 licensed Hackney Carriages and approximately 736 private hire vehicles.

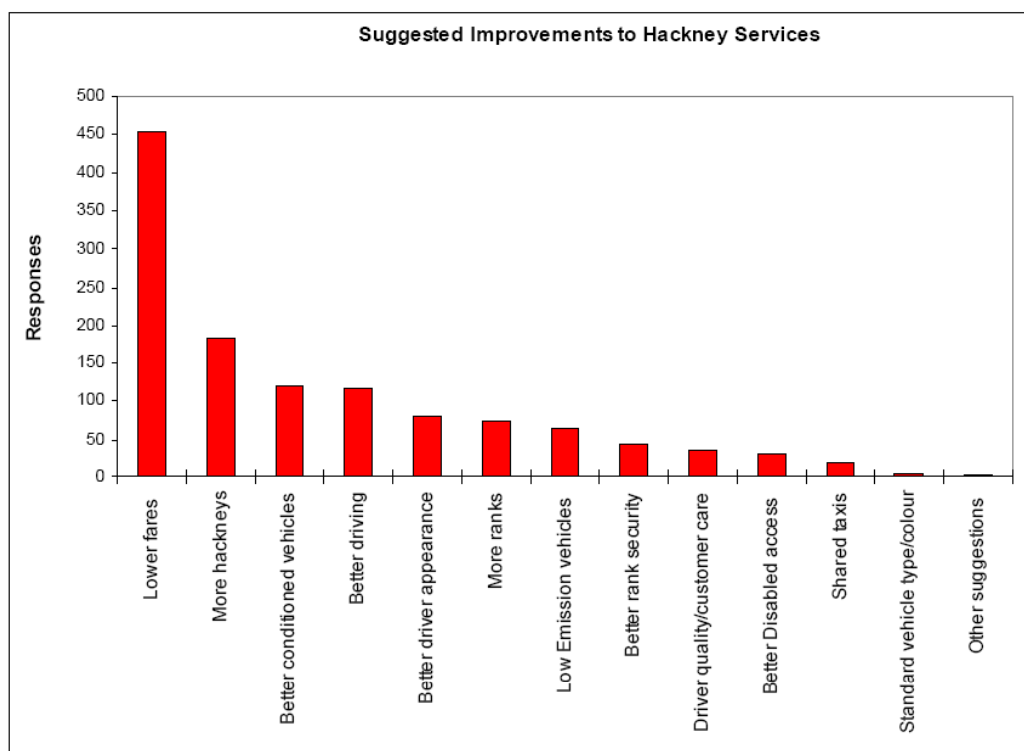
### Survey of Taxi Users

- 2.3 To assist in developing a long-term policy towards taxis, the Council commissioned an 'unmet demand' study of taxi services in the City. A key component of this study was an on-street survey of residents. Figure 2.1 shows the main reasons given for not using taxis.
- 2.4 Many people are willing to utilise a range of other modes of transport as opposed to taxis. Additionally, many people view sustainable modes of transport as viable alternatives to the private car.

**Figure 2.1 Main Deterrents to Hackney Carriage Use**



**Figure 2.2 Measures people would like to see improved in relation to Hackney Carriages**



2.5 Respondents were also asked to describe the improvements they would like to see to taxis and PHVs in Plymouth. The results are shown in Figure 2.2. The most popular suggestion was lower fares. The second priority was greater numbers of vehicles.

2.6 The Council will continue to monitor taxi fares within the City to ensure that residents concerns are being addressed. However, it is necessary to strike a balance between the cost of services and driver livelihood. The Council will also continue to look into key concerns such as the condition and number of ranks within the City. It is the Council’s intention to address

these issues in its taxi and PHV strategy, which is outlined in the next chapter.

### **The Role of Taxis in the provision of Social Services Transport**

- 2.7 Social Services transport is predominately provided by private hire, taxi and private coach operators. Routes for transporting clients are based on the origin (generally the client's home) and destination (generally an institution or school). Approximately 220 routes are in existence for transporting clients within Plymouth.
- 2.8 Taxis and private hire vehicles play a central role in providing transport for people in care. Approximately 98% of all social services trips made by young people are by taxi. The Council will work with taxi and PHV operators to reduce costs per client and improve efficiency.
- 2.9 It may be possible to make a substantial resource saving by improving the way in which the Council uses these vehicles. As in educational and community transport, a need exists to better coordinate the scheduling and planning of trips to make more efficient use of resources. Currently no formal coordination tools such as GIS mapping are in place. The use of RTPI related scheduling software will better coordinate booking and scheduling of trips.
- 2.10 The Council will investigate ways of working with taxi and PHV operators to improve fuel efficiency and reduce harmful emissions. The Taxi and PHV Strategy contains further details.

