LVSA

Bolton Council
Hackney carriage unmet demand survey

Final Report

February 2020

Executive Summary

This Hackney carriage unmet demand survey has been undertaken on behalf of Bolton Council following the guidance of the April 2010 DfT Best Practice Guidance document, and all relevant case history in regard to unmet demand. This Executive Summary draws together key points from the main report that are needed to allow a committee to determine from the facts presented their current position in regard to the policy of limiting hackney carriage vehicle licences according to Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act. It is a summary of the main report which follows and should not be relied upon solely to justify any decisions of a committee but must be read in conjunction with the full report below.

Although there has been continued decline in usage of hackney carriages at ranks in the Bolton Council area since the last survey, encouraging elements have also been identified. The Town Hall rank demand returned after the extended closure. Night demand and use of vehicles by those in wheel chairs has also increased. The quality of the fleet is generally appreciated and in particular driver knowledge of the area. Passengers said fares were reasonable and there was some evidence that the preferred driver option of increased fares might be supported by the public.

Opportunity exists for all parties to work together to try to establish a rank at the hospital, and people told us they would like to be able to get to hackney carriages by phone as well as at ranks though there was also evidence that such transfer by current hackney carriages impacted on the index of significance of unmet demand negatively, though the public suggest this might actually be a benefit to them.

Overall, the current situation regarding hackney carriages in Bolton is more favourable now. But actions are needed to benefit the public and trade. Latent demand and off peak waits are increasing and need careful action. The formal limit could be reduced to 102 with the three spare plates within that limit made available for environmentally friendly vehicles. Further plate hand-backs could partly be extinguished and partly reserved for further such vehicles.

The overarching result is no unmet demand that has been observed is significant in terms of Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act so the Committee can retain the limit and defend that decision.

Reducing the limit would provide encouragement to those still investing in the current trade without risking public service given that the conclusions arose from the current, smaller active fleet. An option exists to both encourage the trade by a reduced limit and allow for those wishing to invest in environmentally friendly vehicles to do so.

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1 General introduction and background

Bolton Council is responsible for the licensing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles operating within the Council area and is the licensing authority for this complete area. Further details of the local application of Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act with regard to limiting hackney carriage vehicle numbers is provided in further Chapters of this report. Hackney carriage vehicle licences are the only part of licensing where such a stipulation occurs and there is no legal means by which either private hire vehicle numbers, private hire or hackney carriage driver numbers, or the number of private hire operators can be limited.

This review of current policy is based on the Best Practice Guidance produced by the Department for Transport in April 2010 (BPG). It seeks to provide information to the licensing authority to meet section 16 of the Transport Act 1985 "that the grant of a hackney carriage vehicle licence may be refused if, but only if, the licensing authority is satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of hackney carriages within its local area, which is unmet." This terminology is typically shortened to "no SUD".

Legal framework

Current hackney carriage, private hire and operator licensing is undertaken within the legal frameworks first set by the Town Police Clause Act 1847 (TPCA), amended and supplemented by various following legislation including the Transport Act 1985, Section 16 in regard to hackney carriage vehicle limits, and by the Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 with reference to private hire vehicles and operators. This latter Act saw application of regulation to the then growing private hire sector which had not been previously part of the TPCA. Many of the aspects of these laws have been tested and refined by other more recent legislation and more importantly through case law.

Beyond legislation, the experience of the person in the street tends to see both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles both as 'taxis' – a term we will try for the sake of clarity to use only in its generic sense within the report. We will use the term 'licensed vehicle' to refer to both hackney carriage and private hire.

Recent legislative and other review

The legislation around licensed vehicles and their drivers has been the subject of many attempts at review. The limiting of hackney carriage vehicle numbers has been a particular concern as it is often considered to be a restrictive practice and against natural economic trends. The current BPG in fact says "most local licensing authorities do not impose quantity restrictions, the Department regards that as best practice".

The most recent reviews were by the Office of Fair Trading in 2003, through the production of the BPG in 2010, the Law Commission review which published its results in 2014, the Parliamentary Task and Finish Group which reported in September 2018, the Government Response in February 2019 and the consultation on "Protecting Users" which closed on 22 April 2019. None of these resulted in any material change to the legislation involved in licensing. Other groups have provided their comments (including the Urban Transport Group and the Competition and Markets Authority) but the upshot remains no change in legislation from that already stated above. There may be some change arising from the latest Government "Consultation" but nothing is yet known about when that will occur, or what final form it may take.

With respect to the principal subject of this survey, local authorities retain the right to restrict the number of hackney carriage vehicle licenses. The Law Commission conclusion included retention of the power to limit hackney carriage vehicle numbers but utilizing a public interest test determined by the Secretary of State. It also suggested the three- year horizon also be used for rank reviews and accessibility reviews. It is assumed the Government response to the Task and Finish Group is now effectively the current reaction to this extensive research.

It is also understood that the revisions resulting from the recently closed Government Consultation will eventually lead to a more comprehensive review of the sections of the BPG not affected by the February 2019 Statutory Guide, as stated in para 1.8 of that document – "A consultation on revised BPG, which focusses on recommendations to licensing authorities to assist them in setting appropriate standards (other than those relating to passenger safety) to enable the provision of services the public demand, will be taken forward once the final Statutory Guidance has been issued." There is currently no quoted date either for final agreement on the "Protecting Users Statutory Guidance" nor for the taking forward of the wider BPG review. The April 2010 BPG therefore remains valid for our review.

Other more recent approaches to regulation

A more recent restriction, often applied to areas where there is no 'quantity' control felt to exist per-se, is that of 'quality control'. This is often a pseudonym for a restriction that any new hackney carriage vehicle licence must be for a wheel chair accessible vehicle, of various kinds as determined locally. In many places this implies a restricted number of saloon style hackney carriage licences are available, which often are given 'grandfather' rights to remain as saloon style.

Within this quality restriction, there are various levels of strength of the types of vehicles allowed. The tightest restriction, now only retained by a few authorities only allows 'London' style wheel chair accessible vehicles, restricted to those with a 25-foot turning circle, and at the present time principally the LTI Tx, the Mercedes Vito special edition with steerable rear axle, and the Metrocab (no longer produced).

Others allow a wider range of van style conversions in their wheel chair accessible fleet, whilst some go as far as also allowing rear-loading conversions. Given the additional price of these vehicles, this often implies a restriction on entry to the hackney carriage trade.

Some authorities do not allow vehicles which appear to be hackney carriage, i.e. mainly the London style vehicles, to be within the private hire fleet, whilst others do allow wheel chair vehicles. The most usual method of distinguishing between hackney carriages and private hire is a 'Taxi' roof sign on the vehicle, although again some areas do allow roof signs on private hire as long as they do not say 'Taxi', some turn those signs at right angles, whilst others apply liveries, mainly to hackney carriage fleets, but sometimes also to private hire fleets.

The unmet demand tool

After introduction of the 1985 Transport Act, Leeds University Institute for Transport Studies developed a tool by which unmet demand could be evaluated and a determination made if this was significant or not. The tool was taken forward and developed as more studies were undertaken. Over time this 'index of significance of unmet demand' (ISUD) became accepted as an industry standard tool to be used for this purpose. Some revisions have been made following the few but specific court cases where various parties have challenged the policy of retaining a limit.

Some of the application has differed between Scottish and English authority's. This is mainly due to some court cases in Scotland taking interpretation of the duty of the licensing authority further than is usual in England and Wales, requiring current knowledge of the status of unmet demand at all times, rather than just at the snap-shot taken every three years. However, the three-year survey horizon has become generally accepted given the advice of the BPG and most locations that review regularly do within that timescale.

Required study methods

The DfT asked in writing in 2004 for all licensing authorities with quantity restrictions to review them, publish their justification by March 2005, and then review at least every three years since then. In due course, this led to a summary of the government guidance which was last updated in England and Wales in 2010 (but more recently in Scotland).

The BPG in 2010 also provided additional suggestions of how these surveys should be undertaken, albeit in general but fairly extensive terms. A key encouragement within the BPG is that "an interval of three years is commonly regarded as the maximum reasonable period between surveys". BPG suggests key points in consideration are passenger waiting times at ranks, for street hailings and telephone bookings, latent and peaked demand, wide consultation and publication of "all the evidence gathered".

The most recent changes in legislation regarding licensed vehicles have been enactment of the parts of the Equality Act related to guidance dogs (sections 168 to 171, enacted in October 2010), the two clauses of the Deregulation Act which were successful in proceeding, relating to length of period each license covers and to allowing operators to transfer work across borders (enacted in October 2015), and most recently enactment of Sections 165 and 167 of the Equality Act, albeit on a permissive basis (see below).

In November 2016, the DfT undertook a consultation regarding enacting Sections 167 and 165 of the Equality Act. These allow for all vehicles capable of carrying a wheel chair to be placed on a list by the local council (section 167). Any driver using a vehicle on this list then has a duty under section 165 to:

- Carry the passenger while in the wheel chair
- Not make any additional charge for doing so
- If the passenger chooses to sit in a passenger seat to carry the wheel chair
- To take such steps as are necessary to ensure that the passenger is carried in safety and reasonable comfort
- To give the passenger such mobility assistance as is reasonably required

This was enacted from April 2017. There remains no confirmation of any timetable for instigating either the remainder of the Equality Act or the Law Commission recommendations, or for the update of the BPG.

Case Law

In respect to case law impinging on unmet demand, the two most recent cases were in 1987 and 2002. The first case (R v Great Yarmouth) concluded authorities must consider the view of significant unmet demand as a whole, not condescending to detailed consideration of the position in every limited area, i.e. to consider significance of unmet demand over the area as a whole.

R v Castle Point considered the issue of latent, or preferably termed, suppressed demand consideration. This clarified that this element relates only to the element which is measurable. Measurable suppressed demand includes inappropriately met demand (taken by private hire vehicles in situations legally hackney carriage opportunities) or those forced to use less satisfactory methods to get home (principally walking, i.e. those observed to walk away from rank locations).

In general, industry standards suggest (but specifically do not mandate in any way) that the determination of conclusions about significance of unmet demand should take into account the practicability of improving the standard of service through the increase of supply of vehicles.

It is also felt important to have consistent treatment of authorities as well as for the same authority over time, although apart from the general guidance of the BPG there is no clear stipulations as to what this means in reality, and certainly no mandatory nor significant court guidance in this regard.

Possible revisions expected

During September 2018 the All-Party Parliamentary Group on taxis produced its long-awaited Final Report. There was a generally accepted call for revision to taxi licensing legislation and practice, including encouragement for local authorities to move towards some of the practical suggestions made within the Report. The Government has broadly supported the recommendations of this Task and Finish Group.

Despite some opposition from members of the group, the right to retain limits on hackney carriage vehicle numbers was supported, with many also supporting adding a tool which would allow private hire numbers to be limited where appropriate, given reasonable explanation of the expected public interest gains. This latter option is now being taken forward in Scotland, with two studies published and the Scottish Government preparing guidance, although the Government response did not support this option.

As already stated, other groups have provided comments giving their views about licensing matters but the upshot remains no change in legislation from that already stated above.

Background conclusion

In conclusion, the present legislation in England and Wales sees public fare-paying passenger carrying vehicles firstly split by passenger capacity. All vehicles able to carry nine or more passengers are dealt with under national public service vehicle licensing. Local licensing authorities only have jurisdiction over vehicles carrying eight or less passengers. Further, the jurisdiction focusses on the vehicles, drivers and operators but rarely extends to the physical infrastructure these use (principally ranks).

The vehicles are split between hackney carriages which are alone able to wait at ranks or pick up people in the streets without a booking, and private hire who can only be used with a booking made through an operator. If any passenger uses a private hire vehicle without such a properly made booking, they are not generally considered to be insured for their journey.

Drivers can either be split between ability to drive either hackney carriage or private hire, or be ‘dual’, allowed to drive either kind of vehicle. Whilst a private hire driver can only take bookings via an operator, with the ‘triple-lock’ applying that the vehicle, driver and operator must all be with the same authority, a hackney carriage driver can accept bookings on-street or by phone without the same stipulation required for private hire.

