

Strategic Review of City Centre Access & Parking

York Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Association, Wednesday 2 June 2021

Taxi and private hire drivers play a key role for visitors, residents and disabled customers in supporting city centre businesses.

Challenges

- **Insufficient space** for Hackney carriages to park up during busy periods (Fri/ Sat/ race days), struggle to park at Duncombe Place and St Saviourgate ranks. Need more rank accommodation/ to open more space up to public infrastructure for taxis and buses. Station uses feeder car parks as additional rank space when busy.
- **Increasing competition for space** from delivery drivers and Blue Badge Holder (BBH) spaces are making it extremely difficult for drivers to get on Duncombe Place rank. Imperative that ranks remain available for taxi use to get people in and out of the city centre, to support city centre businesses as well as the businesses of the taxi operators/ drivers.
- **Enforcement** of delivery loading and BBH free for all, bad situation
 - Duncombe Place biggest issue, food delivery drivers, previously on motorbike, moped, bike parked opposite rank. Now moved to car, driver and a mate park on rank, co-driver refuses to move for taxi, contact parking enforcement, driver picked up delivery and moves off before enforcement arrive. Chaos left, sheer volume has knock-on effect, taxis blocking road and cycle path as there is nowhere to go, can't get into order for next customer. Wrong, unfair if taxis cannot get onto the rank. Drivers have to idle in the road, waiting to get onto rank. Enforcement arrives and enforces taxis idling, not the cause of the situation i.e. Deliveroo/ Just Eat fast food deliveries/ other vehicles. Space needs to be better managed/ have own space. Dangerous, get a lot of abuse if you ask to get into rank space. Delivery drivers don't adhere to any rules turning wrong way on a one way street into Lendal due to footstreet hours, need regulation/ camera at end of Lendal to monitor. Not working, not enough room.
 - City of York Council (CYC) Highways are aware of complaints to licencing team regarding illegal parking on ranks. Not enough enforcement.
 - Police need to ask every vehicle for their vehicle insurance/ public liability insurance. Majority signed up as a cyclist, but have moved to vehicle, therefore working illegally.

- Taxis have a regulatory system. Need a level playing field/ taxis livelihoods need protecting

Specific Ranks

- **Duncombe Place** recently realigned to remove the horse and carriage spaces, and replaced with BBH parking/ delivery loading bay. Delivery lorries and BBH's park over into the taxi rank, meaning taxis often have to reverse into rank. CYC do not enforce. 7 spaces for 183 taxis.
- **St Sampson's Square** is a great rank, 8 spaces, but it cannot be accessed during footstreet hours.
- **Piccadilly** outside Sainsburys, had 4 spaces, reduced to 2 spaces, bike racks and bollards make it difficult to get onto the rank, have to park parallel and reverse in traffic queuing for traffic lights on a busy road. Now introduced disabled and loading bays during day, taxis 6pm-6am. Need a bigger, 24 hour rank in Piccadilly – more development on Piccadilly, lots of demand. Need at least 6 spaces near Spark:York, or relocate cycle parking to Argos side of the road, or further out. Shouldn't be sharing with other users.
- **Rougier Street** share rank with buses, revamped shelters, taxi sign on inside of shelters so unless you are stood in the shelter, 99% of public do not know it is a rank. Need to relocate sign, and mark on floor taxi rank.
- York has the worst ranks in all of Yorkshire.

Accessible Vehicles

- Passengers need confidence that they can get into town AND get back home
- New plates all need to be wheelchair accessible vehicles
- Taxis need access to city centre/ passengers need to be able to get to rank close to city centre, and to be dropped/ picked up near to where they need to be.
- Passengers need to know that there is an accessible vehicle at that rank, not at another rank
- Station taxis do have 6 wheelchair accessible vehicles, but dependent on whether these drivers are working when the passenger phones to book. Majority of drivers of these vehicles work days and so evenings are worse.
- More and more difficult aside of access into city centre
- Impossible to contact HC that are wheelchair accessible other than being at a rank
- Private hire vehicles can be contacted direct, but often have school contracts

- If private hire not available, then drivers try to contact Station taxis, but the operator doesn't know where the vehicle will be/ what time it will be back, so booking needs to be flexible to 1-2 hours
- Station taxis have to handle a lot of complaints because they cannot guarantee a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Difficult to be tied to times as next customer at rank may be local, or may want to go to Newcastle.
- E.g. took booking 9:30 to meet from train with specific accessible vehicle, train got in 10:15, drop customer off 10:30, therefore earned £6.50 in that hour. Other drivers might earn 5x that amount in an hour.
- The vehicle itself costs more, approx. £25,000 to renew whereas a saloon costs half to buy the vehicle. Cost more, earn less.
- By condition of CYC licence a certain number of hackney carriage vehicles have to be wheelchair accessible, this is not a requirement for private hire vehicles.
- Companies need to step up and take responsibility
- One HC wheelchair accessible vehicle has never collected a wheelchair job because there is no way for passengers to contact them direct. Process needs joining up. Passenger needs a way to contact a specific vehicle.
- Need a way to contact other wheelchair accessible vehicles to meet passenger needs. E.g. Taxi Action WhatsApp group has 98 members, can request wheelchair accessible vehicle
- Don't know what solution might be, but want to provide a good service/ strive in excellence. Down to the Chairs of the Associations meet with a contact at CYC to find a way through in partnership with CYC. Develop a booking system similar to Uber where customer can request vehicle type. Develop ideas to assist taxis in assisting passengers. Need support, contact board, forum to get up and running.

