

Brussels, 10 June 2005

IRU POSITION ON ACCESSIBILITY OF TAXIS FOR MOBILITY-IMPAIRED PEOPLE

Updated IRU Position on the accessibility of taxis for mobility-impaired people.

I. ANALYSIS

- Accessibility of taxis and hire cars with driver for people with reduced mobility has been high on the political agenda for several years, not only at ECMT level (a joint ECMT-IRU study was published in 2001 on the Economic Aspects of Taxi Accessibility) and the European Commission level (the 1999 study “Taxi for All”), but also in some EU Member States (the United Kingdom and the Netherlands). Making transport fully accessible forms part of national and international policies to promote the further social integration of people with reduced mobility.
- In 2001, the IRU position stated that the taxi sector is willing to offer services for mobility impaired people provided that this is not done at a financial loss. Responsibility for decision-making on accessibility matters should remain with local authorities who should consult user groups and the taxi trade before taking decisions.
- The ECMT will launch – in cooperation with the IRU – a study on the technical aspects of taxi accessibility in 2005, to examine how vehicle design could contribute to a higher degree of accessibility. The IRU will participate in a Task Force supervising this study. The results of this research project will provide recommendations to vehicle manufacturers and national and local authorities on taxi design providing better accessibility for mobility-impaired people.
- The following aspects must be taken into account when considering vehicle accessibility:
 - If the improved accessibility of all taxis and hire cars with driver becomes mandatory, the sector’s costs will substantially increase as new vehicles become more expensive, retrofitting of existing vehicles becomes obligatory and maintenance costs increase.
 - Accessibility requirements may be very different depending on the type of service offered, such as contractual services, hailing and telephone booking, and on whether the service areas are urban or rural. High costs relating to accessibility could be greatly controlled by using a case-by-case approach rather than imposing accessibility requirements on the entire fleet of taxis and hire cars with drivers.
 - Special tariffs for people with reduced mobility will become more generalised. This means that the extra costs of making vehicles accessible will have to be included in the fares for general users, making travel by taxi or hire car with driver more expensive and further undermining their position as valuable alternatives to the private car.

II. IRU POSITION

The IRU and its Members supports vehicle accessibility for mobility-impaired people, if these are introduced in line with the IRU's 3 "i" strategy:

- innovation: the taxi sector is prepared to work closely together with authorities, manufacturers and user groups to provide innovative solutions to obtain a higher degree of accessibility of taxis and hire cars with driver.
 - incentives: in order to accelerate the entry of accessible vehicles into the market, authorities should introduce a series of incentives relating to compensation for specially-reduced fares, installation of boarding aides in the vehicle and direct and indirect taxation.
 - infrastructure: better accessibility for people with reduced mobility can never be achieved by only making the vehicle accessible. Authorities should make the necessary investments to adapt road infrastructure and taxi stands to the needs of people with reduced mobility.
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