

**Renfrewshire Council
Scrutiny Board**

**The Scope Available to
the Council to Enhance
or to Assist or
Encourage Other
Providers to Enhance
Travel Services to those
Persons in the
Community with Special
Travel Needs**

APPROVED

**by Renfrewshire Council
15 December 2005**

Report 8: 2004/2005

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Approved by Renfrewshire Council: 15 December 2005

Convener: Councillor Terry Kelly (Labour)

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Lead Officer: Andrew Noble
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Review of Enhanced Travel Services in Renfrewshire for People with Special Transport Needs

Report by The Scrutiny Board

1 Summary

1.1 At its meeting on 21 June 2004 the Scrutiny Board agreed to review the options open to the Council to assist and encourage providers of travel services for people in the community with special travel needs. At the meeting of 13 June 2005, the Scrutiny Board agreed to the purpose and scope of the review. The objectives of the review were to;

- Consider the main issues relating to the provision of transport services to people with special transport needs.
- The approach taken by other local authorities in this area and any national developments which may have a bearing on the review.
- The ongoing implementation of the Council's licensing policy in relation to taxi services.
- Identify areas of good practice and areas for further development in the provision of transport services for people with special transport needs

1.2 The focus of the review was primarily on the Council's current licensing policy regarding wheelchair accessible taxis. The secondary focus of the review was on other transport service providers and the mechanisms open to the Council to improve transport services for people with special transport needs.

2 Recommendations

2.1 There should be no change to the Council current taxi licensing policy on wheelchair accessibility.

2.2 Consultation should be undertaken with taxi service providers on developing a disability awareness training programme for all taxi drivers, potentially as part of a larger customer care training package.

2.3 A review should be undertaken on the potential for zoning taxi licensees in the Renfrewshire area as a means of overcoming the "market distortion" caused by Glasgow Airport.

- 2.4 A taxicard concessionary scheme should not be introduced in Renfrewshire due to the cost implications and the relatively small number of people who would benefit from the scheme compared to the number of transport disabled people in Renfrewshire.
- 2.5 The development of a local transport strategy for Renfrewshire should incorporate the MACS guidance "Transport Strategies : Planning for Inclusion" as part of the strategy meets the needs of transport disabled service users and to ensure that consultation on the strategy is conducted in an effective and meaningful way. This approach will make a significant contribution to involving transport disabled people in the design and delivery of transport services.
- 2.6 As part of the development of a local transport strategy the Council should consult with bus and rail companies on the implementation of the MACS document "recommended minimum training standard for staff assisting disabled people".
- 2.7 The development of the local transport strategy for Renfrewshire is the key process to take forward the findings of the Scrutiny Board Review.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 The Review was undertaken at meetings on 27 June, 15 August and 29 August 2005. The Scrutiny Board has considered evidence from a variety of sources. Witness contributions were received from;
- Corporate Services Department, Legal Services; Marcus Parham, Senior Solicitor
 - Strathclyde Passenger Transport; Christian Schmidt
 - Representatives from the Transact group and the Access Panel, both based at the Disability Resource Centre.
 - Planning and Transport Department; Scott Allan, Senior Engineer
 - Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance; Mr Allan Rees
 - BAA; Stuart Wingate, head of Customer Services
 - Airport Taxis; Mr William Mottram
 - TGWU; Mr Andrew Connolly Area organiser, representing Taxi Drivers in Renfrewshire
 - Other Scottish Local Authorities were also asked to submit written evidence for the Scrutiny Board investigation. Some evidence was submitted by other local authorities, however this was not able to be considered by the Scrutiny Board due to the timescale of the review.

4 Definition of Special Transport Needs

- 4.1 There is no agreed definition of “Special Transport Need”. The definition used in the review process has therefore been altered slightly to “transport disabled”. The definition “transport disabled” is used by the Disability Rights Commission. This definition is based on the Social Model of Disability, which the Council has adopted as part of our Equal Opportunities in Service Delivery Policy statement, and is defined in the research as “the unnecessary exclusion of disabled people from current forms of transport”.
- 4.2 Using this definition transport includes both public transport (buses, trains, taxis, aircraft and ferries) and private individual transport (cars and cycles) as well as community transport, i.e. Dial-a-bus.
- 4.3 The Review focused on external providers of transport services, not transport services provided by the Council. This is implicit in the phrasing of the review to “Review the options open to the Council to assist and encourage providers of travel services for people in the community with special travel needs”.

