



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key points

This study has been conducted by Vector Transport Consultancy on behalf of Portsmouth City Council.

Hackney Carriages are regulated by local authorities. The Department for Transport has developed guidance documentation entitled TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING: BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE. The guidance addresses a wide range of licensing considerations and issues and provides recommendations on good practice. Within the licensing aspects considered, is the choice of whether to implement and maintain a restriction in the quantity of Hackney Carriages licences.

Within the guidance, the Department for Transport recommend that if a Licensing Authority should seek to retain a quantity restriction, then a survey should be carried out to establish if there is any unmet demand for Hackney Carriages. The minimum interval between successive surveys is recommended to be no more than three years.

If the result of an unmet demand survey should demonstrate that there is evidence of significant unmet demand, the recommended actions for a licensing authority may be to either raise the limit on Hackney Carriage numbers to an appropriate level, or to remove the limit all together.

If the result of an unmet demand survey should demonstrate that there is no evidence of significant unmet demand, then a third choice of action becomes available to the licensing authority, which is to keep the cap in place at the same level.

A licensing authority may choose at any time, to raise or remove a limit on Hackney Carriage numbers, but in order to retain or impose a limit; good practice guidance suggests that an unmet demand survey is required and that the result shows that there is no evidence of unmet demand.

This study is intended to fulfil the requirements of Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act and to address the questions raised in the Department for Transport (DfT) 2010 Best Practice Guidance.

Surveys were undertaken at taxi ranks in Portsmouth, for four days, from a Thursday morning to the early hours of the following Monday morning, 96 hours later. The volume of passengers and hackney carriages was recorded, together with Hackney Carriage waiting times and wait times for any queuing passengers.

The busiest ranks were the Portsmouth and Southsea Railway Station, Gunwharf Quays and Guildhall ranks. Each of these ranks handled an estimated weekly number of hires in excess of two thousand. Activity at the Guildhall rank was heavily concentrated on Friday and Saturday nights. The rank at Portsmouth and Southsea Railway Station was active throughout station operating hours and beyond, with activity continuing after the station had closed. The rank at Gunwharf Quays was active throughout the day and evening, until the adjacent retail and catering outlets and licensed premises closed for the night.

There were 99 incidences of passengers waiting at ranks. The waiting incidences involved 736 passengers. Incidences of passenger waiting were spread throughout the



period observed and occurred at several of the taxi ranks. There were two types of passenger waiting observed.

Occasional passenger waiting occurred from time to time at various ranks and at various times of day. These occasions generally related to individuals or small groups of passengers travelling together. Generally, on these occasions, passengers waited for a short period before a Hackney Carriage arrived at the rank to pick them up.

Continuous queues of passengers were observed at times. These were queues which formed and the passengers who were waiting initially were joined by additional waiting passengers, before a Hackney Carriage arrived to pick up the initial passengers. Such continuous queues remained in evidence when the rate of arriving Hackney Carriages was not sufficient to clear the queues of passengers, before more passengers arrived to join the queue.

The majority of incidences of passenger waiting occurred as occasional passenger waiting occurrences. However, these incidences accounted for a relatively small proportion (23%) of all passengers who had to wait. The majority of passengers who had to wait for Hackney Carriages were observed in continuous queues. A small proportion of passengers waited in continuous queues at Fratton Station on Friday and Saturday nights. A small number of continuous passenger queues formed at Fratton Railway Station for several brief periods, when the number of passengers arriving on trains exceeded the available capacity in waiting Hackney Carriages. These continuous queues tended to be relatively brief, as additional Hackney Carriages soon arrived to collect waiting passengers. The majority of passengers waiting in continuous queues occurred at the Albert Road rank, on Saturday night. Queues formed after 23:00 hours and remained in place almost continuously for almost three hours. During this period the volume of passengers and Hackney Carriages passing through the rank was high. As a consequence, despite the continuous passenger queueing observed, the average wait time per passenger was rarely more than four minutes and the average wait time was 2.3 minutes.

A total of 18,176 passengers were observed. The number of passengers who had to wait at the ranks for Hackney Carriages equates to 4.0% of all passengers.

Volumes at the ranks are summarised in the following table as estimated equivalent weekly volumes.

