QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In the Report (Taxi Unmet Demand Survey - December 2024) there is mention of five taxi ranks in Perth. This includes the Railway Station. Given that this rank is private and taxis have to pay to present at that rank, have the results been weighted to reflect this fact?

It is important to include all active taxi ranks and even informal rank locations, in order to gather a true picture of activity. This generally includes private ranks where possible. There is no weighting of results as such. All activity at all active ranks is considered equally. In some surveys in the past (not in Perth) there have been incidences where inclusion of data from a private rank with permits meant that the ISUD index was much higher than the threshold for significant unmet demand, but if the private rank were excluded from calculations, then the ISUD value would be within limits. In such occurrences, we have presented parallel assessments with and without the private rank, to demonstrate that it was the cap on permits for the rank, rather than the cap on licences, which caused significant unmet demand.

With the Perth data, exclusion of the Railway Station data from analysis would still result in an extremely high ISUD value. So the results would not be different. The with and without station analysis was not included in the report, in order to avoid complicating matters.

NOTE FROM PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL:

Subsequent to publishing of the December 2024 report, LVSA conducted a comparative analysis of including v. excluding the Perth Railway Station. Please see *Addendum to the Taxi Unmet Demand Survey report*. A summary of the results indicate '*the ISUD value, including the Railway Station rank was 2,143.5. When the observations at the Railway Station were excluded, the value dropped to 1,614.9. Both values are well in excess of the threshold value of 80, which suggests that the level of unmet demand was significant.*'

In the Report there is mention of the South Street, outside Loft taxi rank. This is a part-time rank. Have the results been weighted to reflect this?

The rank observations indicated that the rank outside Loft is not in effective operation. On each night of the survey, the rank space was full of parked vehicles. Pre-booked hires were obtained from outside the club. Passengers would call to book a licensed vehicle and then be picked up by a vehicle which pulled up in the roadway, next to the parked vehicles, outside Loft. There were no rank hires, no waiting taxis and no waiting passengers observed at the South Street, Loft rank. Where there are part time ranks, which are in operation, the camera footage may in some incidences be limited to the operational hours. However, some part time ranks (not in Perth) are used at times, outside the operational hours. As such, it is good practice to observe all activity at the rank, rather than turning a blind eye to operations outside the posted hours for the rank. Such rank usage is rare, but not unheard of.

It appears that all comparative data is between 2017 and 2024. Can you confirm why 2021 survey results were not used in any of the comparisons, please?

There are some comparisons in the report with 2021 data. However, that period was affected by post Covid-19 recovery period. In 2017, the ranks were much busier and the supply of taxis at ranks was working well. 2017 could be considered to be the last survey of a 'normal' situation. The comparison between 2024 and 2017 relates primarily to the level of passenger waiting and the level of passenger demand in each year. The comparison was intended to demonstrate that the level of unmet demand in 2024 was not necessarily just a function of lack of licenced taxis. There are likely to be numerous factors which influence matters. A key comparison is that passenger waiting in 2024 was significantly greater than in 2017. Yet, there was less demand in 2024 than in 2017. There are more taxis licensed in 2024 than there were in 2017, but the smaller fleet in 2017 was able to provide greater capacity to meet demand from the ranks.

In order for the taxi fleet to meet rank-based demand, some behavioural changes would be required, both within the licensed vehicle trades and by the public. For example, taxis focussing less on pre-booked hires and more focus on working during peak demand periods off the ranks. However, the tools available to the Council to influence such changes are limited. In reality, measures are limited to raising or removing the limit on taxi licences or changing taxi vehicle specification requirements, or adjusting the fares table, or a combination of these measures. Changes to the fares table are not within the remit of this survey, so recommendations are limited to what would be required with respect to increasing the number of licences.

There are external influences which are thought to affect both passenger demand and taxi provision. Some of these have been mentioned in the report as feedback from the trade, stakeholders and members of the public. Most of these external influences cannot be controlled or modified as a measures to influence provision of taxis at the ranks. The closest analogy I can think of at the moment is that it is akin to driving a car, when you only have control of the throttle, but not the steering or the brakes. Difficult to navigate if you can only influence one controlling factor.