5 Background

- 5.1 The research report “Attitudes of disabled people to public transport” carried out by MORI in 2002 for the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), found that, on a UK level transport is disabled peoples single biggest local concern. Accessible transport is also a key element of enhancing and sustaining social inclusion across communities in Renfrewshire. The research showed that disabled people travel a a third less often than the able bodied population, and are 60% less likely to have a car or drive. As a result transport disabled people are more frequent users of taxis and public transport, particularly buses.
- 5.2 The Disability Rights Commission’s(DRC) research indicates that approximately 12% to 13% of the population of the United Kingdom are transport disabled. In Renfrewshire this figure would equate to approximately 20,000 people being transport disabled, a sizeable section of the community.
- 5.3 Renfrewshire Council is undertaking a consultation exercise on the development of a new local transport strategy for Renfrewshire. The updated local transport strategy is due for publication in the Spring of 2006. The development of a new local transport strategy provides an ideal opportunity for the Scrutiny Board to review the role the Council can plan in assisting and encouraging transport providers to enhance the travel services they provide to people with a transport disability. The findings of the Scrutiny Board Review will be used to inform the development a local transport strategy for Renfrewshire.

6 Legislative and Policy Background

- 6.1 There are a number of key pieces of legislation which set out the legislative background for the Scrutiny Board Review, these are the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, Transport (Scotland) Act 2001, Scotland's Transport Future: the Transport White Paper 2004, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the newly promulgated Disability Discrimination Act 2005.
- 6.2 The Scottish Executive's overall aim of Scotland's Transport Future is promote economic growth, social inclusion, health and protection of our environment through a safe, integrated, effective and efficient transport system.
- 6.3 The Executive's objectives are to:
- promote economic growth by building, enhancing, managing and maintaining transport services, infrastructure and networks to maximise their efficiency;
 - promote social inclusion by connecting remote and disadvantaged communities and increasing the accessibility of the transport network;
 - protect our environment and improve health by building and investing in public transport and other types of efficient and sustainable transport which minimise emissions and consumption of resources and energy;
 - improve safety of journeys by reducing accidents and enhancing the personal safety of pedestrians, drivers, passengers and staff;
 - improve integration by making journey planning and ticketing easier and working to ensure smooth connection between different forms of transport.
- 6.4 Local Transport Strategies have a statutory basis in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001. This enables Scottish Ministers to issue guidance to local authorities on the preparation of local transport strategies.
- 6.5 The Council is responsible in terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 for the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles. In terms of that Act the Council can determine vehicle specifications and the types of vehicles which are suitable to operate as taxis or private hire vehicles.
- 6.6 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines Discrimination as;
- Refusing or deliberately not providing a service to a disabled person because they are disabled.
 - Offering a service at a lower standard to a disabled person because of their disability.
 - Offering a service on different terms to a disabled person because of their disability.
 - Failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person.

- 6.7 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 places an obligation on transport providers to improve access to the transport infrastructure. For example;
- The sale of tickets
 - Transport information in all forms
 - The physical environment of stations from entrance to the platform or bus stop
 - The services of transport staff at a station or at a travel information centre.
- 6.8 The Disability Discrimination Action 2005 extends the legal obligations on transport providers. By December 2006 a range of new obligations which transport providers will need to take reasonable steps to meet. These include;
- Change a policy, practice or procedure which makes it impossible or very difficult for a disabled person to get on or off a vehicle, or to use any services on the vehicle (for example, a buffet car)
 - Provide an auxiliary aid or service (any kind of extra help) to a disabled person so that they can get on, travel on and get off a vehicle or use any of the services on the vehicle.
- 6.9 The draft statutory Code of Practice produced by the Disability Rights Commission on the provision and use of transport vehicles states that all companies providing transport vehicles should;
- Draw up a policy on including disabled people in their services and regularly review it.
 - Make all staff aware of their responsibilities under the DDA and provide them with training in serving disabled customers and how the DDA relates to their role.
 - Adopt a complaints procedure which is accessible to disabled people.
 - Consult disabled customers and staff about their experiences and how they would like the services improved.
- 6.10 The Westminster Government's legislative agenda is to increase access to goods services, employment and transport for disabled people, as evidenced by the DDA 2005.
- 6.11 Renfrewshire Council's taxi accessibility policy was approved by the Corporate Services Committee on 6th August 1998 in response to growing concerns about the lack of suitable, accessible taxis in Renfrewshire and the problems encountered by disabled people, and in particular wheelchair users, of accessing suitable taxi services.