RANK LOCATION	TOTAL TAXIS DEPARTING RANK EMPTY	TOTAL TAXIS DEPARTING RANK WITH PASSENGERS	TOTAL TAXIS DEPARTING RANK	TOTAL PASSENGERS DEPARTING RANK	AVERAGE PASSENGERS PER TAXI
Fratton Station	128	1,406	1,534	2,025	1.4
Derby Road	102	14	116	14	1.0
Railway Station	72	2,399	2,471	2,930	1.2
Hard Interchange	375	1,292	1,667	2,337	1.8
Paradise Street	61	607	668	887	1.5
Commercial Road	49	672	721	1,116	1.7
Osborne Road	162	1,365	1,527	2,789	2.0
Guildhall Walk	138	2,148	2,286	5,028	2.3
Edinburgh Road	94	513	607	827	1.6
Gunwharf Quays	84	2,472	2,556	4,821	2.0
Albert Road	63	882	945	1,989	2.3
Continental Ferry Port	134	277	411	552	2.0
Cosham High Street	16	16	32	18	1.1
Cosham Railway Station	52	253	305	317	1.3
London Road	40	27	67	38	1.4
Total	1,570	14,343	15,913	25,688	1.8



Table 1 - Summary of Rank Observation Results - estimated weekly totals

Some Hackney Carriages left the ranks empty. It may be the case that many of these empty departures may have been responding to telephone bookings. Feedback from the trade supports this view.

Consultation feedback suggests that many Hackney Carriages work with / for Private Hire operators, as well as undertaking rank hire work.

Public consultation was undertaken through questionnaire surveys conducted on street and an online questionnaire. Stakeholder consultation was undertaken with minority group representatives, local businesses, hotels, licensed premises, visitor attractions, the police transport providers and officers of Portsmouth Council.

The consultation feedback indicated that:

- The Hackney Carriage fleet in Portsmouth is generally well regarded. However, there was consistent feedback from different sources that a minority of drivers have poor knowledge of routes and locations and some have poor language skills.
- Consultation feedback from stakeholders, the public and the trade suggests that a minority of Hackney Carriage drivers over charge customers and offer poor understanding of customers needs and provide poor levels of customer service. However, it is felt that the majority offer high quality services.
- The storage capacity of some ranks is often insufficient to accommodate all of the hackney carriages waiting for fares.
- There is some desire for additional new ranks and increased capacity at existing ranks.
- The Hackney Carriage trade also indicated a degree of frustration at a perceived lack of enforcement action in Portsmouth. This related in particular to the actions of a minority of drivers who over charged passengers and regarding private vehicles parked on ranks during operational periods.
- There were no significant issues raised regarding availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles, at ranks or through pre-booking. Many care homes use regular suppliers and there appears to be competition amongst the main operators to supply care premises. It is anticipated that private individuals also benefit from the level of service provided to those requiring the services of wheelchair accessible vehicles and disabled travellers, Thus leading to few issues raised. However, no confirmation was received directly through consultation feedback to corroborate this view.
- Some issues of a minority of drivers not appreciating the needs of elderly or mobility impaired travellers and providing poor customer service were raised.

Observations

Not all Hackney Carriage drivers work full time. Some work for shorter periods, a few days a week, others work long hours (12 hours + per day) up to 7 days a week, on occasions. Drivers were asked how many hours they worked each day. The average working week was 54.8 hours per week.

Some individuals own single or multiple Hackney Carriage vehicle licences and rent these licensed vehicles to drivers for a weekly fee. A small proportion of the drivers interviewed or who returned survey forms, resented the ownership of licensed vehicles by non-drivers and felt that owners should also be drivers. However, few the drivers, who rent licensed vehicles, advocated raising the limit in numbers so that they could get a vehicle licence for themselves and not have to pay a weekly fee for the licensed vehicle.



Unmet need assessment

Data from the taxi rank surveys was used, together with any indication from the public consultation surveys of frustration with non-availability of Hackney Carriages, to calculate an Index of Significant Unmet Demand (ISUD). The ISUD index value calculated from the survey results was 1.9. A value of less than 80 is normally taken as an indicator that there is no significant unmet demand. Whilst the ISUD value is a strong indicator, it should not be taken in isolation as the only valid evidence. Further evidence from stakeholder and public consultation indicated that there were normally sufficient Hackney Carriages available to satisfy demand.

Conclusions and recommendations

The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether there is evidence of significant unmet demand.

Whilst occurrences of passenger waiting were observed on Saturday night, during the period of peak demand, this was evaluated in the context of overall demand and the duration of passenger waiting. Having evaluated the level of passenger waiting, the evidence gathered suggests that there is **no significant unmet demand**.

Therefore, the conclusion of this survey is that there is **no significant unmet demand**.