

DIRECTOR Stewart Carruth

TITLE OF REPORT Technical Specification for Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Vehicles

REPORT NUMBER: CG/10/030

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to enable Members to endorse, in principle, a specification for wheelchair accessible vehicles which are licensed as taxis within this Local Authority area. Thereafter the proposed specification will be the subject of a consultation exercise.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- a) that the Committee adopt the new specification (“the new specification”) in principle;
- b) that a consultation exercise is carried out on that specification, and
- c) that a further report is placed before the Committee with the outcome of the consultation with a view to making a final decision on which specification will be adopted.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

This will enable the Committee to fulfill its obligations to ensure there is accessible public transport available to a section of the less abled community on the same basis as that enjoyed by able bodied people

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

6. REPORT

- 6.1 Section 10(2) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 provides that a Council shall not grant a taxi licence unless they are satisfied that the vehicle is suitable in type, size and design for use as a taxi. Since the mid 1990s this Council has had a very successful policy that all taxi operators should provide a wheelchair accessible vehicle. This has resulted in the city taxi fleet being approximately 50% wheelchair accessible, a higher percentage than many other Local Authorities. We also have a variety of different vehicles approved as wheelchair accessible, not

just London style cabs, a practice approved by the High Court of Justice, Queen's Bench Division in R v (1) Alma Lunt and (2) Allied Vehicles Ltd. in July 2009.

- 6.2 In 1997, to facilitate an increase in wheelchair accessible vehicles, the then Taxi Inspector drafted a specification for these vehicles, based on his knowledge and experience of road traffic policing. That specification ("the original specification") was in use until the new Department for Transport consultative specification was approved by the Committee on 3rd June 2009.
- 6.3 During 2009 the Department for Transport (of the Westminster Government) held a nationwide consultation exercise (Consultation on Improving Access to Taxis, February 2009) to establish an agreed national specification for wheelchair accessible taxi vehicles. In December 2009 the results of that consultation were published (Improving Access to Taxis. Consultation Analysis Report August 2009). Copies of both documents, which are substantial, can be viewed in the Licensing Team offices, Town House, Broad Street. 167 responses were received to the consultation, mainly from commercial companies and disabled groups. This report is only concerned with the issue of wheelchair accessible taxi vehicles and not with any other wider issues identified in the consultation. The consultation response document does not indicate that the specification which was consulted on will be adopted nationally, but as it is a) a more up to date specification taking account of technical improvements to modern vehicles b) based on more technical knowledge than was in our original specification and c) the only specification ever to be produced at this level, it is reasonable to adopt it.
- 6.4 Appendix 1 to this report shows the original specification requirement and also the requirements of the new specification and compares them in a table format. There is little difference, the main one being that the new specification takes account of modern vehicles. Appendix 2 is the original specification for completeness.
- 6.5 As with any policy adopted by a Local Authority it must be flexible enough to give applicants an opportunity to be heard by the Committee as to why the policy should not be applied in their particular circumstances. Any person or organisation wishing to provide a wheelchair accessible vehicle which does not comply with the new specification will be given that opportunity.
- 6.6 The new specification will not apply retrospectively to vehicles already approved as wheelchair accessible by the Committee.

7 CONSULTATION

This report was discussed at the Taxi Consultation Group on 8th February 2010. there were no adverse comments.

8 REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982

Consultation on Improving Access to Taxis, February 2009, Department for Transport

Improving Access to Taxis, Consultation Analysis Report, December 2009, Department for Transport

SPECIFICATION FOR WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXI VEHICLES

SECTION ONE. Wheelchair Accessibility Requirements.

1. Wheelchair spaces New Specification 1997 Spec

Number required	1 (minimum)	No change
Orientation	Either forwards or rearwards	No change

2. Forward facing wheelchair spaces

Wheelchair space requirements	Length 1130mm (min) Width 690mm (min) Height 1340mm (min)	Not req'd Not req'd 1400
Gradient	The slope of the floor between any two points within the wheelchair space shall not exceed 11 degrees in the longitudinal plane and 5 degrees in the transverse plane.	Not req'd in original spec
Acceptable intrusions into the wheelchair space	One or more tipping, folding or easily removed seats. Padded head and back restraint. Handrails or handholds provided that they do not extend into the wheelchair space by more than 90mm. Wheelchair restraint system and wheelchair user restraint system and appropriate anchorages and fittings.	Not req'd in original spec
Wheelchair user safety provisions	Every wheelchair space shall be fitted with a wheelchair tie-down system and a wheelchair user restraint system.	No change

3. Rearward facing wheelchair spaces

Wheelchair space requirements	Length 1070mm (min) Width 690mm (min) Height 1340mm (min)	Not req'd Not req'd 1400
Gradient	The slope of the floor between any two points within the wheelchair space shall not exceed 11 degrees in the longitudinal plane and 5 degrees in the transverse plane.	No req'd in original spec
Acceptable intrusions into the wheelchair space	One or more tipping, folding or easily removed seats. Padded head and back restraint. Handrails or handholds provided that they do not extend into the wheelchair space by more than 90mm. Wheelchair restraint system and wheelchair user restraint system and appropriate anchorages and	No req'd in original spec

	fittings.	
Wheelchair user safety provisions	Every wheelchair space shall be fitted with a wheelchair tie-down system and a wheelchair user restraint system.	No change