- 6.12 The Council's policy was amended by the Regulatory Functions Board on 21 June 2001. The Policy states that all taxis are to be wheelchair accessible by the end of 2006, with a phased introduction starting in 2004. This policy applies only to taxis and not to private hire vehicles. The present taxi fleet in Renfrewshire consists of 214 licensed taxis, 80 of which are wheelchair accessible, or 37% of the total taxi fleet. The number of wheelchair accessible taxis is steadily increasing as taxi operators come to renew their licences..

7 Witness Sessions

7.1 Corporate Services; Legal Services

- 7.2 Marcus Parham, a senior solicitor in the Licensing section of Corporate Services provided the Scrutiny Board with an overview of the development of the council's taxi accessibility policy, as outlined above, and described how this policy had been implemented.
- 7.3 The Scrutiny Board were informed that since the accessibility policy had begun to be implemented at the beginning of 2004, there had been considerable resistance from the taxi operators. Many of the taxi operators felt the policy was unfair as it only covered taxis not private hire vehicles.
- 7.4 In addition the market for taxi services in Renfrewshire was subject to considerable "distortion", due to Glasgow Airport. Many taxi drivers are almost a permanent presence at the airport, due to the level of work available to them there. 177 of the Council's 214 licensed taxis have permits to operate from the airport. This has two linked effects. Many taxi drivers in Renfrewshire do not have a radio system, as they do not need it to access work, which means they cannot be booked. This particularly effects disabled people who are far more likely to phone to book a taxi from home than to get a taxi at a taxi rank.
- 7.5 The second effect the airport has is that it reduces the number of taxis servicing the rest of Renfrewshire, as so many of them service the airport. This again has a disproportionate effect on disabled people trying to access taxi services from their homes. To help overcome this problem of market distortion caused by the airport some consideration may need to be given to the distribution of taxi services within Renfrewshire. This problem is likely to become more acute as the airport continues to expand. An alternative approach could be to introduce a more rigorous zoning system for taxi licenses than is currently the case in Renfrewshire.
- 7.6 The Scrutiny Board were informed that there had been a long-standing dialogue between the Council and taxi owners and operators regarding the Council's accessibility policy. At present there is a legal challenge to the policy.

8 Planning and Transport Department

8.1 Mr Scot Allan, Principal Engineer from the Council's Planning and Transport department provided an overview of the process involved in developing the second local transport strategy for Renfrewshire. The first local transport strategy had been produced in 2000, and the second strategy for Renfrewshire would form part of a three tiered transport strategy for Scotland, which would have a local, regional and national element.

8.2 Mr Allan outlined the main elements of the development of the local transport strategy. The Board heard evidence from Scott Allan in relation to preparation of the Local Transport Strategy which would set out the Council's objectives and capital spend in relation to transport. He referred to the Regional Transport Strategy being prepared by the West of Scotland Transport Partnership and also the Scottish Transport Strategy being prepared by the Scottish Executive. Mr Allan detailed of the Scrutiny Board the extensive period of consultation in relation to

- The road system
- Footpaths
- access to transport

Discussion forums were being held to obtain evidence of the important issues to be addressed in the Transport Strategy. He referred to the ongoing technical analysis which had been undertaken since 1999 and the increase in traffic and car ownership since then.

8.3 The Local Transport Strategy documents would be drafted in the winter of 2005 and that a working party would be established in order that the strategy could be presented to the Council in Spring of 2006. Issues which would be considered were accessibility to the transport network including, taxi ranks, rail and bus, the 'ring and ride' service being developed for the rural areas, quality bus partnerships and contracts, and the aspirations of disabled people and whether these should be reflected in the local transport strategy.

9 Strathclyde Passenger Transport

9.1 Christian Schmidt a policy analyst from Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive outlined SPT's policy and operational approach to service provision for transport disabled people.

9.2 SPT/Westrans Joint Transport Strategy makes clear its commitment to "access for all" and has an objective for Accessibility ,to; "Promote social inclusion by improving access to identified priority areas, job opportunities, healthcare and community facilities; and through the development of accessible and affordable public transport".

