



## **Improving the provision and accessibility of taxi ranks in Northern Ireland**

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## **About Imtac**

Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

Our aim is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Regional Development.

## **Background**

Taxis are a key mode of transport for many disabled people and older people. Taxis provide a personal service that get people from A to B that is usually available both during the day and at night and in both urban and rural areas.

Access to other forms of public transport in Northern Ireland has improved greatly over the past decade. Despite this taxis remain and will continue to remain a key part of the transport chain that makes getting around easier for disabled people and older people. Taxis can help connect people to public transport, taxis can connect people to services and facilities that are difficult to access by public transport, taxis can provide an alternative service in places where there is no or poor public transport provision and taxis provide services when public transport does not operate.

## **Improving the provision of taxi ranks**

The provision of taxi infrastructure in the form of taxi ranks plays an important role in improving access to taxis for disabled people and older people. In Northern Ireland Roads Service are currently responsible for providing taxi ranks on public roads while other ranks, such as at airports, are the responsibility of the service provider.

Strategically placed taxi ranks can improve access to key services and facilities. Imtac is particularly keen to see improved provision of

accessible taxi ranks at key public transport facilities in our towns and cities. We believe that ranks provided close by to bus and train stations are a key part of the transport chain required to make getting around easier for many disabled people and older people. Good quality taxi ranks at key public transport facilities means people can use taxis to access an improved public transport network to travel further afield or to complete a local journey after travelling by public transport.

Imtac recommends Roads Service, the Department for Regional Development and Translink reviews the current provision of taxi ranks adjacent to and within bus and rail stations across Northern Ireland with a view to identifying opportunities to provide more and upgrade existing ranks to improve linkages between public transport and taxi services. The review should also look at other opportunities to link taxi services to other key services in our towns and cities through better rank provision.

### **Improving the accessibility of taxi ranks**

As well as increasing the availability of taxi ranks it is equally important to ensure ranks are designed to be used easily and safely by disabled people and older people. Rank accessibility is particularly important as the Department for the Environment plan to link the provision of accessible vehicles to ranks under the provisions of the Taxis Act 2008.

Currently there are no design standards for ranks that take into account accessibility requirements for disabled people. Imtac recommends that Roads Service develop such a standard and that these be applied to any new rank provision in future and, where possible, the redesign of existing ranks.

Imtac recommends that the following be considered in any future design standard:

#### Signage

Ranks should have clear signage indicating it is a taxi rank. If appropriate the signage should contain important additional information such as the hours of operation. Signage should be centred around 1400mm off the ground, be no lower than 900mm and no higher than 1800mm. Typeface used should be Sans Serif and be at least 16pt in

size and use lower case lettering. Lettering should be embossed and contrast well in colour from the background to the sign.

### Seating

Where possible covered seating should be provided at ranks.

### Telephone facilities

At ranks where staff are not available a telephone should be provided. If appropriate the telephone should connect people to the taxi operator. The telephone should be located no more than 1040mm off the ground, include embossed figures and be fitted with an inductive coupler.

### Access for wheelchair users

The Department of the Environment is looking at ways to increase the number of taxis accessible to wheelchair users. Therefore ranks must be designed to allow easy access and egress from the nearside of the taxi. This is because most wheelchair accessible taxis only allow access from this side. As some taxis also allow rear access for wheelchair users consideration should also be given in the design of ranks to allow safe rear access to vehicles.

Ranks should be sited in locations where the width of the pavement is sufficient to allow the deployment of any ramps and for the wheelchair user to manoeuvre. The minimum footway width to allow this is 3000mm but widths up to 4040mm are preferable. Research<sup>1</sup> indicates that the maximum angle of the ramp to allow safe access/egress should be no more than 1 in 8 or 12.5%. Where it is safe to do so a kerb height of 200mm is preferable.

### Pedestrian infrastructure

Careful consideration should be given to improving the pedestrian areas around the taxi rank to enable barrier free access to public transport facilities or for onward journeys. Where people are required to cross a

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<sup>1</sup> “National Review of Services and Vehicles Standards in Taxis, Hackneys and Limousines in Ireland”. Commission for Taxi Regulation, Dublin (2005).

street dropped kerbs or raised crossings with appropriate tactile paving should be provided close to the rank.

## **Conclusion**

Taxis are a vital part of the transport chain that enables disabled people and older people to get around easily. However the potential benefits of taxis are reduced by the barriers can that make using them difficult and the poor integration of taxis with other forms of transport. This paper outlines how the Department for Regional Development can increase access to taxis through improving the provision of taxi ranks whilst at the same time making it easier for disabled people and older people to access and use public transport and other key services.

## **Useful publications**

The following publications were used in developing this paper:

“Improving Access to Taxis” published by the European Conference of Ministers for Transport in 2007.

“Inclusive Mobility – A guide to best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure” published by the Department for Transport in 2002.

## **Contact us**

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