



**Southampton – Hackney Carriage Unmet
Demand Survey**

Final Report

July 2015





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key points

This study has been conducted by Vector Transport Consultancy on behalf of Southampton City Council.

Hackney Carriages are regulated by local authorities. The Department for Transport has developed guidance documentation entitled TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING: BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE. The guidance addresses a wide range of licensing considerations and issues and provides recommendations on good practice. Within the licensing aspects considered, is the choice of whether to implement and maintain a restriction in the quantity of Hackney Carriages licences.

Within the guidance, the Department for Transport recommend that if a Licensing Authority should seek to retain a quantity restriction, then a survey should be carried out to establish if there is any unmet demand for Hackney Carriages. The minimum interval between successive surveys is recommended to be no more than three years.

If the result of an unmet demand survey should demonstrate that there is evidence of significant unmet demand, the recommended actions for a licensing authority may be to either raise the limit on Hackney Carriage numbers to an appropriate level, or to remove the limit all together.

If the result of an unmet demand survey should demonstrate that there is no evidence of unmet demand, then an third choice of action becomes available to the licensing authority, which is to keep the cap in place at the same level.

A licensing authority may choose at any time, to raise or remove a limit on Hackney Carriage numbers, but in order to retain or impose a limit; good practice guidance suggests that an unmet demand survey is required and that the result shows that there is no evidence of unmet demand.

This study is intended to fulfil the requirements of Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act and to address the questions raised in the Department for Transport (DfT) 2010 Best Practice Guidance.

Surveys were undertaken at taxi ranks in Southampton, for four days, from a Thursday morning to the early hours of the following Monday morning, 96 hours later. The volume of passengers and hackney carriages was recorded, together with Hackney Carriage waiting times and wait times for any queuing passengers.

The busiest rank was at Southampton Central Railway Station, there are two ranks at the Railway Station, one either side. The rank on the Western Esplanade side was the busiest rank in Southampton, with respect to the total number of hires.

There were 129 incidences of passenger queuing were observed, involving 198 passengers. Incidences of passenger queuing were spread throughout the period observed and spread over most of the taxi ranks. Occasions when passengers had to wait for a Hackney Carriage to arrive at a rank were isolated events rather than continuous periods of queuing. A total of 14,859 passengers were observed departing the ranks in Hackney Carriages, over the four days surveyed. Only 1.3% of passengers had to wait for a Hackney Carriage to arrive at a rank. The normal situation was that Hackney Carriages were observed waiting for passengers to arrive at the ranks.



Volumes at the ranks are summarised in the following table as estimated equivalent weekly volumes.

RANK LOCATION	TOTAL HACKNEY CARRIAGES DEPARTING RANK EMPTY	TOTAL HACKNEY CARRIAGES DEPARTING RANK WITH PASSENGERS	TOTAL HACKNEY CARRIAGES DEPARTING RANK	TOTAL PASSENGERS DEPARTING RANK	AVERAGE PASSENGERS PER HACKNEY CARRIAGE
Above Bar, Yates	210	1670	1880	2577	1.5
High Street	104	820	924	1257	1.5
Portland Terrace	62	433	495	624	1.4
ASDA	25	91	116	108	1.2
Coach Station	243	230	473	347	1.5
Railway Station, Western Esplanade	304	2081	2385	3907	1.9
Railway Station, Blechynden Terrace	398	1824	2222	2731	1.5
Above Bar, Titanic	102	685	787	1285	1.9
London Road	135	1018	1153	1826	1.8
Lower Banister Street	14	514	528	1014	2.0
Church Street, Shirley	187	212	399	283	1.3
Bevois Valley	50	338	388	710	2.1
Angel Crescent	21	523	544	857	1.6
Terminus Terrace	124	1103	1227	2101	1.9
Town Quay	88	393	481	569	1.4
Leisure World	28	705	733	1610	2.3
Total	2095	12640	14735	21806	1.7

Table 1 - Summary of Rank Observation Results - estimated weekly totals

Some Hackney Carriages left the ranks empty. It may be the case that many of these empty departures may have been responding to telephone bookings. Feedback from the trade supports this view.

Consultation feedback suggests that many Hackney Carriages work with / for Private Hire operators, as well as undertaking rank hire work.

Public consultation was undertaken through questionnaire surveys conducted on street and an online questionnaire. Stakeholder consultation was undertaken with minority group representatives, local businesses, hotels, licensed premises, visitor attractions, the police transport providers and officers of Southampton Council.

