

Speech at the Cabinet Meeting in relation to the Cowley LTNs on 18/7/22:

By Mr. Bashir Ahmed. The Chairman of C. O. L. T. A – City of Oxford Licensed Taxi-cab Association.

Dear Chair:

It is a huge shame that the Hackney Carriage (more commonly referred to as the black cab) trade which provides an essential and alternative public transport option for thousands of travelling passengers weekly in Oxford is once again being ignored in such important matters that affects us.

There are approximately 4,600 businesses in Oxford providing around 114,000 jobs. Around 7 million people visit our great city each year. With these figures in front of us, doesn't the authority see black cabs playing a vital role in getting people around of oxford efficiently? Because the desire is to push people away from bringing their cars in to oxford city or residents driving their own cars.

Cowley LTNs have proven to be a disaster for our trade further complicating our journeys with obstacles placed in our paths. Cowley (just as East Oxford) is a busy area for us where we regularly pick up and drop off passengers. Since the introduction of LTNs, we have continuously been lumped in with the general traffic along Iffley road and Cowley road and have not been able to provide an efficient service to any of our passengers including those in wheelchairs and those who are vulnerable.

We have a long history of getting passengers to their destination quickly and efficiently with safety and comfort and avoiding congested routes which benefits the paying passengers. All main routes are now regularly congested due to LTNs. Passengers are picked up late and dropped off late at their destination be it in the city centre, business park, science park, unipart, car plant or hospitals.

Furthermore, it's important to highlight this fact that the black cab trade is asked to make a huge investment in electric taxis. By 2025 all of our current taxis will have to be zero emissions capable (electric taxis) and each costing around £70,000 - £75,000. Twenty percent of our trade are already operating in zero emissions capable cabs. Unlike buses, we don't get any subsidy from the government or local Council. But we are doing our bit helping the environment in a very difficult financial climate.

We need unrestricted access through all roads in Oxford and a 24 hour rank in the City centre. We are experiencing a negative impact on our trade due to the Cowley LTNs. There is no balance in the investment we are asked to make against the road closures we face which is having a significant financial impact on our drivers. This is during the time of very high living costs and very high fuel prices.

Our cabs are easily recognised and accessible and 100% of them are wheelchair accessible. And again I say this, you are ignoring the essential service we provide especially to the elderlies, partially or fully disabled, vulnerable, mothers with young children and those in wheelchairs.

If the authority is serious in its consideration of the installation of ANPR cameras just as you have done on Cornwallis road and Bartholamew road, then we would request that two further roads AS A MINIMUM are considered. These are Littlehay road and Littlemore road so our trade is able to access these roads to provide service to our passengers without further delays. It's important not to get too concerned about this request because it obviously will not be the case where all 107 black cabs will go through these roads at once.

But it must be stressed that this needs to be put in place immediately without further delay as we and our passengers are impacted very badly on a daily basis. But if these means lengthy delays in further consultations which will take months etc, then access must be granted immediately. Why are we and our passengers made to suffer due to a trial period which should be focussing on private car usage.

Thank you for reading.

Mr. B Ahmed

C. O. L. T. A