Recent legislation needing clarification has some operators believing they can use vehicles from any authority as long as they are legally licensed as private hire. At first, under the ‘Stockton’ case, this was hackney carriages operating as private hire in other areas (cross-border hiring). More recently, under the Deregulation Act, private hire companies are able to subcontract bookings to other companies in other areas if they are unable to fulfil their booking, but the interpretation of this has become quite wide.

The ‘triple lock’ licensing rule has also become accepted. A vehicle, driver and operator must all be under the same licensing authority to provide full protection to the passenger. However, it is also accepted that a customer can call any private hire company anywhere to provide their transport although many would not realise that if there was an issue it would be hard for a local authority to follow this up unless the triple lock was in place by the vehicle used and was for the area the customer contacted licensing.

Further, introduction of recent methods of obtaining vehicles, principally using ‘apps’ on mobile phones have also led to confusion as to how ‘apps’ usage sits with present legislation.

Environmental considerations

A new challenge has been introduced by the need to improve air quality. At the present time there are just two fully purpose built wheel chair accessible electric vehicles available – the Dynamo (based on an Nissan battery) and the London Electric Vehicle Company vehicle. Charging points are slowly increasing but this new technology remains in a developing state despite urgency being applied by various Government departments and councils to see sufficient change.

All these matters can impact on hackney carriage services, their usage, and therefore on unmet demand and its significance.

2 Local background and context

Key dates for this Hackney carriage unmet demand survey for Bolton are:

- appointed Licensed Vehicle Surveys and Assessment (LVSA) on 8 April 2019
- in accordance with our proposal of March 2019
- as confirmed during the inception meeting for the survey held by telephone on 11 April 2019
- this survey was carried out between April and July 2019
- On street pedestrian survey work occurred in May 2019 (Saturday)
- the video rank observations occurred in April 2019
- Licensed vehicle driver opinions and operating practices were obtained using an all-driver survey available during May and part of June 2019
- Key stakeholders were consulted throughout the period of the survey
- A draft of this Final Report was reviewed by the client during September 2019
- and reported to the appropriate Council committee during the Autumn of 2019

Bolton Council is one of ten metropolitan district councils in the Greater Manchester area under the Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) transport authority, and in terms of background council policy able to control both licensing and highways. The authority has a current population of 287,000 using the 2019 estimates currently available from the 2011 census. This is just a thousand more than the value for 2016.

The Council area includes central Bolton urban area but extends to a number of other urban centres including Blackrod, Horwich, Westhoughton, Farnworth and Kearsley. It also includes other smaller settlements and a significant amount of rural area. It lies north of Manchester and therefore has boundaries with several Lancashire authorities as well as those with its Greater Manchester neighbours.

There is one private rank located at Horwich Parkway station but as far as we are aware all other ranks are provided by the Council, including that within the now expanded Interchange location. This latter rank has remained near to the exit from the rail station even though most buses have now been transferred to the new location in between the branching of the two rail lines north from Bolton.

Background Transport Policy

With Greater Manchester evolving, with a growing population and economy and being on a path to significant devolution of powers, the current transport strategy is known as the "2040 Transport Strategy" (2040 TS). Its aim is a fully integrated, high capacity transport network across the full area. The present document was published in February 2017.

The strategy is currently being implemented with a 2020-2025 Delivery Plan. It is led by TfGM on behalf of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Local Enterprise Partnership (GMLEP). The transport system is acknowledged as needing to help the local economy to flourish and prosper in a manner that residents can contribute to and benefit from. Many residents are known not to have access to cars. The heart of the 2040 TS is to enable people to move seamlessly between services and modes of transport that maximises choice and supports low-car lifestyles. An increasing focus will be placed on enabling mobility and improving connectivity for everyone no matter how they choose to travel.

Para 53 notes that "we also recognize the importance of other supporting modes of transport, such as taxis, private hire and demand responsive services, which can fill gaps in our transport system, enabling people to make the first or last leg of their journey if they live or work in a location that is remote from the mainstream public transport network. Specialist accessible transport is also essential for people who have mobility impairments and cannot easily use conventional public transport". This is translated to Policy 1 seeking to ensure such modes are fully available and integrated into the GM transport network.

Para 59 accepts that population density is not always sufficient to support good public transport which makes car or licensed vehicle use more of a necessity. It is also true that a focus on efficient high capacity links can open up more gaps in the network that need to be plugged by such options.

Reliability and resilience of the transport network are also counted as important.

Para 170 comments that access and interchange facilities will be of a consistent standard, including that for those using licensed vehicles.

Paras 184 to 186 and Policy 25 specifically relate to licensed vehicles and are reproduced in full:

"184. Taxis and private hire vehicles provide people with the flexibility of door-to-door transport on demand, without needing to use or own their own vehicle, and this role is likely to increase. They are therefore an essential component of the transport network: facilitating journeys where there is no suitable bus service, supporting the night-time economy by allowing people to leave their cars at home; providing the final 'leg' of a journey by rail or air; and acting as a backup mode when a change is needed to the usual travel arrangements. As described in section 126), the growth of 'on demand' companies is revolutionising private hire by providing customers with greater flexibility. Greater Manchester needs a vibrant and high quality taxi/private hire service and we will explore with the industry how new booking systems might be included in our Travel Choices offer.

185. In recognition of their role in supplementing the public transport network, hackney cabs are allowed to use 'with-flow' bus lanes in Greater Manchester. This freedom cannot be extended to private hire vehicles for a number of reasons. There is no limit on the number of PHVs that can be licensed (there are currently around 16,000 in Greater Manchester), and allowing a significant number of additional vehicles into bus lanes would erode the benefit to buses, which is their primary purpose, and would create additional conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists. Also, if selective vehicle detection bus priority, such as at pre-signals, were to be introduced, the signal would turn green for buses, but a PHV in the bus lane would not activate the signal, leading to the danger of red light running.

186. Hackney cab licenses are issued by each of the ten licencing authorities, who also determine the location of taxi ranks. Each authority sets its own standards; for example in terms of the number of licenses issued, the age of vehicles and the area in which they can operate. Our long-term aim is to achieve more consistency across the conurbation, in order to provide a better, more integrated service to the customer and to ensure that taxis entering the Regional Centre and main town centres meet the highest environmental standards. We will work with the ten Greater Manchester Licensing Authorities and the taxi/private hire industry to develop more consistent standards, building on best practice from elsewhere in terms of policy/regulation and operation. There will however be a need to ensure that higher standards are not undermined by vehicles registered in neighbouring authorities but operating in Greater Manchester.

Policy 25: We will work with the ten Licensing Authorities and the taxi/private hire industry to develop more consistent standards for policy/regulation and operation across Greater Manchester"

Overall, transport policy supports the appropriate usage and development of licensed vehicle services, although they may need to be more clearly identified in terms of their overall value and contribution more than has been the case in the past.

The previous aim to develop the new transport interchange in Bolton is now completed although specific provision for licensed vehicles there has not been amended.

Taxi Policy

Bolton has – like all other licensing authorities – the power to restrict the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences it grants when it is satisfied there is no unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages which is deemed to be significant. This power has been in this format since the introduction of the 1985 Transport Act, Section 16, (1985 TA) before which that power to limit was unfettered.

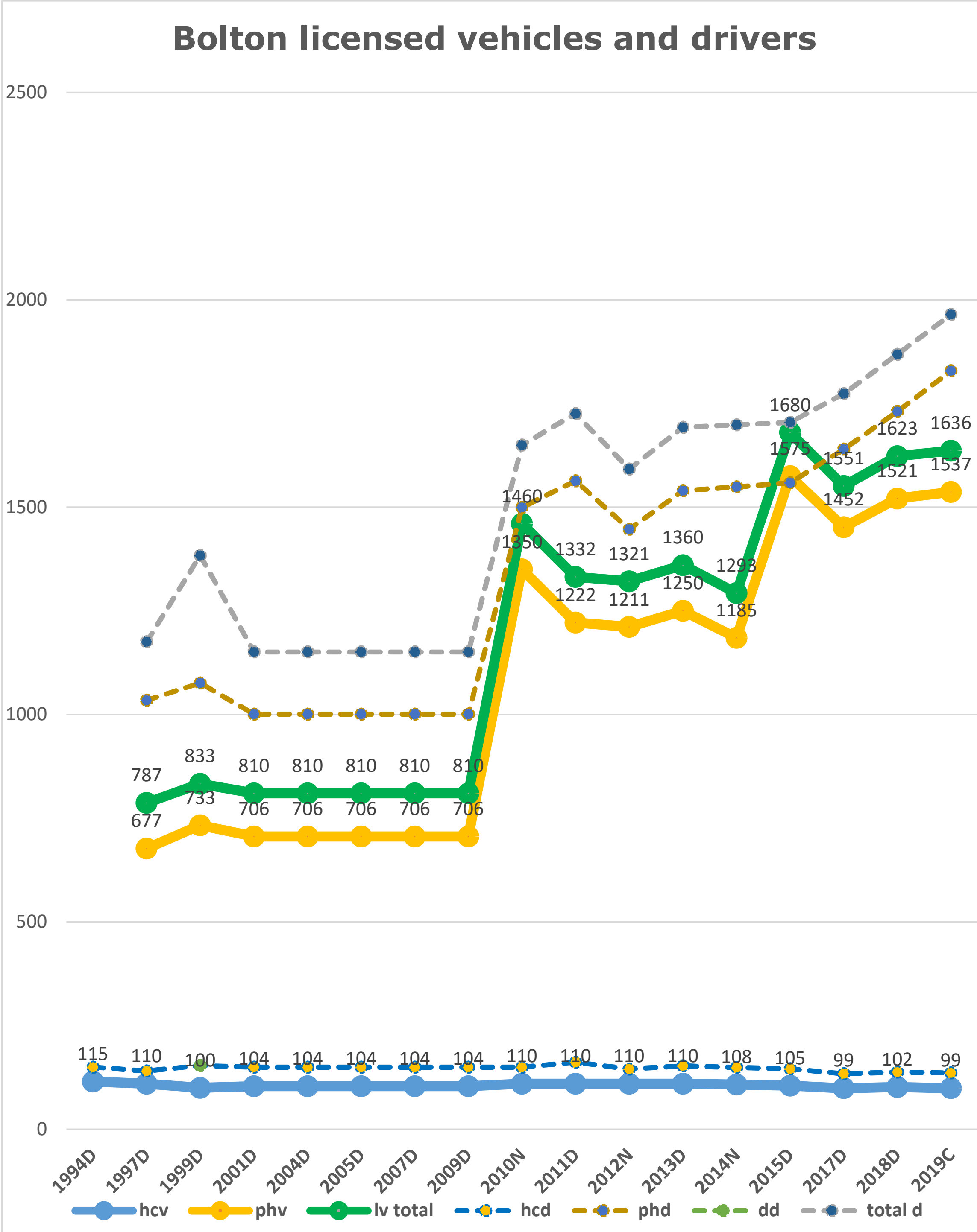
The history of use of this power in Bolton saw removal of the restriction immediately after the 1985 TA came into force. Before that, the rule had been that any new plate would only be granted if a business case for the vehicle was provided and was accepted. At the point of removal of the limit policy, a stipulation was introduced that all new hackney carriages had to be under five years old when first registered. A 'mandatory' policy was also introduced at some point requiring all hackney carriages to be wheel chair accessible, although the range of vehicles counted to be thus has widened over the years.

2003 saw a survey undertaken that found there was no unmet demand which was significant and which saw the recommendation that a limit be returned accepted and put in place. In 2004, the limit set was the 104 vehicles of that time.

Repeat surveys occurred in 2007 and 2012 and whilst both found some instances of unmet demand, as is usually the case in most authorities, both concluded that the level was not significant in terms of the 1985 TA. However, for other reasons six extra plates were issued in 2010, not related to demand issues.

