

Caroline Steven

From: Junaid Hussain [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 July 2017 11:45
To: Caroline Steven
Cc: John A. Savage; Lesley Clarke; Mohammed_isaq@hotmail.co.uk
Subject: Rear/Side Loading Taxi Vehicles Choice

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to express my support for wheelchair users to be given the choice of using rear loading taxi vehicles or side loading taxi vehicles. It needs to be a choice because that is the only way we wheelchair users will benefit.

My father, who is diagnosed with Vascular Parkinsonism, is an occasional wheelchair user. He attends hospital appointments by requesting the hospital to arrange an ambulance vehicle which is notably automated rear loading. For all other occasions, I have to arrange for a hackney taxi vehicle with side wheelchair access to pick my dad up from home. Some of our main concerns with these are as follows:

- **Safety** - We do not go to taxi ranks especially bus station and high street taxi ranks because we feel these are not safe. Even if the High Street rank is unsafe for rear loading vehicles, it is unsafe for side accessible vehicles too. Side loading vehicles have been around for 8 years and they have still managed to get by through moving around in locations where they can load up a wheelchair safely and that is the reason I feel a choice of rear accessible vehicles would benefit wheelchair users.
- **Costs** - Private hire companies price you out of the market and because hackney taxis are metered they are reasonably priced. One of the reasons why I'm putting my support forward for rear loading vehicles is because I rang a private hire company for a rear loading taxi, and was quoted £40 return from Shelburne Road to Castlefield Community Centre.
- **Efficiency** – Further from the previous point, the private hire company weren't even sure if they could supply one and told me it might be about an hour waiting time. Therefore, I drove down to High Street rank and asked one of the wheelchair accessible vehicle drivers to come to my house and he was there in ten minutes. If there were side and rear loading vehicles available I would have definitely chosen a rear loading vehicle but I was restricted with my option to just side loading vehicles. The metered fare was also £6 one way which is a significant difference.

The problems and concerns that I have with these side loading vehicles are:

- **Steep incline** – The ramps used with side loading taxi vehicles have a very steep incline which makes it very dangerous and difficult to operate a wheelchair. My father is a big man and I don't expect most of the taxi drivers to be able to manually push him into the vehicle (especially in the high street taxi rank) and when a driver can, the head always hits the roof of the vehicle unless my dad drops it down or we tilt the wheelchair (which is not safe). Whereas a rear accessible vehicle has a lowered floor making it a low incline and in a rear accessible vehicle you have an electronic winch which pulls the wheelchair of any size straight into the taxi with no height problem and actually takes it inside the vehicle with a remote and the driver has to only clamp it in. Once the wheelchair has been

clamped in, whether you're turning left or right, it won't tilt either way. However, with the side access when you're manoeuvring left or right it sometimes tilts which can be dangerous.

- **Rank with footpath limitation** – At locations where the footpath is narrow, i.e. bus station, once the ramps are pulled out from the side loading vehicle, there is no room to manoeuvre the wheelchair to push into the vehicle so what we need to do is pull the vehicle a metre or so away from the kerb in order to manoeuvre and push the wheelchair on to the ramp and then into the vehicle. This makes it dangerous because then the road becomes narrow for vehicles to pass through. This is obviously not an issue for rear loading vehicles.

- **BCC versus WDC** – Bucks County Council provides rear accessible vehicles and Wycombe District Council should provide rear accessible for wheelchair users as well.

- **Dignity** – With side loading vehicles, I often find that the wheelchair is left with the passenger facing the vehicle side window because you cannot turn the wheelchair facing the rear due to shortage of space in some vehicles. Facing the side window or rear is an undignified way of sitting for the wheelchair user especially when they want to face the front. The wheelchair user when facing the front, would be able to see an oncoming hazard or a potential accident. Further to this, while facing the front, the wheelchair user could take great interest in the environment instead of facing backwards which restricts what you can see and makes you feel disorientated.

Based on the reasons provided above, I would like to support a choice of rear loading taxi vehicles to be made available and that is the only way wheelchair users will benefit if the provider has a choice. There are plenty of day centres for disabled people but we just don't have the choice of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Sincerely,

Junaid Hussain,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area, obscuring the name and any contact information that might have been present.

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