The consultation feedback indicated that:

- The Hackney Carriage fleet in Southampton is generally well regarded. However, there was consistent feedback from different sources that a minority of drivers have poor knowledge of routes and locations and some have poor language skills.
- Consultation feedback from stakeholders, the public and the trade suggests that a minority of Hackney Carriage drivers over charge customers. However, it is felt that the majority offer high quality services.
- Representatives of elderly, disabled and mobility impaired passengers raised issues over the availability of accessible vehicles for wheel chair users and mobility impaired users. These issues related to all licensed vehicles, rather than specifically applied to Hackney Carriages. Indeed, many of the problems encountered related to the inability to book an accessible vehicle, by telephone, rather than the availability of accessible Hackney Carriages at ranks.
- Feedback from the public and stakeholders also highlighted the lack of accessible Hackney Carriages available at ranks.
- The storage capacity of some ranks is often insufficient to accommodate all of the hackney carriages waiting for fares. This is most starkly evident at the Railway Station Western Esplanade rank which regularly exceeds capacity, when large trains are expected to arrive at the station. On some occasions, when a



large number of passengers arrived by train and wished to hire Hackney Carriages, the demand emptied the rank and passengers had to wait for Hackney Carriages to arrive. Additional vehicles generally arrived in a short time and within minutes the rank was full again, with waiting vehicles. The issue arises from the limit in available vehicle storage, rather than the availability of vehicles in the fleet, to service demand. Over supply of Hackney Carriages also occurs at some other ranks, during periods of high demand.

- There is some desire for additional new ranks and increased capacity at existing ranks.
- The Hackney Carriage trade also indicated a degree of frustration at a perceived lack of enforcement action in Southampton. This related in particular to the actions of a minority of drivers who over charged passengers and refused short distance fares.

Observations

Not all Hackney Carriage drivers work full time. Some work for shorter periods, a few days a week, others work long hours (12 hours + per day) up to 7 days a week, on occasions. Drivers were asked how many hours they worked each day. The average working week was 52.1 hours per week.

Some individuals own multiple Hackney Carriage vehicle licences and rent these licensed vehicles to drivers for a weekly fee. A significant proportion of the drivers interviewed or who returned survey forms, resented the ownership of licensed vehicles by non-drivers. Many of these drivers, who rent licensed vehicles, advocated raising the limit in numbers or indeed removing the limit altogether, for a limited period, so that they could get a vehicle licence for themselves and not have to pay a weekly fee for the licensed vehicle. However, these drivers also indicated that they didn't feel that more licences [Hackney Carriages] were required to deal with demand and that more Hackney Carriages would result in lower earnings as the pool of available revenue from hires would be distributed amongst more vehicles.

A significant proportion of licensed vehicle drivers indicated that they had been physically or verbally attacked in the previous year. This was despite the fact that all vehicles were fitted with CCTV systems.

There has been no growth in demand for Hackney Carriages since the last survey was undertaken. Indeed, a like for like comparison of survey data suggests a moderate decline in demand.

Unmet need assessment

Data from the taxi rank surveys was used, together with any indication from the public consultation surveys of frustration with non-availability of Hackney Carriages, to calculate an Index of Significant Unmet Demand (ISUD). The ISUD index value calculated from the survey results was 5.6. A value of less than 80 is normally taken as an indicator that there is no significant unmet demand. Whilst the ISUD value is a strong indicator, it should not be taken in isolation as the only valid evidence. Further evidence from stakeholder and public consultation indicated that there were normally sufficient Hackney Carriages available to satisfy demand.

Future requirements

There is an adequate supply of Hackney Carriages currently and this is likely to be enough to cater for more than 3 years. No additional licences would be necessary to cater for growth in demand over the next three years.

Conclusions and recommendations



The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether there is evidence of significant unmet demand. The evidence gathered suggests that there is **no significant unmet demand**.

It is recommended that there is no need to increase the number of Hackney Carriage licences at the present time, to meet the needs of the travelling public.

The principal issues identified by the trade relate to enforcement issues. More enforcement to catch, or discourage the minority of drivers who follow bad practices, such as overcharging, would be welcomed.

Whilst not primarily a licensing issue relating to Hackney Carriages, the representatives of elderly and mobility impaired users, would welcome initiatives to better integrate social transport with licensed vehicles. There are gaps in provision, in terms when and where transport is available and for whom travel support may be available.