Background Statistics

By drawing together published statistics from both the Department for Transport (D) and the National Private Hire Association (N), supplemented by private information from the licensing authority records (C), recent trends in vehicle, driver and operator numbers can be observed. The detailed numbers supporting the picture below are provided in Appendix 1. Due to the comparative size, the operator figures are shown in the second picture.



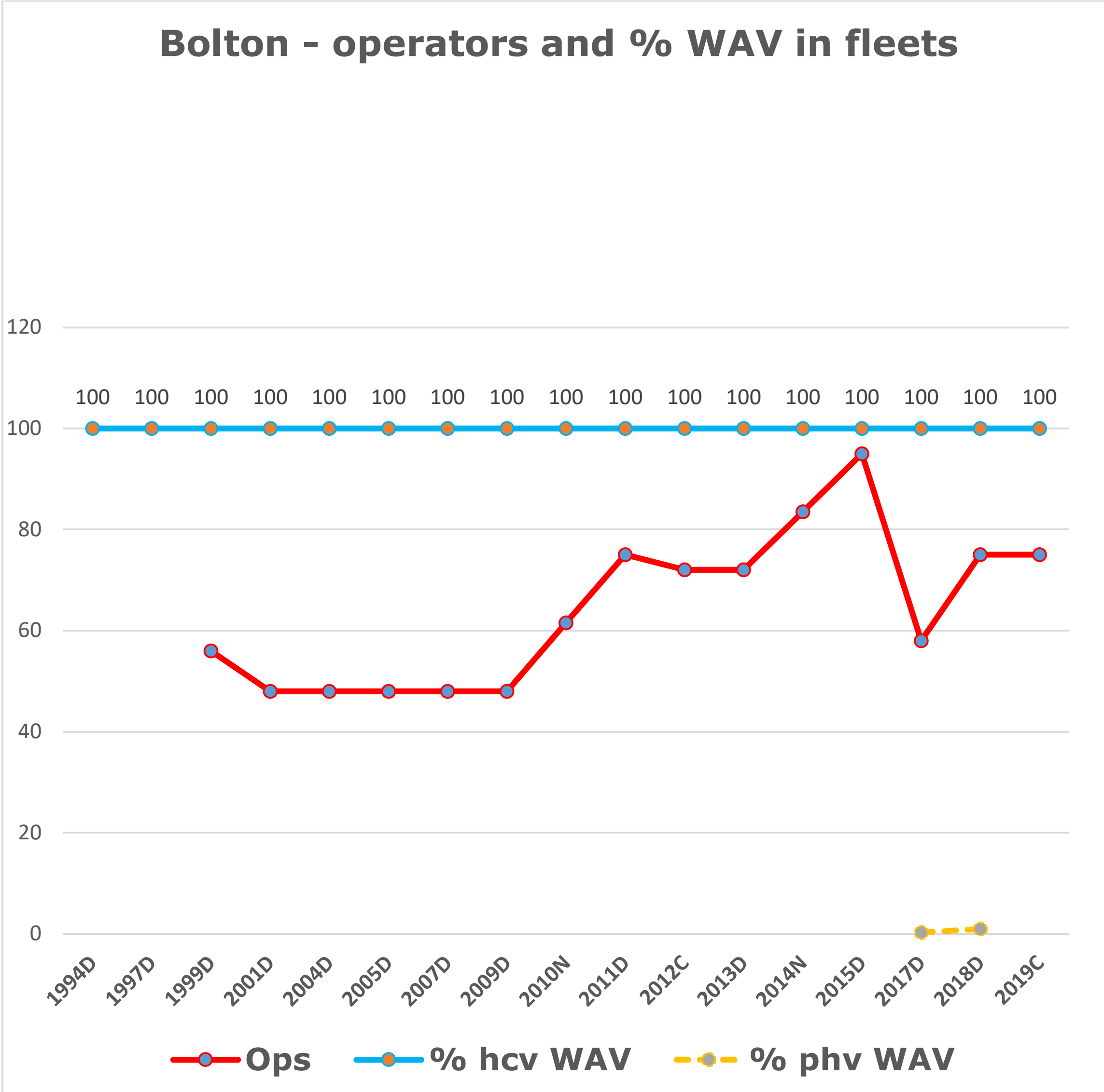
Licensing Statistics from 1994 to date

The graph above shows how hackney carriage vehicles have remained relatively stable since 1994. Even with no limit, there was little pressure for extra vehicles. On the contrary, private hire numbers increased very strongly in 2009 but only for a short period, after which there was some decline only for this to switch again in 2014, since when there has effectively been steady growth to the current level.

Hackney carriages are a very small part of the overall licensed vehicle fleet in the area. There are a lot of less-urban locations which are best serviced by private hire style operations, and for which no ranks really need to be provided as the level of demand is much too low to allow a rank to develop and be sustainable.

At inception we were also made aware that the growth of app-based private hire operations has led to several different authorities, including Bolton, seeing their licences used across the wider Greater Manchester area. The effect of this is that any growth of private hire licence numbers in Bolton does not necessarily reflect an equivalent increase of such vehicles and drivers actually servicing the population in the Bolton area itself. Conversely, out of town private hire are often subcontracted to work in Bolton (often now from Wolverhampton) and undertake Bolton local work. This all suggests a general understatement of the proportion of hackney carriages active in the overall licensed vehicle fleet and should not be taken, as often can be, of any evidence of unmet demand for hackney carriages met by private hire in the actual Bolton licensing area.

Information is also available from these sources to show how the level of wheel chair accessible vehicles (WAV) has varied. It must be noted that in most cases the values for the private hire side tend to be much more approximate than those on the hackney carriage side, as there is no option to mandate for private hire being wheel chair accessible.



Operator numbers and levels of WAV provision in the fleet

For Bolton, with a fully wheel chair accessible hackney carriage fleet, there are only a handful of such vehicles in the private hire fleet.

To set Bolton in context of the English situation in this respect, it is currently one of the 16% of English licensing authorities (as at 31 March 2019) that have a fully WAV hackney carriage fleet and some private hire that are WAV. However with just 0.5% of the phv fleet WAV style, the main reliance for WAV style vehicles by those needing their services in this area is from the hackney carriage fleet. When considering the total licensed vehicle fleet, the overall WAV proportion is 6%, which places Bolton 195th equal out of the 292 licensing authorities in overall terms. Further discussion of this occurs later.

Operator numbers have shown a similar growth mid-term of the dates that information exists for, but there was a dip recently although this has now levelled out to provide a more or less level number of operators over the last six or so years.

Driver ratios

In the previous survey, there were 1.39 hackney carriage drivers per vehicle and a corresponding 0.93 private hire per vehicle – which shows some private hire do not have drivers and must be spare vehicles. At the present time the hackney carriage level remains the same whilst that for private hire has in fact increased to 1.19, a more sensible level compared to the overall numbers.

3 Patent demand measurement (rank surveys)

As already recorded in Chapter 2, control of provision of on-street ranks in Bolton is under the control of the Council itself, albeit in a separate section whilst being within the Council itself. Appendix 2 provides a list of ranks in Bolton at the time of this current survey.

Our methodology involves a current review both in advance of submitting our proposal to undertake this Hackney carriage unmet demand survey and at the study inception meeting, together with site visits where considered necessary. This provides a valid and appropriate sample of rank coverage which is important to feed the numeric evaluation of the level of unmet demand, and its significance (see discussion in Chapter 7). The detailed specification of the hours included in the sample is provided in Appendix 3. Detailed results by rank, day and hour are in Appendix 4.

We do not believe there have been any changes in rank provision since the last survey, although there have been changes in usage levels, and the Town Hall rank has been reinstated, although in a slightly different position to that before the renovation works were undertaken.

The previous rank work was undertaken covering 110 hours on Friday and Saturday 4th / 5th December 2015, in line with previous survey samples. The opportunity was taken for this survey of increasing days and hours covered to improve the robusticity of the sample, with some 186 total hours of rank operation observed. The survey rank from 12:00 Thursday through to the early hours of Sunday morning and was undertaken as usual using small video cameras near the ranks and located to minimise their potential for being observed as well as maximise the data collectible from the observations. The observations were structured to cover ranks when they were active, partly based on previous observations, but also on knowledge gleaned from licensing staff. The observations had no gaps from equipment issues.

Rank usage by other vehicles

Some 7,284 records of information were obtained from the rank videos. This related to in the order of 2,800 different vehicle movements.

In 2019, 54% of the movements observed at or near ranks were by hackney carriage vehicles. A relatively high 23% of movements were by private cars. The worst location for such misuse of rank space was Knowsley Street, which also saw goods vehicle and private hire use it, with hackney carriages just providing 4% of vehicle movements, although demand here is low. 20% of movements observed were private hire vehicles (just 1% up on 2015) with Churchgate and all Bradshawgate ranks suffering. 2% of moves were by goods vehicles and 1% were police or other emergency vehicles.

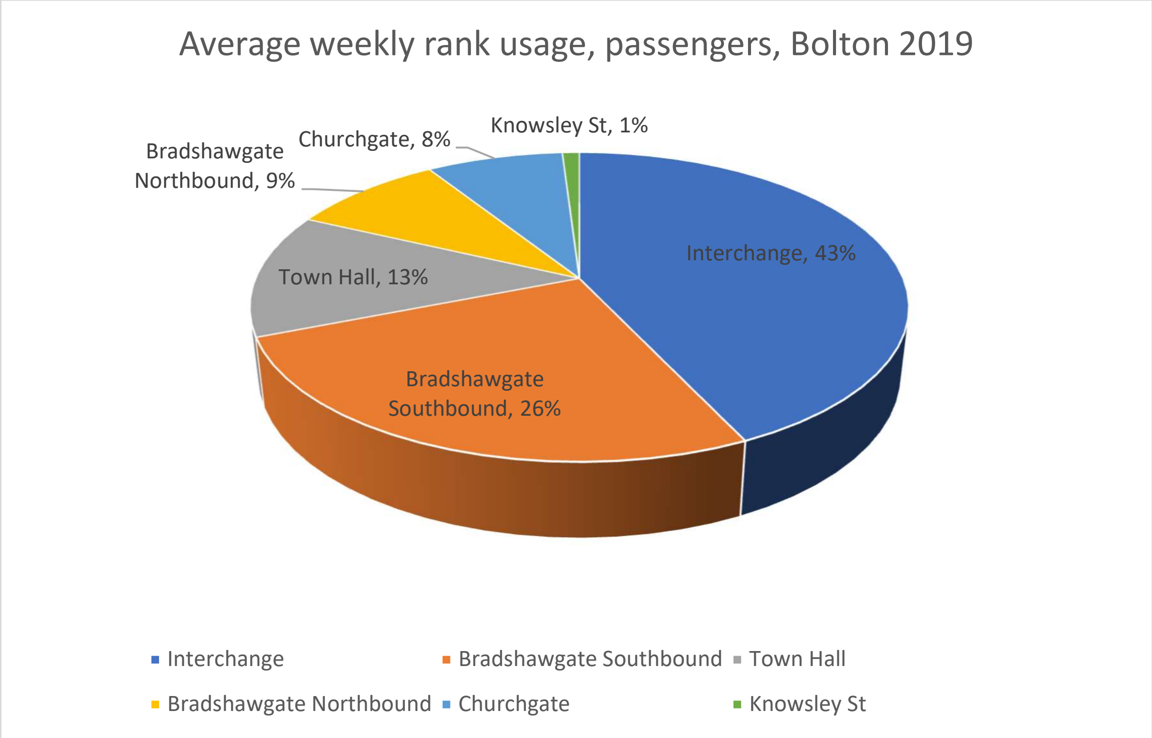
This level of issue is generally worse for private car misuse than in 2015, when just 5% of observed movements at or near ranks were private cars, a very low level of rank misuse.

However, the excellent record for the Interchange rank, which is built to be used only by hackney carriages, continues although there were a few incursions there by private cars.