- 9.3 To support this objective SPT had close links with a number of disability groups to promote this objective, for example the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA), Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) the Disability Rights commission (DRC) and the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).
- 9.4 SPT's commitment to enhancing accessibility for transport disabled people was exemplified in their approach to working with service providers. A number of examples were provided including:
- The development of Howood Railway station at a cost of £1.2million. Opened in 2001, the station is fully accessible to the transport disabled, with ramps to both platforms. It has 2 disabled car parking spaces, sheltered waiting areas and CCTV and Helppoint facilities.
 - The provision of a Dial a bus service in Renfrewshire. There are 5 services covering the entire Council area.
 - A rolling programme, on contract renewal, SPT specifies bus to be low floored, and where possible wheelchair accessible.
 - There are 5 SPT supported bus services in Renfrewshire. For example the 300 service bus operated by Arriva links Paisley and Clydebank, via Glasgow airport and Inchinnan Business Park. The service is operated using the latest bus technology, including a low floor fitted with integral ramps, operated by the driver.
- 9.5 SPT are a key partner in the development of a Local Transport Strategy for Renfrewshire, and will work closely with the Council to produce a strategy.

10 TRANSACT Group

- 10.1 The Transact Group is based at the Disability Resource Centre in Love St, Paisley. Its membership consists principally of Disability Resource Centre users who have an interest in the issues surrounding local transport provision for disabled people. The group raised a number of issues about transport provision in Renfrewshire. The Transact group raised a number of points which underpinned their submission.
- The desire of disabled people to use the same transport as everyone else
 - The ability to travel spontaneously
 - The importance of service providers, particularly taxi drivers, treating disabled people with respect and dignity.
 - The importance of personal safety when making a journey, i.e. the safe use of equipment to help disabled people access trains, buses and taxis and having staff properly trained to use this equipment.
- 10.2 The Scrutiny Board heard evidence from the Transact group that disabled people had a range of problems when trying to access suitable transport. These included;

- A lack of access to suitable forms of transport at the required time, particularly bus and taxi services.
- Disabled people felt discriminated against when using all forms of public transport
- The quality of the transport services available to disabled people was patchy at best, and there was a particular problem relating to the provision of taxis for disabled people in Renfrewshire.
- There was a lack of information on the accessibility and availability of transport services
- There was a lack of appropriate training for transport service staff and drivers to help disabled passengers
- There was a view that Paisley was poorly served by its lack of a central bus station, which would greatly improve facilities for disabled transport users.
- A critical issue for the group was that disabled people's views were properly represented in the design and delivery of transport services. The development of a local transport strategy for Renfrewshire provides a consultation opportunity to get disabled people involved in the transport planning process.

10.3 Representative's from the TRANSACT group reinforced to the Scrutiny Board the centrality and importance of accessible transport for disabled people; the view was expressed that it is one of the most important issues to the disabled community in Renfrewshire.

11 Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance

11.1 Mr Alan Rees the secretary of the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA) gave evidence to the Scrutiny Board. SATA is an umbrella organisation which brings together transport service providers, service users and voluntary sector organisations with a common aim of expanding accessible transport provision across Scotland.

11.2 Mr Rees presented the Scrutiny Board with evidence in two areas, the provision of wheelchair accessible taxi services across Scotland, and a proposal for Scottish Local Authorities, including Renfrewshire, to adopt a subsidised "taxi-card" system.

11.3 SATA had brought forward a petition to the Scottish Parliament on the issue of taxi service provision for disabled people. The petition "Public Petition in Accessible and Affordable Taxis in Scotland" was presented to the Scottish Parliament in October 2002. The petition stated that "taxis are a vital means of door to door transport for many thousands of disabled people, particularly those with restricted mobility for whom bus services and the concessionary schemes that go with them, are not accessible and beneficial". The petition requested that the Scottish Parliament;

