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CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL MINICABS GETS RESULTS, SAYS MAYOR

Ken Livingstone announced shortly before Christmas that there has been a 46% reduction in minicab-related sexual offences over the last five years. They have fallen from 157 minicab-related sexual offences at the end of November 2002 to 84 at the same time in 2007.

The Mayor believes this has happened firstly through the licensing system for minicab operators, drivers, and vehicles. Secondly, the Safer Travel at Night Campaign, where the Mayor has worked in partnership with Transport for London and the Metropolitan Police Service to reduce the use of illegal cabs, has led to many more women becoming aware of the risks of using illegal cabs. This has contributed to a significant reduction in the number of women willing to use illegal cabs in the West End - down from 18% to 4% since 2003.

By raising awareness of the dangers of getting into an illegal minicab, as well as targeted police operations against taxi touts, getting home at night is now safer. Initiatives such as Cabwise have increased the options for people out at night in the capital. The Mayor said: "Through Transport for London's licensing of the minicab trade, and through our work with the Metropolitan Police, we have continued to crack down on illegal taxi touts, and make London safer to travel at night. This work has led to a dramatic reduction in minicab-related attacks on women. It has also led to more women becoming aware of the dangers of illegal minicabs, and increasingly unwilling to risk using them.

Over the coming year we will continue to work to eradicate illegal taxi cabs from London, and to keep improving late night travel."

The Cab Enforcement Unit, which is part of the TfL-funded MPS Transport Operational Command Unit, made more than 1,000 arrests during 2007, 90% which were for taxi touting. Since 2003 officers have made more than 4,000 arrests for touting. The Cab Unit has 34 officers that focus their efforts towards anti-touting activities. TOCU, set up in 2002 to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on the bus network and illegal taxi touts has over 1200 staff including around 400 police, 450 traffic community support officers and 350 traffic wardens.



OYSTER IN MOBILE PHONE TICKETING TRIAL

Transport for London (TfL) and TranSys, the consortium that delivers the Oyster smartcard, have joined forces with O2 to trial a mobile handset that will incorporate Oyster technology. Five hundred customers with a six month trial of 'O2 wallet' phones will be able to use their mobile handset to pay for travel across London. The trial will determine how customers feel about having Oyster technology embedded in their phone. It will also shape if, and how, it can be used on the transport network.

This will help TfL and TranSys decide whether it would be worthwhile developing the trial further to offer more passengers an alternative to the regular Oyster card. It is the UK's first large scale pilot of 'Near Field Communications' technology on mobile phones. Customers on the trial will also be able to use the phones for cashless payments, smart posters and ticketing management.



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