Overall rank usage

Data from each site and hour was analysed and factored to produce estimated average weekly flows for each rank in Bolton. The results are shown below.

Rank	Passengers per week 2019 survey	Passengers per week 2015 survey	Passengers per week, 2012 survey
Interchange	1348 (43%)	2495 (75%)	2670 (66%)
Bradshawgate southbound	813 (26%)	46 (1%)	1 (0.0%)
Town Hall	421 (13%)	4 (0.0%)	517 (13%)
Bradshawgate northbound	283 (9%)	645 (20%)	603 (15%)
Churchgate	266 (8%)	92 (3%)	119 (3%)
Knowsley Street	30 (1%)	20 (1%)	20 (0.0%)
Nelson Square	(in Brad Nbd)	4 (0.0%)	94 (2%)
Total	***3,161***	***3,306***	***4,024***
Growth from previous	***-4%***	***-18%***	***n/a***



Compared to the previous survey, which may have seen higher flows as it was closer to Christmas, compared to the current survey which was in April, some five months later and just after Easter school holidays had ended, the estimated current average weekly flows are around 4% lower now. However, the reduction between the 2012 and 2015 surveys was significantly larger. This suggests the situation for hackney carriages at ranks in Bolton has perhaps stabilised at the present time.

However, the overall figures mask quite large changes between ranks. In both 2012 and 2015 the dominant rank, with two thirds, and then three quarters of all estimated demand, was that at the Interchange. In 2019, that location has seen nearly a halving of estimated flows, and a drop to just 43% of the total. The Town Hall rank has returned to usage, and has regained its previous share of 13% as in 2012, although the absolute figure is less.

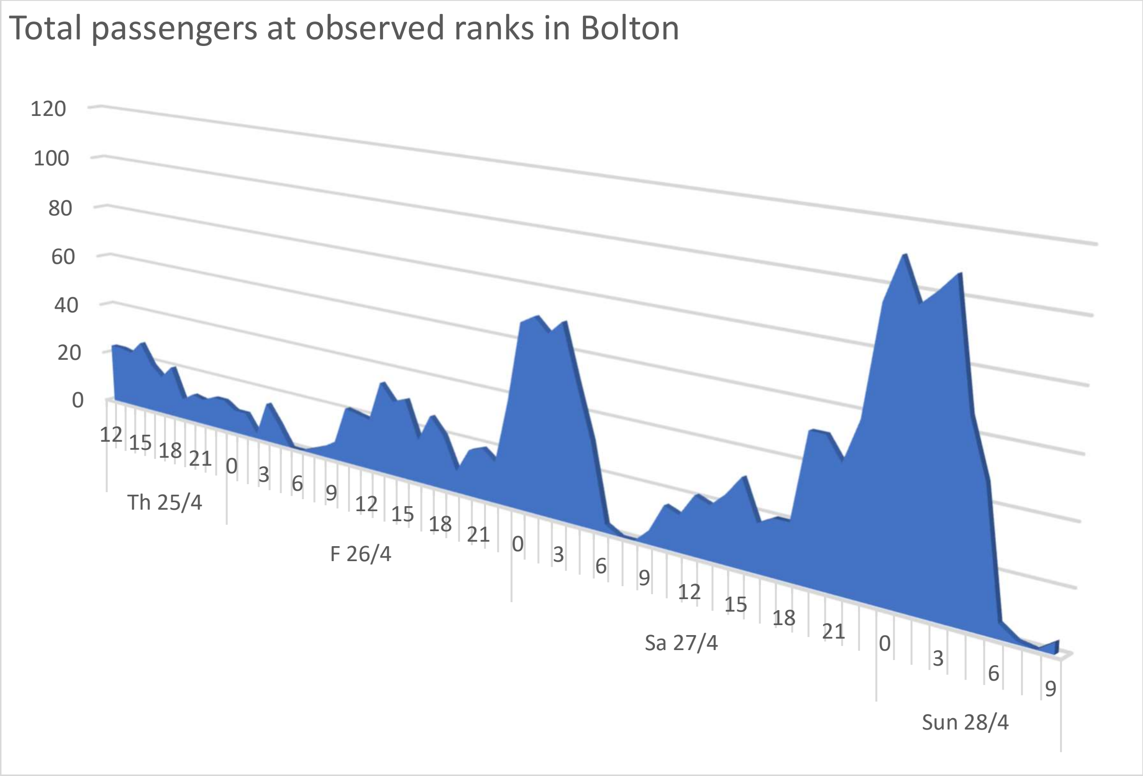
The largest gain has been for Bradshawgate southbound which was hardly used in previous surveys. This is now the main night rank and, together with Churchgate which has also grown in usage, now sees over a third of estimated weekly demand. Bradshawgate northbound is still used, but much less so.

The daytime Knowsley Street rank retains its small level of usage and share in the overall total.

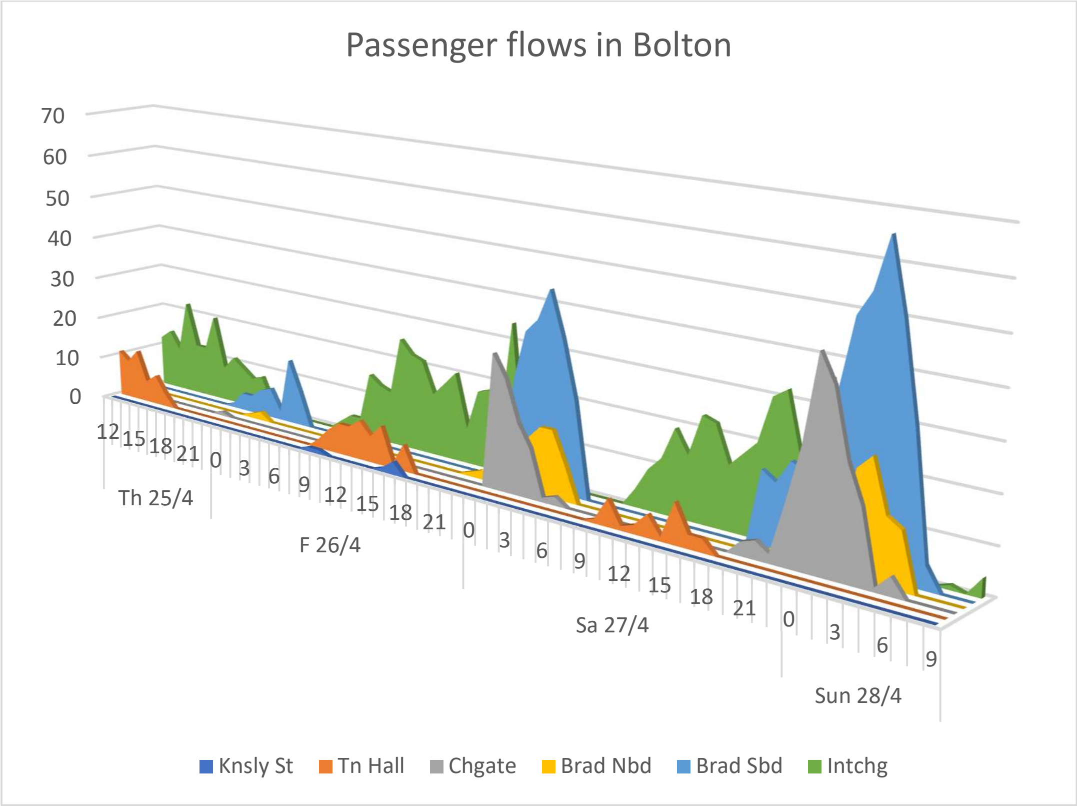
Total passengers and weekly variation

The graph below shows how hourly flows in total across all ranks vary through the days surveyed.

It is clear that the Saturday night dominates hackney carriage usage, with midnight on Saturday seeing the highest flow, with two other hours (02:00 and 03:00) both with flows just over 100 passengers and the 01:00 hour just under the 100. After this, flows drop away although there are still vehicles collecting passengers until 07:00 on the Sunday morning. Compared to this, Friday midnight saw just 67, with no flows in the 07:00 or 08:00 hours.



The graph below plots each rank surveyed over the survey period to show the variation between ranks in that period.



This suggests Interchange rank flows are relatively similar on the Friday and Saturday, but much lower and ending earlier on the Thursday. The Bradshawgate Southbound and Churchgate flows are much lower on the Thursday compared to the Friday or Saturday. However, Town Hall flows tend to be daytime only, but stronger on Thursdays and Fridays than on Saturdays.

Longer term hourly data is available from previous surveys and shown below:

Rank	Day / hours	Date	Passengers	Loaded vehicles
Interchange	Thurs 19th June 0700-0300	2003	351	270
	Thurs 25th April 1200-0300	2019	147	120
	Friday 20th June 0700-0300	2003	418	340
	Friday 5th Oct 0800-0200	2007	286	198
	Friday 5th Oct 0800-0400	2012	391	285
	Friday 4th Dec 0800-0700	2015	377	286
	Friday 26th April 0700-0300	2019	261	196
	Saturday 6th Oct 0400-0400	2012	475	253
	Saturday 5th Dec 0700-0500	2015	397	265
	Saturday 27th April 0700-0500	2019	298	193
Town Hall	Friday 11th July 0800-2000	2003	487	312
	Friday 5th Oct 1000-1900	2012	85	55
	Friday 4th Dec 1000-2000	2015	0	0
	Friday 26th April 1000-2000	2019	50	32
	Saturday 12th July 1000-2000	2003	396	248
	Saturday 6th Oct 0900-1800	2007	179	116
	Saturday 6th Oct 1000-1900	2012	92	50
	Saturday 5th Dec 1000-1900	2015	4	2
	Saturday 27th April 1000-1900	2019	30	19
Knowsley Street	Thurs 19th June 0900-1800	2003	28	16
	Friday 5th Oct 1000-1900	2012	4	4
	Friday 4th Dec 1000-2000	2015	4	3
	Friday 26th April 1000-2000	2019	5	4
Bradshawgate northbound	Friday 13th June 2000-0300	2003	586	297
	Friday 20th June 2000-0100	2003	237	110
	Friday 5th Oct 2100-0300	2007	349	192
	Friday 5th Oct 2200-0400	2012	161	88
	Friday 4th Dec 2200-0400	2015	205	101
	Friday 26th April 2200-0400	2019	56	38
	Saturday 21st June 2000-0400	2003	678	303
	Saturday 6th Oct 2100-0300	2007	633	309
	Saturday 6th Oct 2200-0400	2012	442	235
	Saturday 5th Dec 2200-0400	2015	440	231
	Saturday 27th April 2200-0700	2019	95	64

Bradshawgate southbound	Saturday 6th Oct 2100-0200	2007	195	97
	Saturday 6th Oct 2200-0400	2012	1	1
	Saturday 5th Dec 2200-0400	2015	21	11
	Saturday 27th April 2200-0400	2019	249	239
Churchgate	Saturday 6th Oct 2200-0400	2012	87	50
	Saturday 5th Dec 2200-0400	2015	63	28
	Saturday 27th April 2200-0400	2015	160	97
Nelson Square	Friday 13th June 2000-0300	2003	738	394
	Friday 5th Oct 2200-0400	2012	29	17
	Friday 4th Dec 2200-0400	2015	2	1
	Saturday 6th Oct 2200-0400	2012	65	31
	Saturday 5th Dec 2200-0400	2015	2	1

These tables confirm the overall reduction in flows but also confirm the swop from Bradshawgate northbound to southbound in terms of overall priority and levels of usage. Churchgate has also gained in usage significantly.

Existence of unmet demand

The data was interrogated to identify all hours when passengers had to wait for a hackney carriage to arrive, even for a brief period. From the 186 hours of observations, just six had any average passenger delay at all. There were five hours with average delays a minute or more, and just one hour with average delays less than this.

