

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 29 October 2021

Subject: GM Minimum Licensing Standards for Taxi and Private Hire

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester and Portfolio Lead for Transport and Eamonn Boylan, Chief Executive of the GMCA and GM Lead on Minimum Licensing Standards for Taxi and Private Hire

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update on the progress made on the development of a set of minimum licensing standards relating to taxi and private hire in Greater Manchester. To outline the recommendations officers will be making for Stage 2 (vehicles) of the standard proposals.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The GMCA is requested to:

Note the progress of the Minimum Licensing Standards workstream and endorse the proposals at Stage 2 of the recommendations.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

An equalities impact assessment has been developed which is available at district level.

Legal Considerations:

No legal considerations for GMCA. Legal considerations rest with local authorities.

Financial Consequences – Revenue:

Each of the ten Licensing Authorities have agreed to contribute £5000 towards the development of Minimum Licensing Standards

Financial Consequences – Capital:

N/A

Number of attachments to the report:

One

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- 10 Sept 2021, report to GMCA: MLS Update and Stage 1 Recommendations
- 25 June 2021, report to GMCA: MLS Update
- 31 July 2020, report to GMCA: MLS Consultation
- 29 May 2020, report to GMCA: Clean Air Plan Update

TRACKING/PROCESS		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		No
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		n/a
GM Transport Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
n/a	n/a	

1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2018, Greater Manchester's ten local authorities agreed to collectively develop, approve and implement a common set of minimum licensing standards (MLS) for taxi and private hire services. At that time, the primary driver for this work was to ensure public safety and protection, but vehicle age and emission standards in the context of the Clean Air and the decarbonisation agendas are now also major considerations.
- 1.2 The collaborative approach that the MLS represents will ultimately help achieve the vision of a strong, professional and healthy taxi and private hire sector providing safe and high quality services to residents and visitors across the whole of Greater Manchester. This vision sees Taxis and Private Hire as a crucial part of the overall transport offer, that can consistently deliver safe and high-quality services for the public. The proposed MLS, together with funding from the GM Clean Air Plan, will help deliver improved safety, customer focus, higher environmental standards and accessibility.
- 1.3 The GMCA received a progress report on 10 September 2021, detailing the public consultation outcomes and outlining the final recommendations for policy proposals that districts were making at Stage 1 (Drivers, Operators and Local Authorities), which were endorsed.
- 1.4 This report outlines the progress since that meeting and final officer recommendations at Stage 2 (Vehicles).

2 LINK TO CLEAN AIR PLAN

- 2.1 An important element of the overall approach is to provide clarity and long term certainty for vehicle owners, so that they are able to plan the upgrade of their vehicles in a way that meets and contributes positively to GM's Air Quality, Carbon and other environmental obligations.
- 2.2 This will also help ensure that applicants to the Clean Taxi Fund, secured as part of the GM Clean Air Plan, will have a clear understanding of what locally licensed vehicle requirements will be over the longer term, for example in terms of emissions, age and other criteria, so they can determine the best use of the available funds given their specific circumstances. Note that only those vehicle owners who have licensed their vehicle with one of the GM local licensing authorities (in the 12 months prior to the scheme commencing) will be eligible for Clean Taxi Funds to support upgrade.

3 **PROGRESS UPDATE**

- 3.1 The recommendations at Stage 1 that were endorsed at the September meeting of the CA have now concluded their journey through district governance processes and have been formally approved (without alteration) by all 10 districts.
- 3.2 The Stage 1 standards will take effect from 1 December 2021. The GM Licensing Network is already working on the CCTV and Drug and Alcohol Testing policies, as well as establishing a common framework for calculating fees and conducting compliance and enforcement activity.

4 **STAGE 2 – RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Appended to this report at **Appendix 1** is the template report being used by districts, which sets out the final recommendations for the 10 standards included at Stage 2 for Vehicles.
- 4.2 Whilst ultimately decisions will be made within individual districts on each individual policy standard, the set of final recommendations reflect the aspirations of the GM Licensing Network following months of discussions subsequent to the public consultation. GM Licensing Managers considered all the consultation feedback both at a GM and district level and held further discussions at district level with Members and trade representatives. Detailed discussions also took place with Members of District Licensing Committees to help officers finalise a set of recommended Standards at Stage 2.
- 4.3 As a result of the consultation and additional discussions, a number of amendments have been made to the 10 vehicle standards as proposed at Stage 2. Most notably are the following:
- Not to recommend a date at this stage by which licensing authorities will require vehicles to be Zero Emissions Capable (ZEC) in recognition of the significant risk this poses to licensing authority business models in the absence of national standards to this effect, or legislative reform preventing 'out of area' working. However, a clear intention to move fleets to ZEC has been expressed to trades.
 - In recognition of the feedback from the trade with regards to the impacts of the pandemic, the significant cost to invest in Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV's) and the challenges within the vehicle market itself at present; the age limit

requirements for WAVs has been extended from a maximum ‘coming onto the fleet’ age of 5 years - to 7 years; and maximum age limit of 10 years extended to 15 years with a commitment to review air quality metrics and impacts over the next 2-3 years and review the policy if necessary.