The influences on passenger demand for taxis in Perth have changed the level of demand and when it occurs. For example, there appear to be fewer nighttime economy venues in Perth than there were in 2017. The retail offer in Perth appears to have changed in recent years. Both these changes and potentially other changes will tend to influence demand. If demand has dropped at the ranks, the trade will tend to look for alternative earning opportunities. Whether this is undertaking more pre-booked hires, working part time as a driver and part time elsewhere or undertaking contract work rather than public facing hires. Public behaviour also changes over time. The public consultation had calls for Uber to be introduced in Perth. This is not an uncommon response from the public. As mobile apps are used to control more and more of daily life, from controlling lighting and entertainment at home and controlling washing machines and fridges, people are increasingly inclined to use their smartphones to arrange transport. This includes bus and rail travel, as well as booking licensed vehicles. So, whilst we have seen a reduction in demand at the ranks, we don't know how much of this is a reduction in overall demand and how much is due to changes in behaviour from use of ranks, in favour of use or pre-booked hire, whether obtained via an app or via telephone booking.

The report is limited to recommendations regarding the licence limit. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees regarding how any additional licences would be used. There is strong evidence that some of the most recently released licences are not used for public facing hires and concentrate on contract work. However, we don't know if this use of newly licensed taxis has displaced other licensed vehicles which would otherwise have been used on these contracts.

Was the three-day survey period (June 20-23, 2024) representative of typical demand? Could local events, school holidays, or seasonal factors have distorted the findings?

The three-day survey period was intended to obtain a snapshot of information regarding the level of demand for taxis at ranks and supply of taxis available at the ranks. School holidays are generally avoided when undertaking rank surveys. Seasonal variations are taken into account when the data is analysed.

The cost of public consultation has to be balanced against the overall cost of the project and the role that the public consultation results have within the process.

With only 435 public responses, is the sample size statistically significant? Does it adequately reflect diverse demographics (e.g., age, mobility needs) and usage patterns across Perth?

The unmet demand survey related to the level of demand for taxis at taxi ranks and through hailing passing taxis. The public consultation survey was intended to complement the taxi rank observations and to provide information regarding the level of demand which could be suppressed. Other information was also collected and reported. When analysing the data collected from different sources, the commonality of results was considered. The information from the public consultation survey generally tended to corroborate information from the rank survey and stakeholder consultation. As such, the likelihood that a radically increased sample size would result in radically different result from the public consultation survey seemed unlikely. Therefore, it would be considered that the survey was indeed statistically significant and reasonably representative of the population. The level of confidence associated with a sample of this size would be within the range of plus or minus 10%, for non-extreme results.

It is acknowledged that the method of survey would have influenced results, with not all of the population having access to an online survey. All alternative survey methods would be likely to have an influence on the proportion of the population which could be sampled. The traditional alternative was to undertake face to face public consultation in public areas, such as shopping streets in the City centre. This approach also tends to skew the sample towards people who undertake weekday daytime shopping in the City centre. It was felt that online consultation was less constrained regarding geography and time or response. i.e. people all over Perth could respond at any time of day or night.

Why were these five ranks chosen, and were they observed equally? Could focusing on high-demand ranks like Murray Street overstate unmet demand compared to less-used ones?

All ranks in Perth were included. All were observed over the same period. There was no focus or weighting applied to the Murray Street rank. The results were aggregated across all ranks. Data was collected for the number of passengers, number of taxis departing the ranks and the number of passengers waiting and the length of time passengers waited. This data was aggregated for all ranks and analysed. The assessment of unmet demand relates primarily to the proportion of passengers who had to wait for a taxi.

How many taxis were available via pre-bookings during rank observation periods? Did the survey account for these in assessing total supply, or does it overemphasize rank-based demand?

An unmet demand survey relates to how many taxis are available at ranks and for hailing and how many passengers hire taxis at ranks and by hailing. The level of passenger waiting at taxi ranks or for hailing taxis is considered and assessed to determine whether this level of waiting (termed unmet demand) is significant. If taxis were undertaking pre-booked hires rather than servicing rank-based demand, this was not taken into account when assessing the level of taxi availability at ranks to service rank-based passenger demand.

If 24 licenses are added, could reduce earnings per driver (due to diluted trade) deter new entrants or push existing drivers out, negating the intended increase in supply?

There are many influences which influence the level of demand for taxis, the pattern of demand for taxis (e.g. daytime demand versus nighttime demand), the availability of taxis in different locations and times and the type of hire work which taxis undertake. The willingness of drivers to undertake different types of hire work, and the hours that drivers work is influenced by many factors. It is likely that 24 additional licences would influence both demand for taxis and supply of taxis. It is unlikely that the introduction of 24 new licences would result in 24 licences leaving the fleet.