The longest wait by any passenger was 21 minutes, followed by 13 minutes. Interestingly, all waits over six minutes were at the Town Hall between the 12:00 and the 14:00 hours on Friday 26th April. There was a short wait at Knowsley Street at 09:00 on the same day, and the largest group that had to wait was at the Town Hall in the 14:00 hour on the Thursday, when some 10 passengers had waits between one and two minutes. The final delay was much less and at the Interchange late on Friday, in the 23:00 hour.

Of the 1,664 passengers observed in the actual surveys, just 21 experienced a wait (1%), and, even with the much harsher test of if passengers travelled in hours when there was delay, only 69 passengers in total travelled in such hours (4%). None of the periods of highest flow resulted in any waiting by passengers at all – a very good performance. This tends to suggest that hackney carriages all come out on Saturday nights and provide service to those wanting to get home from ranks.

It also confirms that there is not really any issue of unmet demand in this area at this time based on rank service levels, and the main problems appear to be related to periods of very low demand seeing even lower levels of vehicle provision, particularly at lunchtime and especially so on the Friday.

Further, it suggests there are plenty of hackney carriages available in daytime hours to service other ranks were there any key providers of demand identified that could be serviced by ranks. Put another way, the hackney carriage fleet is a very underutilised resource which yet provides potentially a high level of service, the WAV capability being one matter that cannot be readily serviced by the private hire fleet.

Vehicle activity levels

A sample of hackney carriage plate numbers was recorded during the expected busiest day during the survey, the Saturday. A total of eight hours of plate observations were undertaken, ranging from 12:00 through to 01:00. Given that the main daytime rank is the Interchange, this was observed on four occasions, whilst Bradshawgate was observed once.

Analysis of the information found that on the Saturday, over all observations, just 29% of the fleet were observed active. Of the active fleet, 45% were seen at Bradshawgate, 38% at the Interchange rank and just 17% were seen at both locations. Further inspection suggested that the level of vehicles active at the Interchange rank remained very similar in all time periods. However, apart from the Town Hall location, there is not really any other significantly active daytime rank. There would be several vehicles servicing principally the Town Hall, on the assumption of similar levels to Interchange, this might suggest a further 8% of the fleet at that location. However, that does leave nearly three quarters of the fleet not active at ranks in the daytime.

Bradshawgate clearly drew a lot more vehicles out into service, many of which did not appear to service the Interchange rank, with just a small proportion of the observed vehicles there also having been seen at the Interchange rank. This seems to confirm vehicles focus on where they serve, with a regular day to day fleet servicing the Interchange (but perhaps only a tenth of the fleet), and more night only vehicles servicing Bradshawgate and around.

A further survey was undertaken to add data for Bradshawgate for the 01:30 to 03:00 period, as well as repeating the collection of information for the earlier 19:30 to 21:00 period at that location. This identified a much larger number of vehicles who appeared only to be out to service the later night demand.

When all data was collated, it was found that over the two surveys some 70% of the current fleet had been spotted at least once, with 53% of the fleet seen active in the later period at Bradshawgate. This confirms how peaky the demand is but also suggests that the true size of hackney carriage fleet required is much greater than simple daytime observation might suggest.

However, there is also a major issue for the economics of the service if the bulk of plates are getting most of their activity from no more than perhaps a maximum of 18 hours per week, and possibly less given the fact that Saturday demand is much higher than either Thursday or Friday.

Use of ranks by those with disabilities

The latest survey identified some 12 passengers accessing ranks in wheel chairs, a big increase from 2015, when three people were observed. 58% were at the Town Hall rank with the remainder at the Interchange. This is a very good usage, and suggests there could be opportunity for such service elsewhere.

Eight others appeared to be visibly disabled and received assistance into vehicles. Here, most (63%) were at the Interchange rank, 25% at Town Hall and the remaining 12% at Knowsley Street. In 2015, four others appeared to be disabled and 28 people were assisted into vehicles in various ways.

Both sets of information suggest more people are willing to travel with disabilities using hackney carriages in the area, a good (albeit modest) indicator of the value of the service to residents and visitors. It is interesting to note that the rank that had been disabled in the last survey sees the most wheel chair bound customers.

4 General public views

It is very important that the views of people within the area are obtained about the service provided by hackney carriage and private hire. A key element which these surveys seek to discover is specifically if people have given up waiting for hackney carriages at ranks (the most readily available measure of latent demand). However, the opportunity is also taken with these surveys to identify the overall usage and views of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles within the study area, and to give chance for people to identify current issues and factors which may encourage them to use licensed vehicles more.

Such surveys can also be key in identifying variation of demand for licensed vehicles across an area, particularly if there are significant areas of potential demand without ranks, albeit in the context that many areas do not have places apart from their central area with sufficient demand to justify hackney carriages waiting at ranks.

These surveys tend to be undertaken during the daytime period when more people are available, and when survey staff safety can be guaranteed. Further, interviews with groups of people or with those affected by alcohol consumption may not necessarily provide accurate responses, despite the potential value in speaking with people more likely to use hackney carriages at times of higher demand and then more likely unmet demand. Where possible, extension of interviews to the early evening may capture some of this group, as well as some studies where careful choice of night samples can be undertaken.

Our basic methodology requires a sample size of at least 200 to ensure stable responses. Trained and experienced interviewers are also important as this ensures respondents are guided through the questions carefully and consistently. A minimum sample of 50 interviews is generally possible by a trained interviewer in a day meaning that sample sizes are best incremented by 50, usually if there is targeting of a specific area or group (e.g. of students, or a sub-centre), although conclusions from these separate samples can only be indicative taken alone. For some authorities with multiple centres this can imply value in using a higher sample size, such as 250 if there are two large and one moderate sized centre.

It is normal practice to compare the resulting gender and age structure to the latest available local and national census proportions to identify if the sample has become biased in any way.

More details of the results of the on-street responses are included in Appendix 5.

More recently, general public views have been enlisted from the use of council citizens' panels although the issue with these is that return numbers cannot be guaranteed. The other issue is that the structure of the sample responding cannot be guaranteed either, and it is also true that those on the panel have chosen to be there such that they may tend to be people willing to have stronger opinions than the general public randomly approached.

Finally, some recent surveys have placed an electronic copy of the questionnaire on their web site to allow interested persons to respond, although again there needs to be an element of care with such results as people choosing to take part may have a vested interest.

For this survey, interviews were undertaken in and around the main Bolton centre, where the best range of people were believed to be available for interview. A total of 211 persons were interviewed, all on Saturdays, and in locations such as the Interchange, the Market, Great Moor Street, Newport Street, Victoria Square and the Museum. The sample size was slightly greater than in 2015 (201) and less than 2012 (406, but including several suburban centres).

The present sample obtained was compared to the latest estimate of 2019 population structure. This suggested a bias towards females (as in 2015) and to the medium age group (in 2015 there was a bias towards the older age group). However, these variations should not be significant although this structure will be borne in mind in the result interpretation. This change may be a result of the interviews this time being focussed on a Saturday rather than mid-week as in 2015.

The sample stated that 67% had access to a car (64% in 2015), and that 86% lived in the Bolton council area (very similar to the 85% in 2015). These statistics suggest the result base is fairly similar in this regard. Those that came from beyond Bolton were from a range of locations, with the top two being Blackburn and Warrington, with a range from various parts of Manchester, and just one person stating they were from abroad.

All told us if they had used a licensed vehicle in the area in the last three months. 56% had, a slight increase from the level in 2015 of 52% but lower than the 62% recorded in 2012, although these figures are relatively similar overall.

All respondents also told us how frequently they used licensed vehicles in the area. The highest proportion, 27%, said 'never' whilst 19% said once or twice monthly and 18% once or twice weekly. The resulting estimate of trips by licensed vehicle was 2.9 per person per month, reduced from the 3.8 of 2015 and the even more significant reduction from 4.9 quoted in 2012.

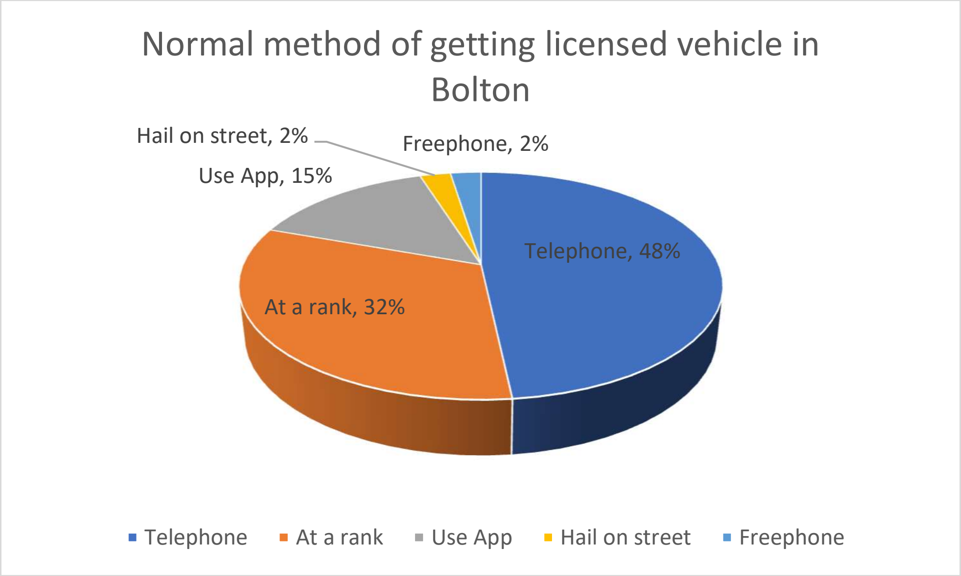
In terms of comparison to the latest National Travel Survey (2016), Bolton values are higher for both frequencies quoted above, with the NTS having 14% once or twice a month and just 6% once or twice weekly. The NTS monthly trip rate per person is 1.08 compared to the Bolton 2.9.

Less people responded to the similar question but focussed on purely hackney carriage vehicle usage. Of those responding, 3% said they could not remember seeing a hackney carriage in the area. A further 46% said they could not remember when they last used one. Both these values are significantly reduced from 2015 values which were 9% and 79% respectively.

Calculating an average level of trips per month for those responding suggested the level of trip making was in the order of 1.2 per month, much higher than the similar value from 2015 (0.4).

This value is 43% of the overall value for licensed vehicles, which suggests a good share is taken by hackney carriage of the overall market in the area, a change from the 11% estimated in 2015. Comparing the profile of usage, the main difference is that hackney carriages are used more for once or twice weekly, more than 2-monthly and once or twice monthly, although the largest value of 29% was for once or twice yearly, nearly twice the level quoted for licensed vehicles in total.

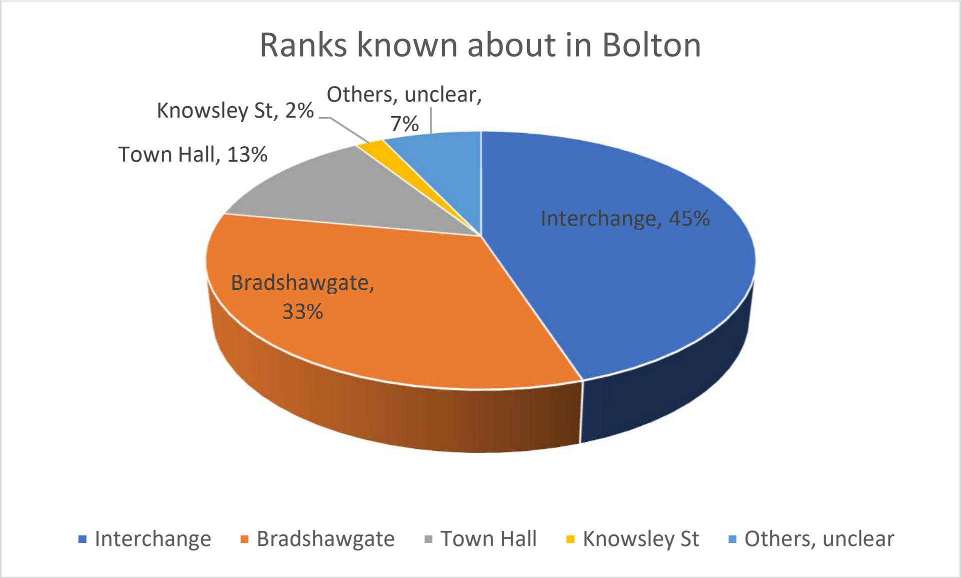
Nearly all told us how they normally got a licensed vehicle in the Bolton area.