- Not to recommend a specific colour requirement for Private Hire vehicles at this stage. A piece of research is to be commissioned to further consider the risks/benefits of this policy. However, single colour for private hire vehicles remains an aspiration of the MLS programme. Most major cities across the world have a private hire fleet that is uniform in colour and readily identifiable and, while the deregulated nature of the private sector in the UK makes achieving that more difficult there is a clear commitment to move in that direction as soon as is practicable.

4.4 The following summary table outlines the initial proposal and the final recommendation for each standard, with the detailed considerations behind each recommendation outlined in Appendix 1:

	Standard as Proposed for Consultation	Final Recommendation
1	<p><u>Emissions</u></p> <p>i. New vehicles being licensed from 1 April 2021 will be required to meet the standards approved following this consultation</p> <p>ii. From April 2021, existing licensed vehicles will begin transitioning to comply with the standards approved following consultation</p> <p>iii. Transition periods will be determined by each district having considered existing local policies and impacts on the trade with an expectation that all vehicles will be compliant by 1 April 2024 (non-compliant vehicles will still be liable to pay the Clean Air Zone charge subject to any exemptions permitted under the Clean Air Plan) – this will be that all licences due for renewal from April 2023 onwards will need to have a compliant vehicle</p>	<p>To require licensed vehicles to be compliant with the current emissions standard as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all <u>new to licence</u> vehicles – from the date policy is determined in district • For <u>existing fleets</u> – to begin transitioning as soon as the policy is in place and to complete transitioning by 1 April 2024* • To note the strong ambition to move existing fleets to ZEC as soon as possible <p>*must also be compliant with age policy standard</p>

	<p>attached to be compliant by 1 April 2024.</p> <p>iv. From 2025 all <u>new to licence</u> would need to be Zero Emissions Capable (ZEC*)</p> <p>v. From April 2028 onwards all vehicle licences would need a ZEC vehicle attached to the licence.</p>	
<p>2</p>	<p>Vehicle Age</p> <p>It was proposed that all licensed vehicles are under 5 years old at first licensing and no more than 10 years old.</p> <p>Views sought on consideration of a different age policy for electric and wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV).</p>	<p>To implement the following policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHV – under 5 years on to fleet and 10 years off • PHV WAV – under 7 years on to fleet and 15 years off • Purpose built HVC – under 7 on to fleet and 15 years off • Air quality metrics and impacts and testing data to be reviewed over the next 2-3 years by the Licensing Network and risks or proposed amendments brought back to Members as necessary <p>That the above policy be implemented for new to licence vehicles as soon as the policy takes effect. That existing fleets begin transitioning and are compliant with the policy by 1 April 2024</p> <p>To remove exceptional use or beyond the age limit (or similar) policies where they currently exist.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Colour</p> <p>It was proposed that all private hire vehicles should be white in colour and hackney carriages should be black with the following exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London style taxis which may be of the manufacturer’s colour; 	<p>To implement/retain the policy standard that all Hackney Carriage Vehicles should be black in colour with the following exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose built Taxis may be of the manufacturer’s colour

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow advertising on some hackney carriages; • Executive hire (for example chauffeur services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising is allowed on London Style Taxis <p>Not to recommend a specific colour requirement for Private Hire vehicles at this stage. A piece of research is to be commissioned to further consider the risks/benefits of this policy. However, single colour for private hire vehicles remains an aspiration of the MLS programme.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Hackney Carriages</p> <p>It was proposed that all licensed hackney carriages should be wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV), and that there is a consistent approach to makes and models of vehicles that will be accepted onto fleets as Hackney Carriages.</p> <p>It was also posed for consultation whether a purpose-built HC vehicle should be side or rear loading.</p>	<p>To implement/retain the standard for all licensed Hackney Vehicles to be WAV.</p> <p>To allow those with currently licensed non-WAV Hackneys transition periods (as jointly agreed by districts).</p> <p>To defer the decision on side/rear loading at this time as the consultation response on this specific point was particularly low.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Vehicle Livery</p> <p>It was proposed that all vehicles will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • display permanently affixed licence plates on the front and back of the vehicle • display a 'GM approved' sticker on the bonnet <p>It was proposed that all PHVs will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only display stickers provided by the licensing authority (at cost) which will bear the operator name, 'advanced bookings only', 'not insured unless pre-booked' and the licensing authority logo • display those stickers on both rear side doors and the back window • not use any magnetic stickers 	<p>To implement / retain the standard as proposed*.</p> <p>*Specified design/dimensions and placement on vehicles to be provided</p>

