



**SPINAL INJURIES
ASSOCIATION**

10th June 2004

Senior Licensing Officer
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Patron
Her Royal Highness
The Princess Royal

President
Baroness Masham of Iton

Dear Sir

RE:- CONCERN OVER REAR LOADING ACCESSIBLE TAXIS

The Spinal Injuries Association is a national organisation that represents some 5,000 spinal cord injured people who are in the main wheelchair users.

It has been brought to my attention that an increasing number of Local Authorities are now licensing vehicles that have been adapted for use as wheelchair accessible taxis, where the passenger is loaded from the rear of the vehicle. I recognise that this is a common conversion for a vehicle that is purchased by wheelchair users for their own use and works well for people when used in their own driveway or getting in/out of the vehicle in a car park.

My concern is that this may not be a suitable solution in the case for a Hackney Carriage on a station or town centre rank. Experience has shown that when taking a taxi from the rank the lead taxi is forced to pull forward, sometimes into the line of traffic, in order to make enough room for loading the passenger at the rear. In many cases the space needed at the back of the vehicle needs to be at least 10 feet to accommodate the ramp, wheelchair and driver.

This problem is often made worse by the lack of a dropped kerb at this point so passengers in manual chairs have to be bumped down the kerb and electric wheelchair users face even greater problems in managing the kerb in order to get into the back of the vehicle. Where accessible taxis load from the kerb these problems simply do not exist – in fact the higher the kerb the less gradient required on the ramp.

A further consideration I would like to bring to your attention is that taxis with side access, and the ability to get out of the vehicle on either side, have a distinct advantage should an unfortunate incident occur such as a rear impact.

There appears to be a wide choice in side loading accessible taxis in the market place. I ask you and your licensing committee to consider the above facts when fixing future policy on this matter. Your help in this matter would be much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Paul Smith
Executive Director