
Report To: GENERAL PURPOSES BOARD **Date:** 17th February 2011

Report By: HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES **Report No:**

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Subject: TAXI TRADE REQUEST TO REVISE MULTI ACCESS VEHICLE SPECIFICATION

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information and guidance on the taxi trade's request to allow the Peugeot Premier (supplied by Allied Vehicles, Glasgow) and vehicles of its generic type to be licensed as Multi Access Public Hire Taxis.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Inverclyde Taxis Ltd sought approval from Environmental and Commercial Services that the Peugeot Premier be licensed as a restricted Multi Access Public Hire Taxi. This request was rejected on the grounds that the vehicle did not meet Inverclyde Council's Public/Private Hire Vehicle Specification. Specifically, when the vehicle was being used to carry a wheelchair bound passenger there was not 16 cu ft of luggage space separated from the passenger carrying compartment by a physical barrier.
- 2.2 The current Private/Public Hire Vehicle Specification states:

Guidelines for conventional saloon/estate cars

- A vehicle will have 4 doors (saloon) or 5 doors (estate car)
- The vehicle will have a minimum engine capacity of 1600cc
- There will be a minimum rear seat width of 48 inches/122cm
- The minimum seating capacity is four adults in addition to the driver
- The luggage compartment will have a minimum capacity of 16cubic feet/0.45 cubic metres

N.B. Where an estate car is to be operated under a licence the following conditions shall also apply:

- Luggage loaded or placed in the luggage compartment must not protrude above the top of the rear seat
- The luggage compartment must be separated from the passenger compartment by a physical barrier, to prevent luggage entering the passenger compartment, to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council

Adapted Vehicles

All fittings and equipment, whether supplied with the vehicle in its original specification or forming part of the special adaptation of the vehicle, including, without prejudice to the foregoing generality, the taillift (if fitted) and all restraining wheelchair clamps and seatbelt webbings and the wheelchair access ramp (where fitted) shall be included as part of the vehicle tests and inspections carried out by the Licensing Authority. The tests shall be the standard required by the statutory regulations, where appropriate.

- 2.3 Inverclyde Taxis were advised that in order for this type of vehicle to be approved, permission should be sought from the General Purposes Board to revise the vehicle specification.

- 2.4 General Purposes Board met on the 12th January 2011 and requested that Environmental and Commercial Services organise a demonstration of the vehicle involving selected Board members and representatives from Inverclyde Council on Disability (ICOD). Thereafter, present a report to the Board outlining the pro's and con's of the vehicle design.
- 2.5 The demonstration took place on Wednesday 26th January 2011 and was attended by Councillor MacLeod, Councillor Ahlfeld, 3 representatives from ICOD (Notes of ICOD's observations attached as appendix 1), Howard McNeilly (Managing Solicitor), Ian Moffat (Head of Environmental and Commercial Services) and Jim Bradley (Team Leader, Transport and Waste Collection). The vehicle was also viewed by Councillor Rebecchi and Councillor McCallum.

3.0 SUMMARY

- 3.1 During the course of the demonstration 3 wheelchairs of varying dimensions with passengers were tested in the vehicle. The vehicle was assessed for passenger comfort for both mobility impaired and able bodied passengers and the capability to carry luggage.
- 3.2 The general consensus was the vehicle was capable of carrying one mobility impaired passenger and two able bodied passengers in comfort with a very limited luggage carrying capability, the equivalent of one small overnight case or three bags of grocery shopping, which would require to be secured behind a cargo net at the drivers side rear of the vehicle beside the wheelchair.
- 3.3 Whilst it was acknowledged this type of vehicle would be a welcome addition to the Public Hire Taxi fleet in Inverclyde, it was not felt that it could be considered a replacement for the full size Multi Access Taxis currently operating on restricted licences. Which offer the capability to carry up to five able bodied, one mobility impaired and 16cu ft of luggage space at any time.
- 3.4 The demonstration raised a number of issues both in relation to this specific vehicle and to the licensing and operation of Multi Access Vehicles in general.
- 3.5 In relation to this specific vehicle, it was felt that due to the sliding rear door and relatively high floor height that a step and grab handle should be fitted to assist non wheelchair seated mobility impaired passengers enter and exit the vehicle.
- 3.6 In general, after viewing the wheelchair loading and securing demonstration, it was felt that formalised training and certification for all drivers of MAVs should be considered. This could take the format of Taxi companies training their own trainers and providing certification (as done by Inverclyde Council for our own MAVs) or using external training providers. Whichever way is chosen by the individual taxi operator, formalised certification should be carried by drivers to allow audits to be carried out during roadside inspections.
- 3.7 While the Peugeot Premier is a MAV of modern design and engineering which offers safety and environmental benefits and carries full M1 European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval Special Purpose. The generic layout of the vehicle is similar to many old van based conversions which may appear to be similar but have no type approval and securing anchor points have not been load tested. In order to avoid the licensing of non M1 type approved vehicles the general vehicle specification for MAVs should be revised to specify that only vehicles carrying M1 European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval be licensed.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the vehicle specification guidelines be revised to allow MAVs of the generic design illustrated by the Peugeot Premier be permitted to be licensed on non MAV restricted Public Hire licenses if the vehicle has M1 European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval. The proposed revised guidelines to replace those stated at point 2.2 are:

Guidelines for Conventional Saloon/Hatchbacks/Estate Cars licensed for Public/Private Hire

- A vehicle will have 4 doors (saloon) or 5 doors (estate and hatchback)
- The vehicle will have a minimum engine capacity of 1600cc
- There will be a minimum rear seat width of 48 inches/122cm
- The minimum seating capacity is four adults in addition to the driver
- The luggage compartment will have a minimum capacity of 16cubic feet/0.45 cubic metres

N.B. Where an estate car is to be operated under a licence the following conditions shall also apply:

- Luggage loaded or placed in the luggage compartment must not protrude above the top of the rear seat
- The luggage compartment must be separated from the passenger compartment by a physical barrier, to prevent luggage entering the passenger compartment, to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council

Guidelines for Multi Access Vehicles licensed on Restricted Public Hire Licences

- Vehicle will have a minimum of 4 doors
- Vehicle will have a minimum engine capacity of 1600cc
- Vehicle will carry M1 European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval
- There will be a minimum seat width of 16 inches/40.5cm for each designated passenger seat
- Vehicle must be capable of carrying one wheelchair passenger and four able bodied adults in addition to the driver at any time
- Luggage compartment will have a minimum capacity of 16 cubic feet/0.45 cubic metres
- Luggage loaded or placed in the luggage compartment must not protrude above the top of the rear seat
- The luggage compartment must be separated from the passenger compartment by a physical barrier, to prevent luggage entering the passenger compartment, to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council

Guidelines for Multi Access Vehicles licensed on General Public/Private Hire Licences

- Vehicle will have a minimum of 4 doors
- Vehicle will have a minimum engine capacity of 1600cc
- Vehicle will carry M1 European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval
- There will be a minimum seat width of 16 inches/0.45cm for each designated passenger seat
- Vehicle must be capable of carrying one wheelchair passenger and one able bodied adult in addition to the driver at any time or four adults in addition to the driver if the vehicle is not being used to carry a wheelchair passenger
- Any luggage carrying facility when the vehicle is being utilised to carry a wheelchair passenger must be separated from the passenger compartment by a physical barrier to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council
- The vehicle should have a luggage compartment of 16 cubic feet/0.45 cubic metres when not being used to carry a wheelchair passenger
- Luggage loaded or placed in the luggage compartment must not protrude above the top of the rear seat
- The luggage compartment must be separated from the passenger compartment by a physical barrier, to prevent luggage entering the passenger compartment, to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council

Notes applying to all Multi Access Vehicles

All fittings and equipment, whether supplied with the vehicle in its original specification or forming part of the special adaptation of the vehicle, including, without prejudice to the foregoing generality, the taillift (if fitted) and all restraining wheelchair clamps and seatbelt webbings and the wheelchair access ramp (where fitted) shall be included as part of the vehicle tests and inspections carried out by the licensing authority. The tests shall be the standard required by the statutory regulations, where appropriate. On presentation for every Annual or 6 monthly test or during the course of any inspection carried out by the licensing authority, the operator/driver shall demonstrate their wheelchair loading and securing procedure.

- 4.1 Where a currently licensed vehicle does not meet M1 European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval, it should be replaced with a vehicle which does no later than 31st March 2013.
- 4.2 Specifically, the Peugeot Premier should be fitted with a step and grab handle at both rear doors to assist non wheelchair seated mobility impaired passengers enter and exit the vehicle.
- 4.3 The revised vehicle guidelines should apply to both Private and Public Hire Vehicles.
- 4.4 Formalised training and certification should be introduced for all drivers and operators of Multi Access Vehicles.
- 4.5 When a vehicle is presented for annual or 6 monthly inspection, the operator or driver presenting the vehicle should demonstrate to the Taxi Examiner their loading and securing procedure. A wheelchair will be retained at the vehicle testing facility for this purpose.