48% said telephone, 32% rank (increased from 6% in 2012, and 19% in 2015) and 2% hailing (also up from 1% in 2015). Apps obtained 15% of the choices made (although in 2015 the 'online' percentage was 18%). For those telling us the app they used, 81% named a national site, with two local sites gaining 16% and 3% of the app mentions.

In terms of those using companies, one large private hire company took 42% of the mentions, with the next two taking 13% and 11% respectively, suggesting some dominance by one company, but given the 17 names provided in total also suggesting there is quite a lot of phone competition in the area. A national company obtained 8% (the fifth largest value).

In terms of ranks, 13 different names were provided where people thought ranks were located. Many of these were different names for the same rank, with the Town Hall rank having the most different names given (including Victoria Square, Octagon Theatre and Howell Croft). All active ranks were named but so were some ranks long unused (the most frequent of which was Bolton Market). 73% of those naming ranks said they used the ranks they named, a very high proportion.



The most named location was the Interchange rank, jointly cited in 45% of all responses made. Bradshawgate obtained 33%, with the various Town Hall names adding up to about 13% and Knowsley Street obtaining around 2% of responses.

Overall this suggests a good knowledge of ranks in the central area, but it also suggests there would be usage for those ranks named but not used, or that they should be removed to avoid people expecting to find a hackney carriage there when they needed one, an expectation very unlikely to be met and which could give rise to latent demand, or a feeling that hackney carriages were never where you wanted them to be.

People were asked to rate various aspects of their last hackney carriage trip. There were no 'very poor' ratings for any category. Only price had any significant quotes of 'poor' (7%), although the overall response for price, with 38% was 'very good'. Vehicle repair, driver behaviour and driver knowledge all had the highest score as 'very good', with 56% of people saying they thought driver knowledge was thus. For vehicle cleanliness, driver appearance, driver hygiene and driver professionalism the highest score was for 'good'. Overall this suggests very little issue with the hackney carriage standard of service provided, with the best score being for an item hackney carriages are well-known for, drivers knowing where they are going.

Just over half of respondents told us matters that might encourage them to use hackney carriages or use them more. An equal level of 22% said better vehicles or better drivers. 13% said more hackney carriages available by phone, but hardly any (3%) said they would use more were more available at ranks. However, the top score, at about 23% was people suggesting there was nothing that might increase their usage of hackney carriages. About 14% suggested cheaper fares would increase their usage.

40% of those responding felt local hackney carriage fares were fair, though 32% said they felt they were expensive. This is marginally more than the 29% saying this in 2015, but a lot less than the 82% quoted in 2012.

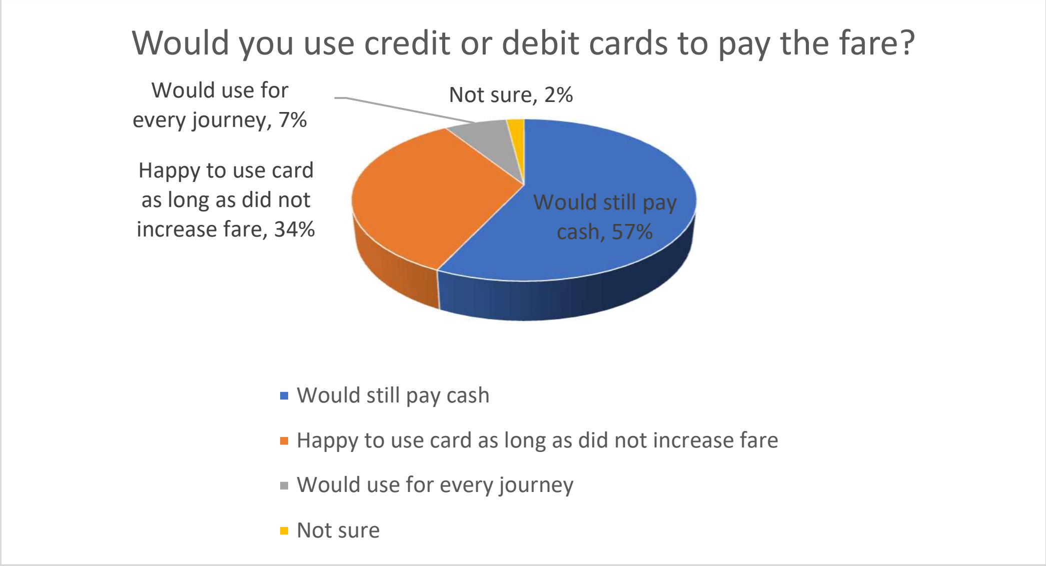
About three quarters of respondents told us if they needed an adapted licensed vehicle or not. 86%, slightly less than the 90% of 2015, said they did not. The remaining responses were split 11% for WAV style and just 2% for other, suggesting a heightened need for WAV style vehicles.

The latent demand factor for rank-based hires saw just seven responses, of which four named ranks. Assuming all were rank related this suggests a factor of 1.047 for rank-based latent demand. The hailing level was 1.019, giving a combined latent demand factor of 1.066, a moderate value. The 2015 value was 1.0, i.e. no latent demand.

78% of those responding however felt there were enough hackney carriages in the area at night.

97% felt safe using hackney carriages in the daytime and a marginally reduced 91% at night. 71% of the small response commenting on safety said better security would improve their feeling of wellbeing, with a further 14% specifically naming cctv addition to vehicles.

When asked about use of credit or debit cards in hackney carriages, 57% would still pay cash and just 7% would use for every journey. 34% said they would be happy as long as it did not cost more (which it cannot now do).



In regards to using electric vehicles, 17% said they would use as long as it did not increase the fare, 3% would use even if the fare was up to 10% higher, but a very high 81% said they had no preference regarding this at all.

Overall, these responses appear to show licensed vehicles, and hackney carriages in particular, in a very good light and possibly point to potentially increased overall usage, particularly again in favour of hackney carriage compared to private hire.

5 Key stakeholder consultation

The following key stakeholders were contacted in line with the recommendations of the BPG:

- Supermarkets
- Hotels
- Pubwatch / individual pubs / night clubs
- Other entertainment venues
- Restaurants
- Hospitals
- Police
- Disability representatives
- Rail operators
- Other council contacts within all relevant local councils

Comments received have been aggregated below to provide an overall appreciation of the situation at the time of this survey. In some cases, there are very specific comments from given stakeholders, but we try to maintain their confidentiality as far as is possible. The comments provided in the remainder of this Chapter are the views of those consulted, and not that of the authors of this report.

Our information was obtained by telephone, email, letter or face to face meeting as appropriate. The list contacted includes those suggested by the Council, those drawn from previous similar surveys, and from general internet trawls for information. Our target stakeholders are as far as possible drawn from across the entire licensing area to ensure the review covers the full area and not just specific parts or areas.

For the sake of clarity, we cover key stakeholders from the public side separately to those from the licensed vehicle trade element, whose views are summarized separately in the following Chapter.

Where the statistical analyses in Chapter 2 demonstrate low levels of wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) provision, an increased emphasis will be given to the issue in terms of the focus of stakeholders but also in specific efforts to contact disabled users and their representatives. However, it must be remembered that none of our consultation is statutory and for cost effective and fixed budget reasons we limit our attempts to contact people generally to a first attempt and reminder.

Further listing of who has responded and how is provided in Appendix 6 but ensuring privacy where appropriate for those contacted.

Supermarkets

Three supermarkets told us their customers used licensed vehicles. One said most customers needing licensed vehicles would ask staff whilst the other two said people would either make their own arrangements or might ask staff, who would help. None were aware of any nearby ranks, and none had received any negative comments about the service provided, which seems to be principally from phoned-for services. Two other supermarkets only had national contact that refused to provide any information, and two others were always too busy to respond.

Hotels

Three hotels told us their customers made use of licensed vehicles. None were aware of nearby ranks, with one suggesting people might go to a nearby booking office. All said customers would ask for vehicles, which would be booked using companies preferred by the hotel. The only issue reported by customers to hotel staff was lateness in arrival. Again, the focus was on booked vehicles.

Public houses

Two pubs told us their customers made use of local licensed vehicles. One had a rank outside, but had never seen it used. Another said people would use the local booking office. They had not received any negative or other comments about the service provided. One said customers would book their own vehicles whilst the other said people often booked, but also did ask staff to book for them. Six others did not make any comment.

Night clubs

None of the three night clubs contacted made any comment.

Other entertainment venues

In the time available, no entertainment venues made any comment about licensed vehicles services.

Restaurants

Two restaurants and cafes told us their customers did use local licensed vehicles. One said people booked the vehicles themselves, whilst the other said while this was the case, they would also book vehicles for customer if asked. No ranks were known of nearby, and there were no issues or other comments received from customers. Three others made no comment.

Hospitals

A trade representative told us they had spoken with relevant contacts at the local hospital who had said they would work with the Council to establish a rank provision there, but no further contact or discussion proved possible during the time of writing of this report. Given the busy nature of hospital contacts this is not unusual. It is not clear how this matter can effectively be taken forward without clear identification of the appropriate contacts.

Police

A representative from the local police told us that both hackney carriage and private hire were currently working very well to clear late night demand for licensed vehicles in central Bolton. A key factor was the support from marshals, who he suggested would be focussing vehicles on the best locations for pick-up, hence the increase in use of the southbound Bradshawgate ranks. The main issue related to how licensing laws had widened the hours that locations were open, meaning some did not close until 06:00 or 07:00 the next morning. Steady flows were experienced mainly between 02:00 and 05:00 but there were usually people still wanting to get home later than this.

Private hire seems to operate more in the outer areas and have more issues there with their security, but the central hackney carriage operation seems to work effectively and well.

Comment was also made about future plans to encourage people to live again in the central area, with a further plan to encourage a mid evening rather than late night economy, with a target of being completed by 2030, but with significant change between now and the next formal requirement for a demand survey (see more below)

Disability

Attempt was made to contact several previously available disability groups for the area, but no comment was received.

Rail and other transport operators

The Bolton council area includes 11 national rail stations with Bolton the largest in passenger terms. All the other stations have less than 590,000 entries and exits per year, with the smallest station having just 19,000. None are likely to generate sufficient demand to justify hackney carriage ranks. Statistics for Bolton are provided below:

Rail year (ends March in last year noted)	Entries / exits	Growth / decline
Bolton *(194th)*		
1997 / 1998	1,575,866	n/a
1998 / 1999	1,544,638	-2%
1999 / 2000	1,654,816	+7%
2000 / 2001	1,720,713	+4%
2001 / 2002	1,718,128	-0.0%
2002 / 2003	1,612,794	-6%
2003 / 2004	n/a	n/a
2004 / 2005	1,867,937	+16%
2005 / 2006	1,929,990	+3%
2006 / 2007	1,952,354	+1%
2007 / 2008	2,097,879	+7%
2008 / 2009	2,743,684	+31%
2009 / 2010	2,833,866	+3%
2010 / 2011	3,059,186	+8%
2011 / 2012	3,262,442	+7%
2012 / 2013	3,583,392	+10%
2013 / 2014	3,695,050	+3%
2014 / 2015	3,518,716	-5%
2015 / 2016	2,866,316	-19%
2016 / 2017	3,240,136	+13%
2017 / 2018	2,950,294	-9%
2018 / 2019	3,074,022	+4%
Overall	97/98 to 18/19	+95%
Last three available	2015/16 to 2018/19	+7%

At the present time, Bolton is 194th highest in terms of patronage from the nearly 2,000 national rail stations. Although over the years there has been substantial growth in rail passengers, the last three years, with electrification work, have seen a reduction, although there may be increases in the near future given these works are now completed and new services are starting to appear. The Interchange rank also services buses arriving at the recently rebuilt bus facility.