<p>6</p>	<p>Vehicle Testing</p> <p>It was proposed that all vehicles more than 3 years old will be tested at least twice a year and that all vehicles will be tested against the DVSA MOT standard as a minimum. (This will be at cost to the vehicle licence proprietor/driver).</p>	<p>To implement / retain the standard as proposed.</p> <p>To take immediate effect for all fleets as soon as the policy is in place.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>CCTV</p> <p>It was proposed that all licensed vehicles are fitted with mandatory CCTV to a standard yet to be determined.</p>	<p>To approve the drafting of a CCTV policy for further consideration and consultation.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Executive Hire</p> <p>It was proposed that the following conditions apply to executive hire vehicle (e.g. chauffeur driven) policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bookings to be confirmed by written contract • Payments made in advance of the journey or by invoice afterwards • Stipulation on the types of vehicles to be licensed • Dress code • Business plan shared with licensing authority • Vehicles not to be fitted with data heads, radios or meters • Exemptions from plates and door signs only to be given when used exclusively for executive hire 	<p>To implement / retain the standard as proposed.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Vehicle design</p> <p>It was proposed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all vehicles conform to the M1 standard (any modified vehicle at M2 standard must have an appropriate test to ensure conformity with single vehicle type approval) • No retrofitting of engines into older vehicles will be allowed. LPG conversions will be accepted 	<p>To implement / retain the standard as proposed with the following amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No advertising other than Council <i>issued</i> signage on PHVs <p>Is changed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No advertising other than Council <i>approved</i> signage on PHVs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where retrofit emissions technology is installed it shall be approved as part of the Clean Vehicle Retrofit Accreditation Scheme (CVRAS) • Specification for window tints will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Front windscreen – min. 75% light transmission b) Front side door glass – min. 70% light transmission c) Remaining glass (exc. Rear window) min. 70% light transmission • No vehicle first being licensed will have been written off in any category and will not be renewed (if previously written off) after 1 April 2021. • No roof signs permitted on PHVs • No advertising other than Council issued signage on PHVs • The question was also posed whether a swivel seat should be required in a Hackney Carriage vehicle 	<p>To remove the minimum light transmission specific for point c) remaining glass and specify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining glass or rear side windows (exc. Rear window) - allow manufacturer's tint to a minimum 20% light transmission <p>To amend the start date for non-renewal of licences with vehicles that have been previously written off to 1 April 2022</p> <p>To defer the decision on swivel seats at this time as the consultation response on this specific point was particularly low.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Vehicle Licence Conditions</p> <p>A set of proposed conditions for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles were set out as part of the consultation. The conditions cover a comprehensive set of expectations with regards to the livery, condition, fares and the responsibilities of the proprietor.</p>	<p>To implement the standard as proposed with the additional requirement (as recommended by the DfT's Statutory Guidance for Taxis and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DBS check requirement for vehicle proprietors who are not licensed drivers.

5 DISTRICT GOVERNANCE & PROPOSED TIMELINE

- 5.1 The Stage 2 reports will begin district governance procedures at various dates throughout November, December and early January, with the final meeting currently scheduled to take place on 13 January 2021.

Activity	Target Date
Stage 1 standards implementation begins	1 Dec 2021
District Governance for Stage 2 begins	6 Nov 2021
District Governance for Stage 2 concludes	13 Jan 2022
Clean Taxi Fund Scheme Go Live	End Jan 2022
Stage 2 standards implementation	With immediate effect (upon determination of policy at district level) for new licences With agreed transitional arrangements for existing fleets on WAV requirement for Hackneys
Clean Air compliance requirements	All GM Licensed non-compliant vehicles given exemption until 31 May 2023 Recommended in MLS that licensed vehicles should be compliant with CAZ requirements by 1 April 2024

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The whole transport sector has to make significant changes at pace to support the reduction in harmful emissions and achieve carbon neutrality as soon as possible, and the challenges to the taxi and private hire trade in this effort are acknowledged. In response, considerable concessions have been made in the final recommendations with regards to emissions and age limit policies, and further

efforts to mitigate the impact on the trade are proposed in the Clean Taxi Fund. As such, it is considered that the recommendations outlined in Appendix 1 are reasonable and achieve the right balance between public safety as the core function of licensing and supporting the trade through this process.

- 6.2 The vision to produce a collaborative set of minimum standards has evolved over a lengthy process of engagement, proposals and following an extensive public consultation which received high levels of support from the public. This report outlines the final recommendations for the 10 Standards for Vehicles at Stage 2 of the project and seeks the collective support of the Combined Authorities.
- 6.3 A report will be brought before the Combined Authority in due course relating to future plans for standards at Stage 3 under the new banner of GM Taxi Standards.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Note the progress of the Minimum Licensing Standards workstream and endorse the proposals at Stage 2 of the recommendations.