Why weren't options like optimizing existing taxi schedules (e.g., incentivizing peak-time work) or improving rank efficiency explored before recommending more licenses?

All taxis are operated within independent commercial businesses. These businesses determine when and where taxis operate and the type of hires which taxis undertake. Businesses may operate a single taxi or multiple taxis, and each taxi may be driven by a single driver or multiple drivers at different times. It is not feasible to implement direct measures to control when the commercial taxi businesses operate there taxis, where they operate their taxis and whether they obtain hires from ranks or through pre-booking.

How would 24 new taxi licenses affect private hire cars, which dominate pre-booked hires? Could this oversaturate the licensed vehicle market, harming both sectors?

There are many factors which influence private hire cars. The addition of more taxi licences is likely to influence private hire cars. It is intended that the addition of more taxi licences would also influence how many taxis service rank-based passenger demand.

The recommendation ties new licenses to wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs). Is there specific data showing sufficient demand for WAVs at ranks, or could this condition limit uptake?

Evidence collected over successive taxi unmet demand surveys and from other stakeholder consultation has indicated that wheelchair users face greater difficulty hiring suitable licensed vehicles, than other members of the public. Increased availability of wheelchair accessible licensed vehicles would be anticipated to improve availability of suitable licensed vehicles available for wheelchair users to hire.

What concrete data supports claims of a driver shortage? If taxis are parked due to no drivers, how will 24 new licenses be utilized without recruitment strategies?

Stakeholder and trade consultation indicated that some taxis are not utilised to undertake rank based hires. Feedback also indicated that some drivers don't work full time. Feedback indicates that there is a limited level of multi-shift driving of individual taxi vehicles. Some new licences may be taken up by existing drivers who don't currently own a taxi. Some may attract new entrants to the trade.

How does Perth's ISUD (Index of Significant Unmet Demand) of 2,143.5 compare to other cities of similar size? Is this value unusually high due to methodological flaws rather than genuine unmet demand?

The ISUD level in Perth was unusually high. The level of passenger waiting observed at ranks was extensive. The unmet demand was genuine.

NOTE FROM PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL:

For reference, the ISUD level based on a selection of Surveys of Unmet Demand have been set out below:

- Stirling in 2022: 271.1
- Aberdeen City in 2024: 55.7
- Edinburgh in 2018: 46
- Argyll and Bute in 2019: 38
- Dundee in 2024: 30
- Perth and Kinross in 2018 (for Perth): 6.7
- Perth and Kinross in 2018 (for Blairgowrie): 17.3
- Perth and Kinross in 2022 (for Perth): 704.3
- Perth and Kinross in 2022 (for Blairgowrie): 2,007.7
- Perth and Kinross in 2024 (for Perth): 2,143.5

Did the survey consider shifts toward ride-sharing apps or public transport improvements that might reduce future taxi demand, making additional licenses unnecessary?

The survey considered a snapshot of observed data over a three-day period. The measures proposed were intended to address current levels of unmet demand.

How was trade feedback (e.g., insufficient trade, parked taxis) factored into the ISUD or recommendation? Were specific concerns dismissed, and if so, why?

Trade feedback was considered in conjunction with other information collected. Trade feedback corroborated information obtained from other sources, including the rank surveys. Trade feedback covered a range of subject areas. No feedback was dismissed. Trade feedback was incorporated in the unmet demand survey report. Some feedback was summarised to represent multiple responses.

2017 figures there are 1959 taxis on the ranks with 159 passengers waiting roughly 2 mins and 08 seconds. 2021 there were 774 taxis on the ranks and 159 people waiting roughly 12 mins and 31 seconds. In 2024 we have 943 taxis on the ranks 331 fares waiting yet the waiting time is only 5 mins and 30 seconds. Page 54 of the Survey says the average waiting time in 2024 is better than in 2021. I thought the Survey indicated it was worse off. This is confusing. Can you please explain?

The 2017 data referred to of 1959 taxis on the ranks, relates to the total number of taxis observed departing the ranks, both empty and with passengers.

The 774 taxis referred to in 2021 relates only to taxis which departed the ranks with passengers. A further 512 taxis departed the ranks empty, equating to a total of 1286 taxis observed departing the ranks.