Funding Obstacles

- Defra funding up to 20% / £3k maximum towards updating vehicles towards a greener fleet, but criteria stipulates that it has to spend at local garages, part exchange vehicle over 5 years old. There are no main dealers of wheelchair accommodating vehicles in York. *CYC Mike Southcombe "is possible to put argument forward if it is not possible to purchase in York, will be taken into consideration when issuing grants."*
- Need a better funding board/ package and support as to how to access funding. We have CYC crest on our door, buses work in partnership with CYC and receive funding, but taxis do not/ would like to.

Electric Vehicles

- Running electric vehicles is not facilitated by the city's infrastructure/ extremely difficult, need hundreds of charging points, cannot use a public car park charging point and deliver a responsive service
- Most vehicles have to pay to plug in. Have observed people plugging in/ parked then gone shopping for over 6 hours when charge time only takes 2 hours.
- If you live in an apartment or terrace then it is impossible to charge an electric vehicle
- Driving range is not far enough, serve a large rural area, engine not viable yet if you need to travel far/ multiple journeys per day
- Impossible to buy an electric vehicle for less than £35-40K, or wheelchair accessible full electric vehicle is £60-65K for London cab, £47K for Nissan, plus the costs of installing home charging points, dedicated parking bays is prohibitive. Need help with these before enforce move to fully electric vehicles.
- London have provided 50% funding to upgrade fleet, and a home charging point/ dedicated bay
- Net zero ok in principle, want to run cheaper vehicles. Would be better to encourage all taxi funding towards hybrid or Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) compliant/ to use less as first step to be achievable, with a target to move to fully electric by 2026. Funding excludes electric/ diesel mix currently.
- Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham policy offers £10,000 to each driver looking to upgrade their vehicle to a certain spec. York's £3,000 is a discouragement.
- Make policies without involving trade.
- Overcome by allowing funding to be spent on hybrid vehicles from national suppliers
- CYC Dave Atkinson has spoken to taxi trade/ associations regarding infrastructure of electric charging points, several months ago in relation to car park upgrades to rapid charging points.
- Can only do so many rapid charges then need a full charge
- Need dedicated taxi charging points, not enough if people leave their cars beyond charge time to go shopping.
- Bookable charging points don't work for taxi vehicles that are in use all of the time.
- Need to consult and support individual drivers and provide list of CYC suppliers.

- **No infrastructure, no appropriate vehicles with sufficient range for rural area, cannot afford to buy**

Needs Of Drivers And Customers

- **Safe drop off points** for passengers in the city centre during footstreet hours, re-open St Sampsons Square. Being unable to take passengers into the city centre causes problems, especially international visitors wanting to access hotels and guest houses in the city centre with large amounts of luggage. Dropping at the edge of the city centre doesn't work.
- Judges Lodge, and Galtres Lodge **exemptions** are regular drop offs. We can now only access Judges Court hotel on Coney Street before 10:30am and after 8:00pm, which doesn't fit hotel check-in at 2:00pm. We have to drop off at Ouse Bridge/ edge of city centre for Judges Court which doesn't work.
- To be recognised as part of key public infrastructure, and included in **transport policy** like buses, want partnership with CYC rather than acting as individuals, better funded
- Licence money to be better used of facilities for drivers, such as clear **signage**, and to be more visible e.g, red line taxi bays demarked in London with no parking and no stopping enforced
- 24 hour **enforcement** - CYC only enforce daytime. Leeds have taxi marshalls, local authority enforcement on motorcycles/ vans/ cameras 24 hours a day, moving people on, checking cars and documents
- **Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)** on ranks would save a lot of problems, allow certain vehicles, city would benefit in longer term in terms of reduced traffic and revenue income. Debated whether out of town private hire vehicles, or delivery drivers got fined. Noted HC can use bus lanes in Leeds, even if out of town, but not private hire.

Actions

- Share note of meeting, invite further needs/ challenges if any are missing
- Share link to My City Centre business survey (includes specific taxi/ private hire questions)
- Invite drivers who are interested in a meeting with York Disability Rights Forum in the coming weeks to continue the discussion and explore ideas for improving accessible services.