1. Encourages and enables all local authorities in Scotland to have at least 50% of their vehicles licensed taxi fleet fully accessible for wheelchair users and other disabled people.
 2. Encourages and enables all local authorities in Scotland to have a standard concessionary scheme for taxis to make them affordable for at least 14 single trips a week throughout the year.
- 11.4 The Petition had not been successful in achieving its aims, however Mr Rees explained that the Petitions committee had referred the Local Government and Transport Committee, which commissioned research on the basis of SATA's petition. This Committee concluded that there was "nothing further it could usefully do" other than make the report available for people to influence the policies of their local authorities. SATA are continuing their campaign to gain support for their position as outlined in the petition to the Scottish Parliament.
- 11.5 Mr Rees stated that the majority of the wheelchair accessible taxis were located in the major urban centres of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee. Renfrewshire's taxi licensing accessibility policy was noted as going beyond SATA's petitions request for a 50% wheelchair accessible taxi fleet.
- 11.6 Mr Rees provided the Scrutiny Board with details of how taxicard concession schemes operate in other local authority areas, notably the scheme operated by Edinburgh City Council. Edinburgh City Council operate a scheme for disabled people who cannot use public transport buses. The taxicard scheme provides a discount of up to £3.00 per trip, for a maximum of 104 single trips per year.
- 11.7 SATA estimated that, based on a Strathclyde Passenger Transport report from 1995 that 2.4% of the total population would benefit from a taxicard system. On this basis a taxicard system in Renfrewshire would be available to 4,300 people. If Renfrewshire were to adopt a taxicard scheme on the basis of the service provided by Edinburgh City Council, the cost would be an estimated, £312 per person per year. On the projection of the 1995 SPTE report, and full uptake and utilisation of the taxi card scheme would cost the Council £1,341,600 per annum.
- 11.8 There would clearly be a very significant financial cost to the Council if a taxicard scheme on this basis was introduced. It should also be noted that, based on the research conducted by SPTE a taxicard scheme would only be available to 2.4% of the population, compared to approximately 12% of the population who are, according to the DRC, transport disabled. A taxicard scheme on this basis would therefore be very expensive to operate and only benefit a small number of people in Renfrewshire. In addition a taxicard scheme, while reducing the cost of taxi services for disabled people would have no effect on the availability of taxis for disabled people in Renfrewshire.

11.9 Such a scheme could not be funded by the Council; additional resources would need to be made available by the Scottish Executive to fund it. It should also be noted that in their evidence the representatives from the TRANSACT group did not raise the cost of taxis as a significant issue with the Scrutiny Board.

11.10 Mr Rees also stressed to the Scrutiny Board the importance of training for transport staff on disability awareness. Mr Rees informed the Scrutiny Board that the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) had produced "Recommended minimum training standards for staff assisting disabled people", which had been endorsed by the Scottish Executive in February 2004. The minimum training standard covers;

- attitude and communication
- physical Assistance
- handling mobility aids
- handling special equipment

Mr Rees explained to the Scrutiny Board that the training standard devised by MACS should form the basis of discussions with transport service providers, including taxi service providers.

12 British Airports Authority (BAA) Glasgow Customer Services Director Mr Stuart Wingate

12.1 Mr Wingate was invited to give evidence to the Scrutiny Board because of the importance of Glasgow Airport in relation to taxi services in Renfrewshire. Mr Wingate provided an overview of BAA's position regarding the provision of taxi services for the Scrutiny Board.

12.2 Mr Wingate stressed to the Scrutiny Board that, in all areas of the airports business, there was a commitment to act responsibly, a commitment to sustainable growth and an active commitment to developing and integrated transport strategy.

12.3 The needs of all BAA's passengers were taken into account, however Mr Wingate stressed to the Board that particular regard was paid to passengers with reduced mobility who may have special transport needs. The Airport liaise with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) to ensure that they comply with the Code of Practice for Access to Air Travel for Disabled People (March 2003).

- 12.4 Mr Wingate informed the Scrutiny Board that BAA were satisfied that under the current arrangements for taxi provision the needs of the Airports passengers were being met; including those passengers who have a disability. Mr Wingate went on to say that, assuming there is no legislative requirements to change the taxi licensing arrangements at Glasgow Airport, it would be BAA's preference that the present licensing arrangements are maintained.
- 12.5 Members of the Scrutiny Board questioned Mr Wingate about BAA's preference regarding the taxi fleet serving the airport. Mrs Wingate informed the Board that the Airport's preference was for a "mixed" taxi fleet; one which included wheelchair accessible taxis and cars which were not accessible. Mr Wingate made the point that a considerable percentage of the airports passengers are international business travellers who in many cases travel considerable distances, for example to Edinburgh, by taxi. In Mr Wingate's view these passengers would prefer a saloon car which by definition would not be wheelchair accessible.

