

# A READER'S LETTER TO MURAD QURESHI

As reported in the last issue of Taxi Globe, Murad Qureshi, Labour's environment spokesperson on the London Assembly, 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." He then 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."

Stanley Roth, a licensed taxi driver who is renowned for his interest in greener driving, has written to Mr Qureshi.

Dear Mr. Qureshi,

I am most surprised at your attack on the London taxi trade about the amount of pollution it creates. It is not our fault it is your fault. The trade has to buy a purpose built taxi with wheelchair capability and we have the choice of two both of which are diesel. Why attack the taxi when buses are worst - where are there CNG buses in London? For the last 14 years I as lone taxi driver have been trying to get the manufacturers to stop using diesel engines and use LPG or CNG (which can be Carbon neutral using Bio Methane from landfill sites) but as you can gather nobody listens to me. However they would listen to you as Chair of Environment Committee if you told manufacturers that they could only sell gas engine taxis. Mercedes have gas engines in Sweden and Germany and LTI could get gas engines from CRMT.

I ask you to read the following which was written by David Trevett AMIEE

Yours Sincerely

Stanley M. Roth MITG

## LOW CARBON TAXI

As you know, the UK Government has over the past few years attempted to reduce Taxi emission levels in London. The stop start driving conditions coupled with relatively low operating speed exacerbates both fuel consumption and emission levels of London Taxis.

Government bodies such as EST, TfL and DfT, in conjunction with the PCO have tried to reduce taxi emissions by such programmes as:

- LPG fuelling of London Black Cabs.
- The fitment of special catalysts (to upgrade initial emission levels from Euro 0/1, with Fairway and TX1 to Euro 3 approval level.
- Recently TfL, in conjunction with Cenex (Centre of Excellence), developed a programme in the form of a Tender for the "Low Carbon Taxi."

This programme offered funding for the development and pre-production evaluation of the selected Low Carbon Taxi offered by the winning contending contractor. It was clearly stated in the tender by TfL that there must be no collusion between contenders and Cenex/TfL during the selection process. The selected contractors were advised by TfL for application to tender.

The above incentives have all apparently suffered serious setbacks. The LPG incentive resulted in a number unscrupulous parties effectively taking the funding but not fulfilling the obligations. The result being that no LPG Taxi was officially recommended.

The Euro 3 initiative resulted in hasty fitment of catalysts to well worn Fairway and TX taxis, which just passed the initial test, but within weeks effectively produced emission levels well below requirement. The recent Cenex/TfL "Low Carbon Taxi" initiative has chosen a contractor, Evo Electric, a new company that is developing a series diesel electric version of the TX4, using as yet apparently untried and tested technology where the TX4 VM 425 diesel engine drives a uniquely designed lightweight motor-generator coupled to the rear axle. This replaces the standard automatic transmission. It is assumed that the vehicle is also fitted with batteries/capacitors and regenerative braking. The makers suggest that the fuel consumption will be reduced by around 50%, together with CO2 reduction, but a later version will exhibit fuel consumption of up to 100mpg. However, it is believed that these levels of saving, with the use of regenerative braking at the relatively low terminal speed reductions of around 30mph to near zero, will not produce sufficient kinetic energy to produce these figures. There appears to be no test figures supporting the claims.

It is further noticed that a senior technical advisor of Evo Electric is the most senior executive of Cenex. This situation does not seem in line with TfL's Tender requirement that there must be no collusion between the contractor (Evo Electric). Whilst Evo Electric were given 71% votes, another company were given an unrealistic figure of 13%. This has resulted in that company's immediate withdrawal from any further work with London Taxis, not withstanding a huge waste of time and investment. The company does have a London Taxi that does work and was approved by and licensed by the PCO, having worked on the project for over four years in conjunction with the PCO to develop a carbon neutral taxi that produces not just zero carbon, but virtually zero particulates and very low levels of NOx and SOx, none of which is covered by Evo Electric's product, which operates a standard VM 425 diesel engine.

It is stated that London Taxis account for 25% of London's vehicle emissions. There are approximately 22,000 operating in Greater London. Emission reduction on

London Taxis is vital; all emissions, not just the currently popular carbon emissions. These may be important for Global Warming concerns, but N10 particulate emissions, which are carcinogenic, together with NOx and SOx are considered extremely harmful to the taxi driver and his passengers and bystanders and account for well over 1,000 deaths in London annually. Bearing in mind, the taxi driver spends a great proportion of his life breathing London's environmentally unfriendly air.

We now understand that Smiths Electrical Vehicles are also looking at a pure electric taxi.

In conclusion, we would make the following points.

With regard to Electric Taxis, a couple of years ago, the Mayor of New York requested NASA to develop a suitable electric taxi for his city. NASA used the Chrysler PT Cruiser platform as a base, being a compact but roomy modern vehicle. The resultant test vehicles were given to the leading New York taxi operators for a period of one year to evaluate over a complete cycle of seasonal conditions. The results concluded and written as an official report under the Mayor's directive gave the following results.

- The vehicle range was barely suitable (70-100 miles) on warm days, but dropped to as low as 30 miles in the winter.
- The recharge cycle did not allow a second 8 hour driver shift, therefore considerably affected profitability.
- If a passenger required the taxi driver to go outside the city, the vehicle had insufficient range.
- The vehicle had no realistic second hand value, and was more expensive than the original petrol/diesel version to purchase, even on a volume basis.
- The reliability of the electric version was NOT anywhere as good as the original petrol/diesel version, despite the fact that NASA was chosen as the technical expert.
- The projected cost of "plug in" recharging stations in a dense city like New York was prohibitive. This was also found by Geely, makers of London Taxis in Shanghai, when considering electric taxis in Beijing.

NONE of the taxi companies wanted to take the matter further and the project was discontinued.

We read from many sources that the Government wishes to promote new jobs in these difficult times from the development of alternative fuels. However, there has been little or no direct support from Government in this area. Ethanol was favoured until it was found that fuel was to be produced using valuable agricultural resource. Electric vehicles are not strictly alternative fuelled vehicles. Electricity is at a premium in the UK, because the government has allowed North Sea Oil/Gas to almost run out, whilst we sell gas to France during our summer months at low prices and buy it back at twice the price in our winter months. France however has built vast gas storage plants. Our electricity generating plants, both coal and gas are in need of replacement, together with our nuclear generating plants.

If we take the easy line, as it seems government is doing, and use electricity as an "alternative fuel", to power our taxis, vans and commuter vehicles in London and other cities, we will initiate regular blackouts during winter months. If all the 22,000 London Taxis (not including licensed minicabs) were made to run on electricity from the National Grid, these alone would require up to 8 Gigawatt hours/day; enough to supply a large city.

If you recently watched HRH The Prince of Wales' lecture on BBC entitled "Facing the Future", he made it clear that we must all fall in line with nature's process of natural recycling, if the planet is to survive. By looking after the planet and copying its own natural techniques, both the planet and our lives will become as one and survive as one. As he stated, we are part of nature, not in control of nature. He mentioned a technology that we use which mimics nature, the conversion of raw sewage into fertiliser or bio methane and pure drinking water. It is similarly suggested that, in our case, the conversion of domestic waste (landfill) into bio methane, the next lowest emission fuel to hydrogen, surely is the best, cleanest and in fact cheapest fuel produced nationally from unwanted waste matter, of which we have an abundance.

Has anybody taken the trouble to ask London Cab drivers what they want as an alternative carbon neutral ultra low emissions alternative fuel. Well, at least Stanley Roth, one of London's highly experienced taxi drivers, has followed our endeavours, driven our test vehicles, advised his requirements and remains very positive.