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Signs + 1000

1-16 MINIBUSES

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Dear Terry Shulver.

I would like to comment on your letter dated 11 July: Ref TS, and would ask my comments are forwarded to the relevant panel members and forwarded to an association for the visually impaired and disabled.

I have grave concern about anything that would increase costs to drivers, who are normally sole trader businessmen. The costs can only further add to the problem of driver operating from other areas on economic grounds, which in turn increase costs to MK drivers ETC. ETC.

The costs that are listed are not specific, only indicting a minimum cost to the driver, not a maximum. The only exception is with glue on signs, which no one uses, on economic grounds, because they destroy the cars paint work which reduces the car resale value.

Further-more even with older and/or company cars no one uses glue signs because clearly when parked unattended, this indicates to thief's this vehicle is a cab, so it may have money inside. *Although, I don't know why taking door signs off unattended vehicles, has not already been raised by the police, on the best practice sheet also sent with your letter?*

The DSA driving test would also increase over heads. I am sure if there was an economic advantage, through reduced insurance costs, in taking some form of advanced driving test the drivers would have done this. Indeed, they may well have.

However, your policy dose not excluded any one who has demonstrated a greater driving ability. I know drivers who are driving instructors, have passed advanced driving exams, passed Heavy goods license or in my case passed a Public Service License, yet I/they will still have to pay this fee.

Although I have heard s stories of bad driving, since private hire is a profession, maybe a requirement of passing a UK test or a Council assessment could be introduced? Or recognizing drivers who have sat and passed one of the above listed as professional drivers?

The point is made that pre booked door signs would stop/reduce plying for hire by educating the public and detracting drivers.

However, the South Northant's sign are extremely bold (appoint I will come back to) have been around for a long time now and has not changed a thing, I think. There still seems an excessive amount outside the clubs, **which people still use with-out hesitation.**

Indeed, I have heard several people state they think they are great. *"They know they are not booked they know they should be, but they can now get a taxi home from Stony Stratford or the clubs, something they could not do before they become common place."*

This I fell is the bottom line; the public want to just get home.

My biggest concern is the negative impact these proposals will have on the disabled.

Recently, I assisted an operator in writing an operating policy for the tender for the new Disabled Transport Service in Milton Keynes. One aspect of this was consultation with the visually impaired, (Not Blind!)

Many stated they could recognize some shapes or colors, a system used for jockeys. For instance, if the vehicles where numbered, you could have a: 1 on a red circle: 2 on a blue square: 3 on an orange triangle ETC. Each sign having one or more recognizable features to the visually impaired person. The largest 3 companies in Milton Keynes, Skyline, Ace and Raffels all have door signs that are recognizable even if seen from a distance where you could not read the actual words in a similar way.

If all these signs had the same MK logo, in the same color, with company logo being reduced in size to accommodate, this would stop these poor people being able to recognize the door signs, which have a maximum size. But from a practical point of view could not be a lot larger anyway I really wonder if away consultation took place on this at all?

I know you have made provision for chauffeurs, however, I take visually impaired children on home to school transport and fell there should be an exception to vehicle used on a dedicated school run, for the reasons above, where clearly you could not ply for hire.

Indeed, I fell policing/prosecution fee's should not put onto plating costs, especially on vehicle not used on main stream "circuits"

I fell I must go back to economics, If I run a vehicle, for the disabled, which I do. I will incur training fees (costs) which if I purchased a vehicle not for the disabled I would not. This begs the question: Will the next vehicle I or any driver purchase be wheel chair useable?????

The answer may well be in looking at solar panels. Great Idea; saves the plant; how many people buy one???

There is another complication with paying for the wheel-chair training; a problem that I know of is relevant to at least two other operators. I have fleet insurance for any driver over 25 years with 2 years experience. If I have an absentee, leaving, holiday, illness, death, ETC I could get any licensed driver to drive my disable access vehicle showing them how to use the clamps.

However, if they need to sit a training course, this will take some time, maybe months, if the local knowledge exams are a bench mark. This would leave my business with a redundant vehicle. Again, would this make good business sense to purchase a vehicle for the disabled???

The other 2 operators I am thinking of both have a customer base of local work, rather than just home to school. Again will this have a negative impact on the disabled???

I hope the points I have raised will be considered.

Yours truly,

Steven Jackson