4. Boarding Lifts and Ramps

Safe Working Load	300 kg (min)	No change
Means of preventing the vehicle being driven away	Not allow the vehicle to be driven away whilst device is deployed.	No change
Dimensions (length applies to that outside of the overall vehicle body footprint at the ramp entry level)	Single piece ramp Width 700mm (min) Length 1600mm (min) Lift Width 700mm (min) Length 1200mm (min)	750mm 1700mm 750mm 1200mm
Ramp Gradients (can be achieved using a kneeling system)	Side Entry Kerb (125mm): 11 degrees (max) Ground : 17 degrees (max) Rear Entry Ground : 11 degrees (max)	Originally 25% Originally 25%
Slip Resistant Surfaces	All surfaces over which a wheelchair user may travel shall have a slip resistant finish applied.	No change
Handrails	Ramps : Not required Lifts : Where the platform travel exceeds a height of 500mm from the ground then a handrail must be provided.	No change No change
Guards	Ramps : None Lifts : Side upstands 25mm high and automatic roll-off devices fitted at least 100mm high at each end of the platform.	No change No change
Colour contrasting edge markings	A band contrasting with the remainder of the boarding ramp or lift surface, 45mm to 55mm in width around and abutting the edge of the ramp or lift surface.	No change
Control and fail-safe mechanisms for power operated equipment	Power operated equipment shall only be capable of operation from a control adjacent to the ramp or lift.	No change
Load sensors and recycling mechanisms for power operated equipment	A device to stop the movement of the boarding ramp or lift if that motion is likely to cause injury.	No change

Manual over-ride provisions for power operated equipment	A provision to repeatedly operate the equipment in the event of power failure shall be provided.	No change
Manual / portable ramp storage provisions	Such ramps must have a designated stowage location which can store the equipment such that it does not present a risk of injury.	No change

5. Entrances and Exits

Number and position	A minimum of one located on the nearside or the rear of the vehicle.	No change
Minimum doorway width	740mm	780mm
Minimum doorway height	1230mm	1340mm

6. Interior Manoeuvring

From a wheelchair entrance to a wheelchair space	No requirement	No requirement
From a wheelchair space to a wheelchair exit	No requirement	No requirement
Floor gradient	No requirement	No requirement

7. Signs and Markings

Interior	Visible advice to wheelchair user and taxi driver on positioning of wheelchair and use of wheelchair tie-down and occupant restraint systems.	No change
Exterior	Clear indication that the vehicle is wheelchair accessible.	No change

SECTION TWO Ambulatory Accessibility Requirements

1. Entrances and Exits

Number and location	A minimum of one located on the nearside or the rear of the vehicle.	No change
Aperture dimensions	Where the priority seat meets the requirements of 3(a) it shall be of adequate dimensions to allow the passage through the aperture of the occupied priority seat. Where the priority seat meets the requirements of 3(b)(i) the door aperture shall allow the passenger to	1400 – 1500mm plus from ground original spec

	easily access the seat from outside of the vehicle. Where the priority seat meets the requirements of 3(b)(ii) the doorway shall be 650mm wide by 1230mm high.	Different criteria used in new spec
Manual door design	Hinged and sliding doors acceptable.	No change
Powered door requirements	(a) Shall be capable of operation by a passenger when the vehicle is stationary. (b) A device to stop the movement if that motion is likely to cause injury to a passenger or pedestrian. (c) A provision to operate the equipment in the event of a power failure.	No change

2. Interior Space

Floor	Any surface over which a passenger is required to walk shall have a slip resistant finish.	No change
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3. Priority Seat

Provision	At least one priority seat must be provided which may be either : a) a multi-axial moving seat which can be easily used by a passenger boarding from the kerb or ground or ; b) a fixed seat design ; i) providing the cushion is no more than 200mm measured inwards from the entrance or ; ii) providing the cushion is as near as practicable to the entrance and the internal floor to roof height exceeds 1500mm.	New. Not in original spec
Orientation	Forward or rear facing.	N/A
Spacing	For all forward facing priority seat configurations, the clear space in front of the SRP shall be 650mm minimum. For facing seat configurations the seat back separation shall be 1300mm minimum and the distance between the leading edges of each seat cushion shall be 400mm minimum.	N/A
Dimensions	All priority seats shall have a minimum width of 380mm and a depth of 340mm - 510mm. The SRP of a fixed seat complying with the requirements of 3(b)(i) or (ii), or of a multi-axial	N/A

