

# Private hire industry faces modern shake up



## Plans to modernise the capital's private hire industry have been announced by TfL.

Drivers of private hire vehicles – which include minicabs and limousines – would need to meet a formal English language requirement and be able to provide guaranteed fare estimates for customers in advance, if proposals are approved.

Other measures include more robust insurance requirements and providing driver and vehicle details to customers, including a photo of the driver, before the start of each journey.

The proposals come after a public consultation and review of private

hire regulations, which attracted more than 16,000 responses late last year. They will be put to the TfL Board for approval in March.

TfL's chief operating officer for Surface Transport, Garrett Emmerson, said: 'Londoners have given a very clear indication of how they would like us to shape the regulation of the private hire industry to deliver improved safety and customer service. We had an overwhelming response to the consultation and all of the proposals we are taking forward received majority support.'

The number of private hire drivers in the capital has soared in recent years from 59,000 in 2009/10 to more than 95,000 today. This has contributed to growing traffic congestion, illegal parking and areas of poor air quality. TfL estimates that one in ten vehicles entering the zone is now a private hire vehicle.

Mayor Boris Johnson has asked TfL to investigate removing the Congestion Charge exemption for private hire vehicles in the city.

He said: 'New technology has revolutionised the private hire industry in recent years, bringing with it quantum leaps in terms of faster, better and cheaper services for customers. However it has also meant a rapid increase in the number of private hire vehicles on our streets.'

'These vehicles now represent more than 10 per cent of vehicles entering the Congestion Charging zone on a daily basis and I have asked TfL to investigate the impact and feasibility of removing the exemption for private hire vehicles.'

The Mayor is also progressing legislation to enable TfL to regulate pedicabs, or rickshaws, which will help to tackle fare abuses prevalent among some drivers.

**Did you know?**  
There are **36,000 more private hire drivers operating across London today than in 2009/10**

# Happy birthday Poems on the Underground!

TO celebrate 30 years of Poems on the Underground, customers can once again enjoy the original five verses originally published in 1986.

Throughout February the Tube's four million passengers can read the works by celebrated writers Seamus Heaney (later to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature), Guyanese-British poet Grace Nichols, populist American poet William Carlos Williams, Robert Burns and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Poems on the Underground has become a celebrated public arts programme and has shared more than 500 works with the travelling public since it was established. From classical verse to contemporary and international pieces, some of the poets have been famous, others relatively unknown.

As part of the celebrations, Underground staff will be highlighting some of their favourite poetry on whiteboards in stations across the network. Customers will also be able to pick up a free leaflet featuring a collection of 30 poems from the 30 years, from central London Tube stations.

Poems on the Underground was inspired by the American writer Judith Chernaik, who, along with poets Gerard Benson and Cicely Herbert, thought that a few lines of verse would be a welcome addition among the advertising on the Tube. The idea has since been copied by public transport authorities on networks in Dublin, New York, Paris, Barcelona, Stockholm, Helsinki, St Petersburg and Shanghai.

Judith said: 'It's hard to believe that an idea which started as a pleasant way of providing reading matter on Tube



journeys has reached its 30th year. The programme continues to thrive because of London Underground's support and an amazing public response – and above all because of the poets past and present who have enriched our lives in so many ways.'

■ For more information, visit [tfl.gov.uk/poems](http://tfl.gov.uk/poems)

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