



## **Unite response to the Civil Aviation Authority Consultation on issues affecting passengers' access to UK airports: a review of surface access**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This response is submitted by Unite the Union, the UK's largest trade union with 1.42 million members across the private and public sectors. The union's members work in a range of industries including transport, manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction, local government, education, health and not for profit sectors.
- 1.2 The Civil Air Transport (CAT) membership of Unite is currently the largest representative group of workers employed within the aviation industry. The union's current membership includes 67,000 members working within Civil Aviation and many thousands more whose employment is dependent on the fortunes of the aviation industry supply chain.
- 1.3 Unite also represents rail workers, buses service employees, taxi drivers and lorry drivers, all of which can be effected by any changes made by the CAA. In total Unite has over a quarter of a million members in the various forms of transport. In this response we intend to concentrate on the issues affecting taxi drivers.
- 1.4 Taxi drivers undertake a three-four year training course before becoming licensed and have been voted the World's best taxi service for the last six years. There are over 2,000 taxi movements a day at Heathrow airport, picking up over 3,000 passengers per day. The taxi trade at Heathrow airport offer an on-demand service throughout the operational hours of the airport and are able to offer a service in all cases of emergency, such as disrupted flights.
- 1.5 There are taxi ranks at each of the five terminals at Heathrow airport and taxis provide an on-demand service at every terminal. All London taxis are 100 percent wheelchair accessible giving a service to every passenger passing through Heathrow Airport. From 3rd October 2016 all London taxis will accept all major credit cards with no surcharge on the fare. London taxis can take five or six passengers (depending on model) and the fare is the same for regardless of the number of passengers travelling in the taxi representing excellent value. And from 1st January 2018 all London taxis will be required to be zero emission capable which will lead to the London taxi fleet the greenest, cleanest taxi fleet in the country. As such the London taxi ranks can assist Heathrow Airports bid to have a third runway by fighting to reduce air quality problems that currently plagues
- 1.6 Despite all of these positives points for the passenger it is our belief that HAL introduce a number of unfair competition elements against taxis operating against the best interests of passengers.

- 1.7 Unite believes that this consultation came about following complaints from Purple Parking to the CAA after being moved away from the terminals at Heathrow at the expense of Heathrow airport's own car parking.

## 2 Summary

- 2.1 It is our view that there are a number of issues in which Unite feel that Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) are promoting unfair competition in regard to the taxi service being offered to the public at Heathrow Airport.
- 2.2 Many schemes exist that give passengers' guarantees on service and price in locations close to the airport and when travelling outside of the London licensing area.
- 2.3 The Heathrow Express (HEX) provides an excellent service to Paddington Station, but this isn't suitable for all passengers. It is almost always cheaper to travel by taxi if there are more than three passengers travelling together. If passengers require an onward journey from Paddington then it could be cheaper for three passengers travelling together to travel by taxi. It could also be quicker by taxi.
- 2.4 Unite believes that Heathrow Express abuses its position at Heathrow Airport by approaching arrival passengers airside before they pass through the terminal and even on some flights. They give passengers misleading information about the price of the HEX compared to a taxi ride. They fail to point out that the taxi price is for up to five passengers, and inflate the taxi prices often failing to point out that an onward journey is required from Paddington Station at an additional cost.
- 2.5 It is Unite's belief that this is unfair completion and an abuse of HEX's. The taxi trade at Heathrow Airport have no way of challenging these claims because the taxi trade have no access to passenger's airside of the terminal. We believe this abuse should be stopped and accurate information comparisons should be given to passengers on arrival and in on board adverts in literature.
- 2.6 The taxi trade would like to introduce taxi information desks into all of the terminals. Previously this was the case but no desks operate at the present time. The desks were paid for by a levy on the entrance fee that is collected by HAL from every taxi that enters the taxi feeder park at Heathrow. The taxi trade would like to re-introduce the levy to provide money for taxi information desks at each terminal. The levy could also be used to provide a taxi pre-booking option on the BAA website, which would enhance the passenger experience.
- 2.7 Recently HAL have put forward proposals to introduce a private hire car park, Authorised Vehicle Area (AVA), at Heathrow Airport. The taxi trade have many competitors at Heathrow but accept that fair competition is essential to passenger choice. Unite assumes that this will be an area where private hire vehicles can wait until their prearranged fare arrives and not a money making scheme by the airports owners that will promote unlawful toting.
- 2.8 Currently there are private hire illegally touting in and around Heathrow Airport, with very little enforcement. Members have even observed information desk staff, within the terminals provide misleading information about taxi fares and times of journeys. Unite believes this can only be as a result of a lack of training or employers providing false or misleading information to unlawfully encourage passengers to use private hire services. Unite trusts that such concerns can be addressed swiftly.

2.9 Unite is particularly concerned over how Heathrow by-laws 3.28, 2.29 and 4.14 will be implemented at the airport. In particular Unite cannot understand how a private hire vehicle can be allowed to enter Heathrow Airport in "anticipation of a booking" (4.14). The whole premise of these by-laws and the private hire car park, AVA, seem to be acting against fair competition. Unite believes that the wording should limit private hire access to those who have paperwork or a digital confirmation of a booking and those with fares already on board.

### **3 Conclusion**

3.1 Unite believe the taxi trade is suffering from unfair competition at Heathrow Airport from the onward journey alternatives. We hope that our concerns can be addressed around the Heathrow Express approach airside and the misleading information that is given regarding the comparison with the taxi trade.

3.2 Unite would like our concerns addressed with regard to the proposed private hire car park, AVA, and the illegal touting that is taking place daily at Heathrow Airport. We would also like our concerns around by-laws 3.28, 3.29 and 4.14 to be addressed.

3.3 Unite believes that Taxis at Heathrow Airport provide the best on-demand service to passengers in the world. Unite want to build on this excellent service in conjunction with the CAA and Heathrow Airport to further the passenger experience at Heathrow.

**Bobby Morton**  
National Officer for Passenger Services

28 April 2016

For more information contact Colin Potter Research Officer via

[colin.potter@unitetheunion.org](mailto:colin.potter@unitetheunion.org).

Tel 0207 611 2591

Unite the union  
128 Theobalds Road  
Holborn  
WC1X 8TN