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BUS LANES AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

There is a great strength of feeling amongst the cab trade concerning the campaign by the private hire trade to be allowed in bus lanes. Private hire has begun to use the M4 bus lane but a PCO Notice, signed by Mary Dowdye, Head of Standards & Regulations, has now been issued, which states:

The Highways Agency (an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport) is the relevant highway authority for the M4 Bus Lane, and enforcement of the bus lane is undertaken by the Metropolitan Police.

As well as buses and motorcyclists the bus lane is available to all licensed taxis and is signed accordingly. Private hire vehicles, licensed under the Private Hire Vehicles (London) Act 1998, are not permitted to use it and drivers should be aware that contravening the prohibition is an offence.

MINICABS FINED FOR USING M4 BUS LANE

At last, the RMT can report that the safety of Licensed Taxi drivers and other legal users of the M4 Bus Lane and their passengers that had been compromised by the reckless behaviour of Private Hire drivers, has been dealt with. On 27th August 2009, a Senior Customer Service Met. Police Officer phoned me to confirm that, as of Wednesday 26th August, 2009, the Metropolitan Police Service will be maintaining a strong, active, presence along this stretch of the London-bound M4 Bus lane.

Being legal users, our safety had been put at risk by a Public Administration, namely the PCO, who seems to have lost control of the Private Hire Trade that it licenses. The PH Trade, led by Addison Lee's John Griffin, have openly flouted all laws regarding the M4 Bus Lane as part of a co-ordinated Campaign to gain access to all Bus Lanes Nationally. They assumed rights that they did not have and took up full-time residency of an already busy access lane into Central London.

Taxi Trade Representatives have tried contacting the relevant authorities but have had door after door closed in their faces. Now with strong leadership and eager people who care for our trade and its members, the RMT Taxi Division have gone to the top to seek answers about what has been happening and why we have been getting fobbed off with lame excuses and lies? Having seen the contempt with which the LTDA's Bob Oddy is treated in his role as the Taxi Trade's Member of the TfL Transport Committee, RMT Reps decided to ask Government Ministers, Senior figures at T.F.L., the P.C.O, MP's and even Senior Officers at the Metropolitan Police what was going on?

Eventually, after many calls and emails, confirmation was received on 27th August, that seven PHV drivers were caught in the M4 Bus Lane and given three points on their driving licenses and a fine of £60! This followed a mobile picket at the Hogarth Roundabout on the A4 to highlight the issue. The Police say they will now also continue a highly visible presence and any PHV driver caught will be dealt with severely. Private Hire, you have been warned!!!

This should be music to the legal, law abiding users who have had to travel this section of the motorway in constant fear of a reckless, impatient, mini cab driver pulling in from an almost stationary position. How no one has been killed is beyond comprehension given some of the absolutely stupid antics of some of these clowns driving PHV's!! To pull into the path of a 20-Ton Coach/Bus or 2-Ton Taxi beggars belief!!! Do they think these vehicles can stop on a sixpence??? How can it be that there is still no need for them to take an additional driving test. This section of the Motorway is known amongst us as the 'Road of Fear'!!!!

And to make matters worse, a certain so-called 'Professional' Private Hire Company has been putting it's customers and other road users at risk after telling its drivers by letter, to use the M4 Bus Lane, night and day. In other words, ignore the Police, the Highways Agency, PCO and the safety of other Law abiding road users!!! Do as you please....the Law according to 'Griffin'!!!!

London Cabbies will be interested to see what action the new Head of the PCO, John Mason, who we now know has his hands on the tiller will take regarding a PHV business that does what it wants, when it wants and has shown that they have no regards for the law, be it on the M4 Bus Lane issue or the out of control Touting by Licensed PHV's all over Central London.

The Private Hire Trade had intentions to 'cock a snook' at the Authorities and throw away the Rule book doing as they please! Well, we've news for you! The RMT will not stand idly by and accept these actions. We will make strong representation and win back the streets! We will not stand back and watch the various venues and Establishments, infested with dodgy 'Clipboard Johnnies' illegally feeding their mates our work!

The Fight back has begun!!!

Join the RMT London Taxi Branch and you can help us win back what is legally yours!!!!"

PAUL SWEENEY, RMT Heathrow Taxi Division.