Assuming a 50-week year this implies hackney carriages took 4.4% of all arriving passengers.

Other Council contacts

Several other relevant council contacts were approached but none had any comment. Contacts made included highways and those responsible for future development in the area.

6 Trade stakeholder views

The BPG encourages all studies to include 'all those involved in the trade'. There are a number of different ways felt to be valid in meeting this requirement, partly dependent on what the licensing authority feel is reasonable and possible given the specifics of those involved in the trade in their area.

The most direct and least costly route is to obtain comment from trade representatives. This can be undertaken by email, phone call or face to face meeting by the consultant undertaking the study. In some cases to ensure validity of the work being undertaken it may be best for the consultation to occur after the main work has been undertaken. This avoids anyone being able to claim that the survey work was influenced by any change in behaviour.

Most current studies tend to issue a letter and questionnaire to all hackney carriage and private hire owners, drivers and operators. This is best issued by the council on behalf of the independent consultant. Usual return is now using an on-line form of the questionnaire, with the option of postal return still being provided, albeit in some cases without use of a freepost return. Returns can be encouraged by email or direct contact via representatives.

Some authorities cover private hire by issuing the letter and questionnaire to operators seeking they pass them on when drivers book on or off, or via vehicle data head communications.

In all cases, we believe it is essential we document the method used clearly and measure response levels. However, it is also rare for there to be high levels of response, with 5% typically felt to be good and reasonable.

Method of engaging drivers for this current survey

The Council issued the questionnaires for this survey, using a letter and form prepared by LVSA and confirmed with the council to ensure it reflected current operations and terminology and also contained all relevant information. In the order of 136 questionnaires were issued to hackney carriage drivers, with other forms / links sent to private hire companies for forwarding. There were 19 hackney carriage, 2 private hire and one dual respondee. This is a 14% response for hackney carriages but a very small response for private hire, as is usually the case. In 2015, the focus was issue to hackney carriage, with a 5% response rate from them.

As already noted above, the responses were split between 86% from hackney carriage, 9% from private hire and 5% from a driver saying they drove both kinds of vehicle. For most questions, only the hackney carriage response will be reported as the private hire and dual numbers are too small to be representative.

In some cases, where appropriate, the total responses will be discussed.

Levels of experience and background to operation

The hackney carriage respondents had an average of 17 years' experience, ranging from four to 30 years. This was up one year from the last survey, with the range slightly more than the three to 27 years quoted in the previous survey. On average they worked just over five days, with a range of three to seven days quoted. 42% said they worked six days, 37% five, 11% three and 5% each said four and seven days. On average, this amounted to just over 39 hours, but the range was 25 to 100 hours. This was longer than in the previous survey, when the average hours were 35.

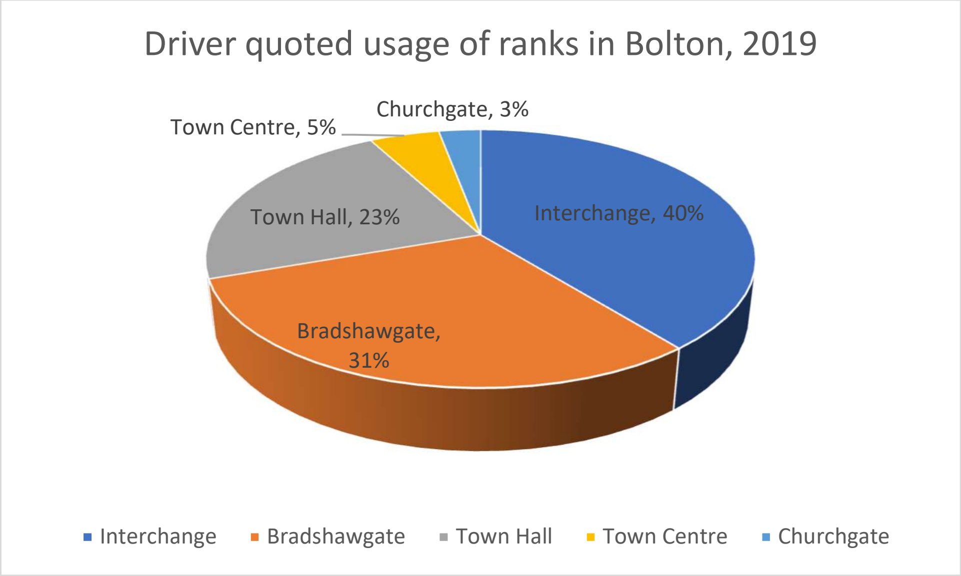
The main factor affecting when drivers chose to work was family commitments (33%) followed by avoiding heavy traffic periods, preference and working busy times. One person focussed on contracts whilst another two said they worked when they felt best able to get passengers.

91% owned their own vehicles and none said that anyone else drove the vehicle they used.

There was an even split between those that accepted bookings and those that did not. 71% of bookings came via phone links, with one person saying emailed bookings and another simply 'private customers'. Five different radio circuits were named.

Rank operations

In terms of ranks, there were a total of 40 different mentions made – with 40% being the station (Interchange), 28% Bradshawgate (direction not specified), 23% Town Hall, 5% 'town centre' and 3% each for Bradshawgate northbound and Churchgate.



Compared to the last survey, this was an increased proportion of drivers saying they serviced the interchange (30% last time), the Town Hall (20%) and Bradshawgate (was 20%).

75% said their main way of getting fares was from ranks. One had school contracts (a private hire vehicle) and another used an app (one hackney carriage).

Trade views about vehicle numbers

All those responding to the question said there were enough hackney carriages in the Bolton area. 41% felt fares were about right, 47% said they needed to be increased and 6% said they needed to be reduced. The remainder said 'other' but did not define what they meant.

In this survey, 95% said retain the limit, compared to all agreeing it should be retained in the previous survey. 56% said they would leave the trade if the limit were removed or increased. About 14% said they would give up and claim benefits as unemployed.

Two reasons scored equally for the benefit of having a limit. 43% felt it reduced pollution and congestion and a similar number felt it meant taxis were always available.

Various other comments were provided. Most were requesting more ranks near key generators, including the hospital, near a large hotel and at supermarkets. Some also asked that the Town Hall rank be returned to its former capacity and location.

Reviewing the days and hours worked, over two thirds, the highest proportion, worked 2330-0500 on Saturday nights into Sunday morning. Between 53 and 58% worked Monday-Wednesday 0500-1300 and Tuesday 1300-2000. Hardly any worked on Sundays, and very few during Saturday daytimes. There was very little cover from 2000-2330 other than on Friday and Saturday nights.

One member of the trade contacted us and reported they had spoken to the hospital trust about a possible rank in the main entrance lay-by. The contact they had spoken to advised they should try to 'get the council on board'. They are concerned that the potential for servicing those needing disabled accessible vehicles is not being met.

7 Evaluation of unmet demand and its significance

It is first important to define our specific view about what constitutes unmet demand. Our definition is when a person turns up at a hackney carriage rank and finds there is no vehicle there available for immediate hire. This normally leads to a queue of people building up, some of who may walk off (taken to be latent demand), whilst others will wait till a vehicle collects them. Later passengers may well arrive when there are vehicles there, but because of the queue will not obtain a vehicle immediately.

There are other instances where queues of passengers can be observed at hackney carriage ranks. This can occur when the level of demand is such that it takes longer for vehicles to move up to waiting passengers than passengers can board and move away. This often occurs at railway stations but can also occur at other ranks where high levels of passenger arrivals occur. We do not consider this is unmet demand, but geometric delay and although we note this, it is not counted towards unmet demand being significant.

The industry standard index of the significance of unmet demand (ISUD) was initiated at the time of the introduction of section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act as a numeric and consistent way of evaluating unmet demand and its significance. The ISUD methodology was initially developed by a university and then adopted by one of the leading consultant groups undertaking the surveys made necessary to enable authorities to retain their limit on hackney carriage vehicle numbers. The index has been developed and deepened over time to take into account various court challenges. It has now become accepted as the industry standard test of if identified unmet demand is significant.

The index is a statistical guide derived to evaluate if observed unmet demand is in fact significant. However, its basis is that early tests using first principles identified based on a moderate sample suggested that the level of index of 80 was the cut-off above which the index was in fact significant, and that unmet demand therefore was such that action was needed in terms of additional issue of plates to reduce the demand below this level, or a complete change of policy if it was felt appropriate. This level has been accepted as part of the industry standard. However, the index is not a strict determinant and care is needed in providing the input samples as well as interpreting the result provided. However, the index has various components which can also be used to understand what is happening in the rank-based and overall licensed vehicle market.

How ISUD works

ISUD draws from several different parts of the study data. Each separate component of the index is designed to capture a part of the operation of the demand for hackney carriages and reflect this numerically. Whilst the principal inputs are from the rank surveys, the measure of latent demand comes from the public on-street surveys, and any final decision about if identified unmet demand is significant, or in fact about the value of continuing the current policy of restricting vehicle numbers, must be taken fully in the context of a careful balance of all the evidence gathered during the survey process.

The present ISUD calculation has two components which both could be zero. In the case that either are zero, the overall index result is zero, which means they clearly demonstrate there is no unmet demand which is significant, even if other values are high.

The first component which can be zero is the proportion of daytime hours where people are observed to have to wait for a hackney carriage to arrive. The level of wait used is ANY average wait at all within any hour. The industry definition of these hours varies, the main index user counts from 10:00 to 18:00 (i.e. eight hours ending at 17:59). The present index is clear that unmet demand cannot be significant if there are no such hours. The only rider on this component is that the sample of hours collected must include a fair element of such hours, and that if the value is non-zero, review of the potential effect of a wider sample needs to be considered.

The other component which could be zero is the test identifying the proportion of passengers which are travelling in any hour when the average passenger wait in that hour is greater than one minute.

If both of these components are non-zero, then the remaining components of the index come into play. These are the peakiness factor, the seasonality factor, average passenger delay, and the latent demand factor.

Average passenger delay is the total amount of time waited by all passengers in the sample, divided by the total number of passengers observed who entered hackney carriages.

The seasonality factor allows for the undertaking of rank survey work in periods which are not typical, although guidance is that such periods should normally be avoided if possible particularly as the impact of seasons may not just be on the level of passenger demand, but may also impact on the level of supply. This is particularly true in regard to if surveys are undertaken when schools are active or not.

More general components of ISUD

Periods when schools are not active can lead to more hackney carriage vehicles being available whilst they are not required for school contract work. Such periods can also reduce hackney carriage demand with people away on holiday from the area. Generally, use of hackney carriages is higher in December in the run-up to Christmas, but much lower in January, February and the parts of July and August when more people are likely to be on holiday. The factor tends to range from 0.8 for December (factoring high demand level impacts down) to 1.2 for January / February (inflating the values from low demand levels upwards).

There can be special cases where summer demand needs to be covered, although high peaks for tourist traffic use of hackney carriages tend not to be so dominant at the current time, apart from in a few key tourist authorities.

The peakiness factor is generally either 1 (level demand generally) or 0.5 (demand has a high peak at one point during the week). This is used to allow for the difficulty of any transport system being able to meet high levels of peaking. It is rarely possible or practicable for example for any public transport system, or any road capacity, to be provided to cover a few hours a week.

The latent demand factor was added following a court case. It comes from asking people in the on-street questionnaires if they have ever given up waiting for a hackney carriage at a rank in any part of the area. This factor generally only affects the level of the index as it only ranges from 1.0 (no-one has given up) to 2.0 (everyone says they have). It is also important to check that people are quoting legitimate hackney carriage rank waits as some, despite careful questioning, quote giving up waiting at home, which must be for a private hire vehicle (even if in hackney carriage guise as there are few private homes with taxi ranks outside).

