

MINICABS ARE GREENER SAYS ASSEMBLY MEMBER

Murad Qureshi is Labour's environment spokesperson on the London Assembly. He recently said: "An easy way for eco-conscious Londoners to be greener if they need to use a taxi service is to use a private hire minicab instead." Angry response soon followed, including Brian Rice, Chairman of Dial-a-Cab, who wrote to both Murad and the Mayor. He told Taxi Globe: "I was really upset that a man in his position would make such disparaging remarks regarding the London Taxi Industry, to state our vehicles emit too much CO2 is nothing short of ignorance!"



Brian Rice

Does he not realise we operate the vehicles that his Authority dictate that we drive!

How on earth can you specify that a certain type of vehicle must be used - then criticise that vehicle

and the industry and request members of the public to use alternative inferior transport - absolute ludicrous!"

Murad later tried to explain his comments. "Black cabs are a permanent and necessary part of London's transport network and no one is proposing to replace them with PHVs. Black cabs need to clean up their act. The Mayor should take a lead on this crucial issue and do everything he can to reduce emissions – rather than pander to drivers' convenience in pursuit of electoral advantage."

Speaking at the Assembly Plenary meeting at City Hall, which discussed the Mayor's strategies, Boris Johnson said that emissions of small particulates needed to be "addressed" but denied the need to reinstate the twice-yearly inspections of black cabs which he has abolished. Murad said after the meeting: "The Mayor cannot deny the fact that the 21,000 black cab vehicles in London cause the same amount of pollution as the city's 46,000

private hire vehicles. These kinds of particulates are especially harmful, particularly if you have asthma or other respiratory problems, and they need to be reduced." Murad also made the point that the main cause of emissions from black cabs is from brake and tyre wear rather than engines and added: "The Mayor used the word 'trivial' to describe these emissions, but it is not 'trivial' if you are the parent of an asthmatic child suffering from London's poor air quality. The Mayor needs to take a lead on this crucial issue and do everything he can to reduce emissions – rather than pander to drivers' convenience."

"These vehicles should be regularly monitored, and the decision to abolish twice-yearly checks was irresponsible. Along with the suspension of Phase 3 of the Low Emission Zone, this clearly shows that Boris's commitment to our environment is lacklustre at best."

LONDON TAXI ROOF ANTENNAE

New taxis leaving the Coventry LTI production line since July have been fitted with antennae from Hirschmann Car Communication. Paragon Auto Electrics, one of the two distributors for HCC in Great Britain, won back the order to equip vehicles in the "in-car entertainment" sector from the competition. "We're extremely pleased that we are once more London Taxi International's supplier of choice," says Gerald Schaffert, Head of Sales Aftermarket at HCC. "We're sure that, with Paragon in the team, the quality of our products and our delivery reliability will also show the British manufacturer how good this cooperation is on a long-term basis."

All the "Bronze" and "Silver" models of TX4 models produced from July 2009 will initially be equipped with the HCC radio antenna. Furthermore, tests for equipping the "Gold" model have also proved successful: in addition to AM and FM reception, the model will be equipped for digital radio. "This requires the use of a higher-quality combination antenna," explains Mr Schaffert. "London Taxi International has recently successfully tested such an antenna from HCC and released it for serial installation."



CAMDEN TRIAL STOPPING AT CASH MACHINES

The London Borough of Camden has launched a trial allowing taxis and private hire vehicles to wait for passengers using ATMs at night on roads in the Borough. This follows Transport for London's (TfL) recent decision to formalise the exemption for taxis and PHVs on red routes.

Began on 27 July 2009, a six month trial is in operation, allowing taxis and PHVs to stop on yellow lines and wait for passengers to use cash machines in the London Borough of Camden. As on red routes, the trial will operate every night between 22:00 and 06:00. Licensed taxis licensed and licensed PHVs displaying the red route exemption signage will be able to stop for up to five minutes to allow passengers to use a cash machine. Waiting is still prohibited at bus stops with wide yellow lines although taxis are allowed to stop at these to pick up and set down passengers. At all other times of the day the normal stopping restrictions apply.

If the trial is successful then Camden Council will consider making this exemption permanent, other boroughs may follow suit, but for now this exemption only applies on red routes or in Camden.

TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN OXFORD STREET

What is the best way to sort out the chronic traffic congestion that plagues the retail heart of London on Oxford Street, Regent Street and Bond Street? The London Assembly Transport Committee is examining current initiatives aimed at reducing congestion and establishing what further action could be taken, led by Victoria Borwick AM. Oxford Street, Regent Street and Bond Street and the surrounding area draws five million visitors a week, making the area London's most visited retail destination and a big player in the capital's economic success. Despite this popularity, traffic congestion is recognised as a serious problem by retailers, Westminster City Council, Transport for London, landlords and visitors. The investigation will involve meetings with a range of stakeholders and experts, written evidence and site visits, with a full report of the findings and recommendations published this winter.

Victoria Borwick said: "The wall of metal that runs through Oxford Street is a nightmare for pedestrians and people trying to travel in and through this part

of London. As many as 187 buses alone travel through Oxford Street each hour during peak times so I am keen to investigate any way this might be reduced. Oxford Street's congestion is a problem recognised by retailers, Westminster council, Transport for London and the five million people who visit the Oxford Street area every week. Traffic crawling bumper to bumper along these routes has become an all too familiar frustration for shoppers and people trying to make the most of this vibrant London landmark. Bus journey times from Marble Arch to Oxford Circus are reported to be as high as 20 minutes to cover just under three quarters of a mile.

It's time to take a serious look at the various proposals that have been put forward and identify the best ways to bring about a noticeable improvement."

For more information, or to contribute your views, please contact Tim Steer at tim.steer@london.gov.uk or 020 7983 4250.