## 3 Taxi and PHV Strategy

### Taxi Specific Policies

#### Numbers of Licences

- 3.1 The number of Hackney Carriages in the City is limited by licence although private hire vehicles are unrestricted. The number of licences available to operators has recently been under review in Plymouth. The intention was to reach equilibrium on taxi provision, making a high level of services available for residents while at the same time ensuring that taxi operation is a viable industry.
- 3.2 Three options were under consideration:
- Maintaining the limit at 359 licences;
  - Limited increase of Hackney Carriage licences; and
  - Remove the limit on Hackney Carriages licences.
- 3.3 A survey revealed that there was no significant demand for an increase in licences. Therefore it has been decided to retain the limit of 359 licences. This situation will be kept under review.

#### Rank Monitoring and Location

- 3.4 Consultation with taxi and PHV operators took the form of two meetings, the results from which indicates that a need exists for improved monitoring of taxi ranks to ensure that unlicensed vehicles do not use designated ranks. The Council also holds monthly meetings with representatives from the PHV and taxi trade. Measures to implement enforcement of ranks are already in place and ongoing. The Council will step up its provision with:
- A more robust system of spot check at all ranks within the City;
  - More 'out of hours' enforcement of ranks (evenings and weekends); and
  - A more systematic approach to the enforcement of ranks.
- 3.5 These measures will be supported by a more reactive policy on reported abuses.
- 3.6 Additionally, early in the LTP2 period, an assessment of infrastructure at ranks will be undertaken. The results will feed into a hierarchical programme of rank improvements, which will be rolled out through the LTP2 period.
- 3.7 As part of this process, the council will review its policy towards taxi and PHV operation at major public transport interchanges. The Council has undertaken a comprehensive survey of potential interchange sites as a start to developing a network of Mobihubs as part of its overall Public Transport Strategy.

## Proposals for Taxis and PHVs

### Interchange

- 3.8 Taxis and PHVs have a critical role to play in the integration of passenger transport modes. The strategy proposes a series of improvements at key interchange points to foster better integration between taxis and rail/bus/ferry services. Integration will focus on key public transport interchanges.
- 3.9 The City Council will be working with partners in the taxi and PHV industry to identify ways to better integrate taxis and PHVs at major public transport interchanges.

### Bus Station

- 3.10 The Council will ensure continued ease of access at the current Bretonside bus station. As plans for a new bus station develop the Council will ensure that taxi and PHV operators are fully consulted.

### Plymouth Airport

- 3.11 Currently one PHV firm and one taxi firm have exclusive rights to operate at the City's airport. The Council is unable to influence agreements between private companies although it is interested in the long-term implications for integrated transport in the City.

### Railway Stations

- 3.12 Similarly, exclusive arrangements with two operators for the provision of taxi and PHV services are in place at the City centre railway station. Although the Council has no control over private companies it will consult with partners in the rail industry to determine whether this is the best arrangement for effective transport integration at the City's main railway station.

### Social Inclusion

- 3.13 Taxis play an important role in the mobility of disabled residents. Consideration will be given to further Wheelchair Accessible/Disabled Access taxi provision particularly if additional Hackney Carriage licences are issued.
- 3.14 The Council will also work with taxi and PHV operators to better manage transport for the disabled. Central to this will be a programme of driver training in disability awareness.
- 3.15 The Community Transport Strategy and the Education and Social Services Transport Strategy describe a number of other taxi related policies to be brought forward during the LTP2 period to achieve socially inclusion objectives.
- 3.16 Developing taxis as a Demand Responsive Transport Service generates new travel opportunities for journeys to employment areas at times of day or days of the week that other more conventional public transport services cannot provide.

#### Liaison with Operators

- 3.18 The Council will continue to hold regular monthly meetings with representatives of both the Hackney Carriage and PHV trades.

#### Vehicle Emissions

- 3.19 As part of the Council's Air Quality Strategy there is a need for reducing emissions from taxis and PHVs by encouraging better maintenance and switching off engines when stationary, particularly at taxi ranks.

## 4 Conclusions

4.1 Table 3.1 summarises the Council's proposals for taxis and PHVs during the LTP2 period.

**Table 3.1 Summary of Proposed Measures**

Measure type	Time scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve ongoing monitoring of taxi ranks, increase spot checks, and enforce ranks.</li> </ul>	Short term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake an assessment of taxi ranks within the City and develop a hierarchy of rank improvements.</li> </ul>	Short term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with taxi and PHV operators to better manage transport for the disabled. Implement programme of driver training in disability awareness.</li> </ul>	Short – medium term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement programme of rank improvements.</li> </ul>	Medium-Long term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the potential of taxis in providing Demand Responsive Transport solutions where no other public transport provision exists.</li> </ul>	Medium-Long term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate ways to better integrate taxis and private hire vehicles at interchanges.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce emissions, particularly at taxi ranks, and promote a cleaner taxi fleet by encouraging better maintenance. Switching off engines when idling. Potential enforcement through licensing.</li> </ul>	Ongoing