Accessible Peugeot Taxi Consultation

ICOD staff, service users and board members were invited to participate in a consultation and trial of the accessibility of proposed new accessible vehicles on Wednesday 26th January 2011

2 Powerchair Wheelchair users and one manual wheelchair user attended the meeting.

The feedback given is detailed below:

	Positives	Concerns
Entering & exiting the vehicle	Each participant felt very safe when entering and exiting the vehicle they felt reassured of their safety due to safety straps being attached to their wheelchair. Each participant also commented on the ramp and that they felt safe as the ramp in the new vehicle is not as steep as the ramp on the current WAV. Each participant also liked that it was a rear entry system to the vehicle and felt that it was a more smoother and fluent transition process as in previous experience with WAV ramps drivers will ask users to move a little in certain directions and in some experience the ramps have not been suitable for Power wheelchairs	ICOD's concern is that all drivers are trained appropriately to assist users entering and exiting the WAV safely and securely as previous experience with WAV is that not all drivers are trained effectively when assisting wheelchair users. ICOD also have concerns with the height of the entrance door for larger powered wheelchairs and would propose for the vehicle to be tested by members of the community who use larger orthopaedic wheelchairs.
Safety features	Users felt reassured and safe when inside the vehicle knowing that there were a variety of clamps, seat belts in place to stop the wheelchair	ICOD's would propose that all drivers be appropriately trained in using the safety features. Service users have

	<p>from moving when inside the vehicle.</p>	<p>previously experienced safety issues when travelling in currently WAV where drivers have failed to secure their wheelchair in place causing movement throughout the journey.</p>
<p>Seating Space for other passengers</p>	<p>Users advised that the seating was comfortable and spacious. Users also reported that it felt like they were more in a standard car rather than a big uncomfortable vehicle,</p>	<p>Users and ICOD's concerns are that in current WAV 1 wheelchair users and 3 other passengers can travel in the same vehicle, the new WAV would only allow capacity for 1 wheelchair user and 2 passengers as long as the front passenger seat can be used. There was also concerns if someone who uses a large orthopaedic chair that there would only be space for 1 passenger in the front to accompany them. There were concerns that a wheelchair user wanted to travel with more than 2 friends then they would require 2 taxis. and again</p>
<p>Storage space for luggage etc</p>	<p>Adequate space for shopping and bags for everyday trips.</p>	<p>Users advised that if a net bag was fitted to allow for storage of shopping containing all their shopping in one space. They did express</p>

		that there was less storage space than the current WAV and advised that if they required a lot of storage space for luggage i.e. if going on holiday they these cars would not be suitable.

Summary:

All users were happy with the safety features within the car and the gradient of the ramp was within standards and allowed for powered wheelchairs and manual chairs to access the vehicle safely and securely.

ICOD would propose that all drivers be trained to effectively and efficiently operate the safety features and to be able to assist passengers into the WAV safely and with ease. ICOD would also like to propose that all new drivers using the WAV are suitably trained before driving the vehicle as some drivers may drive a variety of vehicles, it would also be beneficial to periodically provide refresher training for all drivers.

ICOD would also propose that these vehicles are to replace standard 4 seater taxis and not the existing WAV as a variety of transport for varying needs is beneficial. Increasing the number of accessible vehicles will also allow those who require the use of WAV the safety and security of being able to access a taxi. As previously many of our service users have experienced difficulty in accessing a WAV and have in many occasions have been in a predicament where they have been stranded and felt vulnerable and unsafe. Many of our service users have also experienced situations when a WAV has refused to take the passenger due to the ramp being unsuitable for powered wheelchairs. The addition of these WAV would allow for passengers who use powered wheelchairs and manual wheelchairs peace of mind knowing that the ramps are accessible and that there an increased number of WAV on the road.

ICOD also suggest that a step and a grab rail be fitted to the WAV for those passengers that have ambulant mobility to allow for ease of access to and from the vehicle.

ICOD would also propose we consult residents at MacElhose Court on the accessibility of these vehicles as a number of their residents use a range of wheelchairs. If possible to have the taxi company take along the WAV to MacElhose court and allow residents to assist with the feedback of the accessibility of these WAV