13 Local Authorities

- 13.1 A number of local authorities were asked to make a contribution to the Scrutiny Board investigation. No local authority provided a witness to the Scrutiny Board, however four authorities, North and South Lanarkshire, Dundee City and Aberdeen City Council provided written feedback. The feedback from these authorities was mixed, regarding their licensing conditions for wheelchair accessible taxis.
- 13.2 North Lanarkshire and Dundee City Council both have wheelchair accessibility taxi licensing policies similar to Renfrewshire's which has seen a steady growth in the number wheelchair accessible taxis in both Council areas. In addition Dundee City Council has a policy, in place for approximately five years, that as a condition of the taxi licence, drivers must undergo a disability awareness course run by the Council's Social Work Department. The taxi trade in Dundee had responded poorly to the introduction of this policy, however they had not formally challenged it.
- 13.3 South Lanarkshire are in the process of developing an accessible taxi policy and are in consultation with the taxi trade in their area on the details of the policy. As with other local authorities a change in licensing policy has been resisted by the taxi trade in South Lanarkshire.

- 13.4 Aberdeen City Council have encountered significant challenges in introducing a new licensing policy for wheelchair accessible taxis. The Council has faced a legal challenge from the taxi trade in Aberdeen who are opposed to any change in the current licensing policy. Aberdeen City Council has sought guidance from the Scottish Executive on this matter, particularly in relation to the long promised technical specification for disabled access taxis, which are being developed by the Ministry of Transport at a UK wide level. The Scottish Executive has not been forthcoming with any assistance to Aberdeen City Council on this issue.
- 13.5 Research carried out by the Democracy Disability and Society group, who have produced a disability awareness training pack for taxi drivers, showed that only six of Scotland's 32 local authorities provided disability awareness training for taxi drivers.

14 Airport Taxi Services and Transport and General Workers Union

- 14.1 The Board heard evidence from Mr Drew Connolly, Transport & General Workers Union and Mr William Motram, Airport Taxi Services.
- 14.2 Mr Connolly made it clear to the Scrutiny Board that he disagreed with the definition of transport disability outlined in an earlier paper by the Reviews lead officer. Mr Connolly's view, based on his experience as a taxi driver was that there were only about 2,000 people with a transport disability in Renfrewshire, contrasting to and estimated 20,000 in Renfrewshire base on research conducted by the Disability Rights Commission.
- 14.3 Mr Connolly informed the Scrutiny Board that Renfrewshire was adequately served by wheelchair accessible 'facility' cars and that his members disagreed strongly with the Council's policy on wheelchair accessible taxis. Mr Connolly's view was that the policy was expensive and burdensome on taxi drivers in Renfrewshire, because of the additional costs involved in purchasing and operating a wheelchair accessible taxi. Mr Connolly stated that the Council's policy on wheelchair accessible taxis should be withdrawn as it was damaging to the taxi trade in Renfrewshire, many of whom were sole traders.
- 14.4 Mr Connolly went on to state that there was a misconception about the role of taxis and how they provide a service. Taxis serve taxi ranks and can be hailed in the street, unlike private hire cars. Mr Connolly explained to the Board that taxis responded to demand for their services, and as result there were occasions when disabled people did not get a service as promptly as they would wish. Mr Connolly also expressed the view that the complaints about taxi services from disabled people was directly linked to the reduction of dial a bus services within Renfrewshire.

- 14.5 Mr Mottram echoed the view of Mr Wingate that the airport wanted and required a mixed taxi fleet which contained both wheelchair accessible and saloon cars. Mr Mottram informed the Scrutiny Board that he was keen that dialogue between the Council and the taxi service providers should continue on the Council's licensing policy.

15 Conclusion

- 15.1 The evidence provided to the Scrutiny Board through the course of the review confirmed the importance of accessible transport for disabled people. The primary focus of the review on taxi services in Renfrewshire identified a complex series of issues which present significant difficulties for the Council, taxi service providers and disabled people in Renfrewshire.
- 15.2 It became clear through the course of the Scrutiny Board Review that there was a tension between the needs and aspirations of disabled transport service users, the Council's policy on wheelchair accessible taxis and the interests of the taxi service providers. It is also clear from the evidence submitted to the Scrutiny Board that the Council's current taxi licensing policy is a cause of considerable friction between the Council and taxi service providers. However the policy on wheelchair accessibility which the Council has adopted is broadly in line with best practice in other Scottish local authority areas, and significantly, is consistent with the direction of legislation from the Government, to increase access to goods and services for disabled people.
- 15.2 The development of a local transport strategy for Renfrewshire provides an opportunity to involve disabled people and community groups in a consultation process on transport infrastructure and service provision. Based on the evidence submitted at the Scrutiny Board there is a clear potential for a number of the issues raised by the Transact group in relation to poor or uneven transport services being addressed as part of this process. It is also clear from the Scrutiny process that SPT are willing partners in developing a local transport strategy which is sensitive to the needs of disabled service users.