

Dear Committee,

We hope you and your families are well and keeping safe.

We would like to put forward our thoughts regarding access around our City. These concerns are for the public gaining access to residential, commercial and medical premises, as well as the Transport hubs.

Edinburgh licensed taxis are integral part of the public transport network. We have one of the newest, cleanest( emissions) fleets in the UK. As such we require access to ALL areas of our City, without being forced to take our paying customers( our citizens and visitors) on longer than required routes to their chosen destinations. We would encourage this committee to guarantee access by licensed taxis ( Black cabs) to ALL existing and planned BUS GATES .

One area that we have concerns with is the closure of Waverley Bridge. We feel this will make our customers favour drop off areas for Waverley station like outside the Balmoral hotel. There have been historic problems in this area that Police Scotland have been addressing along with the Cab Office. Our opinion is the closure of Waverley Bridge will increase the problem as opposed to helping the problem with congestion in this area which is mainly contributed to the amount of buses on it.

We would also like to raise our concerns about closing main arterial roads in the City. By closing these roads, all that will happen is traffic will be redirected onto residential streets. We'd also like to highlight the extra congestion that the City faced last year during the festival and the Summertime Streets project, as by closing those few streets the extra congestion and then the subsequent pollution increase was there for everyone to witness, we can't see how it could be claimed that this trial was a success!

We support the ideas of making social distancing easier on the public but do question some of the streets chosen.

East Fettes Avenue being an example, what we as a trade while driving around our City witness is, a need for more commercial/residential areas to be assisted with measures to help social distancing ie; Raeburn Place

as opposed to East Fettes Avenue, as the volume of pedestrians is significantly increased in this area.

There are other areas of social distancing that we have concerns in, It's in every citizen's best interest to reduce the spread of this awful virus, so we all can return to our working, social and domestic lives without the fear of contracting it.

Government guidelines state there should be a 2 meter distance kept between people that don't share a domestic household . We ask how can this be possible in a saloon car?

This committee are wanting to extend pedestrian areas to reduce contamination, yet haven't taken steps to address social distancing in a car?

Our understanding is, that Department of Transport have taken this decision to allow Private Hire Cars to continue to operate, which in doing so contradicts the guidelines that the Government have been ramming home since the beginning of the lockdown, which is to stay 2 meters apart.

Black cabs have been chosen by NHS and Transport Scotland to convey passengers to Covid-19 testing centres.

Our fleet are able to comply with social distancing. A protective screen between passengers and driver. These aren't available in a saloon car and haven't been tested on safety and reliability.

Let me make this very clear these concerns aren't about stopping Private Hire working, these concerns are about stopping the spread of this deadly virus.

As I have stated our concerns are that a public hire operator will be hindered from accessing areas of our City. We firmly believe that where buses go, so should licensed Black Taxis .

Thank you for hearing our concerns and we hope that sooner rather than later can we rid our City, Country and the World of this deadly virus.

Scott Blair

Chair

Edinburgh Cab Branch

Unite the Union