	<p>moving seat when positioned for travel, shall have a height above the vehicle floor of 300mm – 450mm.</p> <p>Additionally, the SRP of a fixed seat complying with the requirements of 3(b)(i), or a multi-axial moving seat complying with 3(a) when deployed for boarding and alighting, shall have a height above the ground of 420mm – 870mm.</p>	
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4. Steps – Applies to vehicles with a floor or sill height exceeding 320mm.
(may be achieved with kneeling)

Dimensions	<p>1st step from the ground shall not exceed 250mm.</p> <p>Subsequent steps 100mm - 200mm. Width 400mm minimum Depth 190mm minimum</p>	<p>No change</p> <p>120 – 200mm 400mm 280mm</p>
Design features	Steps shall be designed to be, slip resistant, minimise tripping risk and have a contrasting band along the front edge of 45mm - 55mm.	No change
Maximum number of intermediate steps from ground to vehicle floor	Two	3 originally
Step operation for non-fixed steps	No requirement.	No requirement
Requirements for power operated steps	<p>A device to stop the movement if that motion is likely to cause injury.</p> <p>A provision to repeatedly operate the equipment in the event of power failure shall be provided.</p>	No requirement

5. Handrails and Handholds

Position	Handrails / handholds must be provided for disabled passengers entering / exiting the vehicle and when manoeuvring inside the vehicle to a seat.	No change
Dimensions	20mm – 35mm diameter or oval with the maximum section 30 – 35mm and the minimum section 20mm.	30 – 35mm
Design	Handrails and handholds shall be slip resistant, capable of being easily and firmly gripped and visually contrast with surroundings.	No change

SECTION THREE General Requirements

1. Lighting

Design Features	Lighting shall be fitted to illuminate the interior and	No change
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	<p>exterior of the vehicle sufficient to allow both wheelchair users and other passengers to board and alight the vehicle in safety.</p> <p>Any lighting fitted in accordance with this requirement shall have a means of preventing its operation when the vehicle is in motion if its use is likely to affect adversely the driver's vision.</p>	Not req'd in original spec
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2. Kneeling Systems

Design Features	When a kneeling system is fitted a switch shall be used to enable operation and must be under the direct control of the driver. The lowering process shall be capable of being stopped and reversed and shall prevent the vehicle being driven at a speed exceeding 5 mph. when the vehicle is lowered.	Not req'd in original spec
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3. Securing Equipment

Design Features	All wheelchairs shall be secured with tested and approved equipment.	No change
Storage	Secure storage is required for all securing equipment when not in use.	No change

Two items of the original specification are not covered by the new specification.

Item 45, which refers to transfer boards – these items are no longer deemed appropriate.

Items 51, 52 and 53 which refer to swivel seats. These items were originally introduced for a particular type of seat which has not found favour. The use of multi-axle moving seats is covered by the section in the new specification which relates to priority seats.

DEFINITIONS – in this document –

“boarding lift” means a lift fitted to a licensed taxi for the purpose of allowing wheelchair users to board and alight the vehicle ;

“boarding ramp” means a ramp fitted to a licensed taxi for the purpose of allowing wheelchair users to board and alight from the vehicle;

“contrast” means a contrast in the amount of light which is reflected by the surfaces of the parts of a licensed taxi or its equipment, which is required by this specification to contrast

“cushion” means that part of the seat on which the person using the seat sits, whether padded or not;

“deep” in relation to a step, means the distance from the outer edge of the nosing of the step tread to the rear of the step tread;

“entrance” means an entrance to a licensed taxi providing access to a priority seat or a wheelchair space;

“exit” means an exit from a licensed taxi but does not include an exit which is provided for use only in case of emergency;

“external step” means the last step or platform from an entrance or an exit which leads directly from the vehicle to the ground;

“kg” means kilogram(s);

“kneeling system” means a system which enables the bodywork of a licensed taxi to be lowered relative to its normal height of travel;

“licensed area” means the area of The City of Aberdeen;

“licensing authority” means Aberdeen City Council;

“mm” means millimeter(s);

“normal height of travel” means the height specified by the vehicle’s manufacturer for normal vehicle travel;

“portable ramp” means a ramp which is carried in a licensed taxi for the purpose of allowing wheelchair users to board and alight from the vehicle;

“power grip” means a grip in which the fingers and thumb are able to wrap around a handle;

“priority seat” means a seat designated as such in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Section 2 of this specification;

“private hire car” means a hire car other than a taxi as defined in Section 23 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

“reference wheelchair” means an occupied wheelchair having the dimensions shown in Diagram A of the consultation document;

“seat” means a seat intended for use by passengers and, accordingly, does not include the driver’s seat;

“SRP” means Seat Reference Point, which is the point at which the seat cushion and seat back join, midway across the seat cushion width. Where the seat cushion and back components do not meet, the plane of the seat back and cushion shall be projected to an intersection;

“taxi” means a hire car as defined in Section 23 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

“Taxi Inspector” means any person authorised by Aberdeen City Council to exercise the powers to carry out the duties of the Taxi Inspector or any person acting under the direct instructions or with the authority of the Taxi Inspector;

“wheelchair user” means a disabled person using a wheelchair