The 943 taxis referred to in the 2024 report relates to taxis which departed the ranks with passengers. A further 464 taxis departed the ranks empty, equating to a total of 1407 taxis departing the ranks.

The report on page 54 states "For the 2024 survey, average passenger delay was 1.23 minutes (1 minute 14 seconds), this compares with the 2021 survey, when the average passenger delay was 2.17 minutes (2 minutes 10 seconds)." The average passenger waiting time was lower in 2024 than in 2021. The difference could be interpreted by some as better. The report did not state that the waiting time was 'worse off'. The assessment of unmet demand and whether it is significant is not solely reliant on comparing the average waiting times for passengers. The number of passengers who had to wait, the level of waiting at different times of day and the proportion of all passengers who had to wait, together with the proportion of potential passengers who don't use ranks or give up waiting at ranks, because they don't expect that there will be taxis available for them to use, all play a part in the assessment.

Page 3 of the Survey refers to a population of 153,810 but that is for the whole of Perth and Kinross. The City of Perth is just under 50,000. How do you account for this discrepancy?

Table 1 of the report compares the number of licensed vehicles in each local authority area in Scotland with the population of the relevant authority. This is provided as an illustrative comparison on a like for like basis. Whilst some local authorities in Scotland have licensing zones within the authority, it is not practicable to make comparisons on a zone by zone basis, between different authority areas. The illustration serves to indicate that the relationship between population and licensed vehicle provision varies. This serves indicate that other influences can affect the number of licensed vehicles which operate in different areas.

The Survey was completed in June 2024. Is this Survey now not well out of date?

Taxi unmet demand surveys are undertaken periodically every few years. In Perth and Kinross, this has generally been at intervals of around three years. The results of each survey represent a snapshot of conditions at the time of the survey. The 2024 survey captured a snapshot of conditions at that time and remain valid.

According to the National Taxi Groups, the Survey should have been carried out over a longer period.

The survey was undertaken according to guidance which was in place at the time. The period over which the survey was conducted was commensurate with the majority of taxi unmet demand surveys undertaken in the UK.

Page 9 of the Survey indicates 40 passengers 'left in frustration' ... why is this wording the same as the last two Survey reports?

The wording 'left in frustration' was used in the 2021 and 2024 reports. No use of this wording was found in the 2017 report. The wording has been found to be representative of the situation it is intended to depict. The wording in each report related to the number of people who arrived at taxi ranks where there were no taxis waiting and then waited for taxis to arrive. After having waited they left the ranks, when no taxis arrived at the ranks. These passengers are held to represent latent unmet demand for taxis. However, the term 'left in frustration' is generally better understood by readers of the reports and is felt to be a phrase which is generally representative of the situation it depicts.

Page 60 of the Survey the number of hires has dropped by 48%. How will adding more plates assist?

The survey found that there was a high level of latent demand which was unmet. Increased availability of taxis at ranks would encourage more of the latent demand to become patent (actual) demand and use more taxis at the ranks. i.e. if there are more taxis waiting at the ranks, more passengers would hire them from the ranks. The scope of the survey limits the potential measures which can be identified to address a significant level of unmet demand. The measures which may be suggested are limited to variation in the number of taxi licences.

Page 61 of the Survey. If 3 more taxis worked the ranks on Friday and Saturday nights and 1 additional worked during weekdays that would provide sufficient additional capacity. Why have you recommended 24 plates?

If the number of taxis suggested worked the ranks for the duration of the times indicated (3 on Friday and Saturday nights and 1 additional worked during weekdays), this would provide a significant increase in capacity if these taxis worked solely from the ranks. However, there is no way of ensuring that if, say, four more licences were issued, that they would work from the ranks at the days and times required and for the duration of operation required. There is strong evidence to indicate that not all taxis work from the ranks all the time. Consequently, it is necessary to calculate the 'equivalent' number of taxis which work from the ranks at different times. This 'equivalent' is the equivalent number of taxis which would be working full time at the ranks to provide the equivalent level of capacity provided by the taxis which actually worked from the ranks. The proportionate increase in 'equivalent' number of taxis working from the ranks, which would be necessary to address the level of unmet demand, was calculated. This proportion was applied to the full number of taxis, to calculate the number of taxis required to supply the necessary level of provision at the ranks to cater for unmet demand. When undertaking the calculation, it is necessary to assume that working practices and operating hours will be similar to existing practices, for any new licences and that they would be unlikely to all operate solely from the ranks.