The ISUD index is the result of multiplying each of the components together and benchmarking this against the cut-off value of 80. Changes in the individual components of the index can also be illustrative. For example, the growth of daytime hour queueing can be an earlier sign of unmet demand developing than might be apparent from the proportion of people experiencing a queue particularly as the former element is based on any wait and not just that averaging over a minute. The change to a peaky demand profile can tend towards reducing the potential for unmet demand to be significant.

Finally, any ISUD value must be interpreted in the light of the sample used to feed it, as well as completely in the context of all other information gathered. Generally, the guide of the index will tend not to be overturned in regard to significant unmet demand being identified, but this cannot be assumed to be the case – the index is a guide and a part of the evidence and needs to be taken fully in context.

The Bolton ISUD Results

Element	2019	2015	2012
Av Pass Delay	0.08	0.1	
Daytime hours with queues	11.11	4.17	0
Prop of pass in hours with av pass wait 1 min or more	2.1	1.72	0.9
Seasonality	1	1	
Peak factor	0.5	0.5	0.5
Latent demand	1.066	1.0	
Overall ISUD	1.04	0.36	Zero

The table above shows that the present index of significance of unmet demand is currently at the highest level it has been since this index was used to review unmet demand in this area. However, the value is still a very long way off the cut-off level of 80 which industry standards suggests is the level at which observed unmet demand becomes significant.

However, comparison to previous years does show a significant increase in the value, albeit small. In reality, average passenger delay has actually decreased, whilst the peak factor and seasonality have stayed the same. There is a slight increase in the proportion of passengers travelling in hours with average passenger delay over a minute, but not to any significant degree. Latent demand now exists, at a moderate level.

Why is the ISUD factor increasing at this time?

The key factor driving the index upwards relates to the proportion of weekday, off peak hours, when there is now some delay. In the 2012 survey, there were no such hours. There are now some 11% of such hours. This is a typical result occurring from low off peak demand that means many hackney carriages work on private hire circuits rather than sitting at ranks, reducing service to the ranks. It can also occur when off peak demand reduces and some vehicles choose not to work at such times, but to focus on higher levels of demand. Whatever the reason is (further discussed in our synthesis below), it is clear the trade need to give some thought to improving this service to the public.

8 Summary, synthesis and study conclusions

This Hackney carriage unmet demand survey on behalf of Bolton has been undertaken following the guidance of the BPG and other recent case history regarding unmet demand and its significance. This Chapter provides a summary of the preceding information, draws this together and provides overall conclusions regarding the survey undertaken. Recommendations are provided in a further separate chapter.

Background and context

This study has been undertaken against the current legal and industry standard background to reviewing unmet demand and its significance. The overall taxi industry remains in both a state of flux and also with some element of awaiting potential change the timeline for which remains unknown. Whilst the demands of the public, and attempts by the free trade to meet this continue to develop, the legal background in which these occur sees desire for change but little action resulting from this. A response to the recent Government consultation, itself a response to the All Party Parliamentary Group report, remains awaited. Change in Wales remains on hold, whilst the Scottish Government are close to issuing their Guidance with respect to implementing reviews of private hire demand with a view to showing how Scottish authorities can see if capping private hire vehicle numbers might be an appropriate tool for their areas.

In the local arena, reviews are occurring within the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) seeking to harmonise licensed vehicles across the area where practicable. The 2040 Transport Strategy acknowledges the importance of hackney carriage and private hire as key gap-fillers as well as being important in their own right to the transport of each authority. In many cases, these elements of public transport can meet needs that other modes are not able to. This includes covering disability needs as well as being able to provide lower levels of demand than other services are able to economically provide.

Within this background, LVSA were appointed in April 2019 to undertake a review of the current levels of unmet demand in the Bolton licensing area, and its level of significance. Ranks were observed in April, people were spoken to in the streets of the area in May, trade opinions were canvassed in May and various key stakeholders were contacted during the full period of the review.

Bolton has had a period from the mid 1980's to 2003 with no limit on hackney carriage vehicle numbers. The limit was set in 2004 to the 104 hackney carriage vehicles in place at that time, and has been regularly reviewed since with no further plates added to the date of this survey.

National statistics, supported by local review, show the actual number of hackney carriages on issue as having fallen below the actual limit, with 99 on issue at the time of the rank survey work. To the contrary, private hire vehicle numbers have risen, although some of that has been of vehicles registered in the area but used in other parts of the wider Greater Manchester region. Further, some more distant private hire vehicles have also been used to service local demand within the context of the current national situation following the implementation of the Deregulation Act and the general understanding of the ability to subcontract where appropriate. This has also been part of the reaction which includes meeting public demand by use of more recently developed methods of obtaining licensed vehicles, i.e. by use of apps.

National statistics also set the context for Bolton currently having a fully WAV hackney carriage fleet, but just a few private hire that are similarly capable. The full fleet WAV level is 6%, placing Bolton 195th out of 292 licensing areas in terms of the overall position for WAV style vehicles. This information is important in understanding the overall 'accessibility' of the fleet which is determined not just by vehicle type, but also by how vehicles can be obtained by those needing their services.

Despite the reduction in overall hackney carriage vehicles there remains some evidence that some multi-shifting of vehicles occurs, at about the same level as in the previous survey, although the issue of excess private hire vehicles over drivers from the last review now seems to have gone away.

Rank observations

For this survey the main change regarding ranks has been that the Town Hall rank is now back in operation, albeit in a slightly different location. The new bus interchange is now operating, but rank provision for the full interchange site remains as it was, near the principal rail station exit.

An expanded rank observation programme saw in the order of 2,800 vehicle movements at or near ranks in the area. Of these, 54% were hackney carriages. 23% of observed movements were private cars, with most abuse occurring at Knowsley Street rank, although hackney carriage presence there was low mainly due to very low passenger demand levels at that location. There was evidence of relatively high levels of private hire at or near ranks, with 20% of all observations relating to their use – although this was not much increased from the 19% for this statistic in the previous survey.

The Interchange rank had no issues given its being secure by design, but both Churchgate and the various ranks in Bradshawgate were susceptible to private hire usage at various times. However, some of this may relate to the extensive coverage of kerb space by ranks in Bradshawgate and the need for passengers to be able to board vehicles – although there is clear need to ensure passenger safety and legality in this regard.

Overall current estimated weekly passenger demand is around 3,200 passengers at all ranks in the area, about 4% down on the level from 2015, but showing the reduction much less than that observed between 2012 and 2015, which is encouraging, particularly against the overall national trend of reduced hackney carriage rank usage.

This picture masks a wider change between ranks with the Town Hall regaining its 13% share whilst the Interchange rank has seen absolute flows halved and share reduced to 43% at this time. On the contrary, Bradshawgate Southbound has seen major gains in usage partly at the expense of the northbound related to changes in street layout (not rank provision).

The most dominant passenger demand at the present time is on the Saturday night – with a significant peak. However, this does occur at three locations, which also see activity on Friday nights. Just the main night rank sees activity on the Thursday, reflecting the lower level of demand and suggesting the two other locations essentially support the main southbound Bradshawgate operation.

Interestingly, the Town Hall rank tends to be busier Monday to Friday than Saturday, when demand there tends to also be a lot peakier through the day. Most daytime demand occurs at the Interchange rank, which tends to see growth in levels from Thursday through Friday to being busiest on Saturday, although it is very dependent on train operating hours.

Review of hour by hour flows at specific ranks over the full set of surveys confirms the overall reduction in flows over the years and also confirms the growth in the main two night ranks over time.

In terms of hours with any passenger delay, the extended survey programme of 186 hours only found six with any passenger delay observed at all – a very low level of unmet demand. Even with the harshest tests, the performance of the ranks is excellent in terms of lack of people having to wait for vehicles to arrive. Just 4% of all passengers travelled in hours with any delay at all – and only 1% actually experienced any wait. Further discussion of this is included in the unmet demand significance section below.

Tests of plate activity found no more than perhaps 37% of the fleet active during our observations – including an assumption that about 8% of the fleet perhaps focussed only on the Town Hall demand. Many appeared only to service the night demand, with only 17% of vehicles active seen at both the Interchange and the night ranks. A further test on a subsequent evening increased the overall fleet activity level to 70%, but most of the additional vehicles principally serviced the night demand.

This raises a concern that many vehicles are dependent on flows during a maximum of 18 hours per week which would clearly suggest economic issues and need for finding other demand.

A very positive finding was a big increase to 12 passengers of those using wheel chairs to access hackney carriages at ranks in the area. 58% of these were at the Town Hall rank, with the remainder at the Interchange. This suggests both are vital services to the travelling public. There were a good number of others who appeared disabled in other, non-wheel chair dependent ways, again emphasising the key value of the hackney carriage fleet to those who may not otherwise be able to readily travel.

On street public views

Over 200 persons were interviewed on Saturdays in central Bolton. The sample saw more females and more medium age group representatives than suggested in the Census. In terms of access to a car and where people lived, proportions were very similar to the previous survey, with 67% saying they had regular access to a car and 86% being from the local area.

The resulting level of recent licensed vehicle usage at 56% was relatively similar to that in both the previous two surveys. However, overall usage levels were reduced at 2.9 trips per person per month for all licensed vehicles but actually higher for hackney carriages than in the 2015 survey (1.2 trips per person per month), suggesting that hackney carriage usage might have increased proportionately compared to overall licensed vehicle usage. Overall usage appears to be much higher than that suggested by the National Travel Survey. The values reflecting how many could not remember seeing a hackney carriage and those saying they could not remember when they last used one were both significantly reduced from the previous 2015 levels, again encouraging results.

In a similar manner, current views suggested an increase in the proportion of people getting hackney carriages from a rank. Apps were clearly important with a national player getting 8% of the mentions made in terms of companies people would contact to get a licensed vehicle. Further, when people did contact companies they were all private hire companies, with the largest company getting 42% of the mentions of companies made.

73% of those naming ranks said they used them. There was a good knowledge of rank albeit by a range of names for each location. The Town Hall rank obtained the largest range of different names. The Interchange rank was mentioned most, with 45% of all mentions by the public. Bradshawgate obtained about a third of mentions. Some unused ranks were also named, which is a concern as that could give rise to latent demand.

The views of people about the standard of the hackney carriage service suggested very few issues and high levels of satisfaction from most elements of service provided. A particularly good score was obtained from people saying they were impressed how well hackney carriage drivers knew the area.

However, more usage might be encouraged by better vehicles or better drivers, with 22% of the response for this question given to both categories. The next highest score, 13% sought more hackney carriages they could phone for. A negative view was that 23% said there was nothing that would encourage them to use, or use hackney carriages more.

The highest proportion, 40% said hackney carriage fares were fair, but 32% felt they were expensive. However, the result was more favourable about fares than that quoted in 2012.

There was evidence of a heightened need for WAV style vehicles compared to previous years.

One other negative viewpoint was that latent demand was 1.047 for ranks and 1.019 for hailing, giving a combined factor of 1.066, increased from the zero of the previous survey. This should be tempered by the question about people thinking there were enough hackney carriages at night, which saw 78% say they felt there were enough.

Safety in using hackney carriages in both day and night was high.

Just 7% said they would use credit cards for every journey with 57% saying they would still pay cash, and 34% only happy to use if it did not have an impact on prices.

81% had no preference with regard to use of electric vehicles. 3% would use even if they had to pay more whilst 17% would use them as long as it had no impact on price of travel.

Key stakeholder views

Most key stakeholders had customers that mainly used phoned-for services, with few aware of ranks.

The police were very supportive of the level of service provided by both hackney carriage and private hire. They also felt the marshals had improved the level of usage and regulation of vehicle pick-ups.

A trade representative had received support from a hospital contact to work with the council to establish a rank there, but no further detail was obtained.

National rail statistics suggested the electrification of the local service, and resulting closures and bus replacements, had reduced demand at Bolton Interchange by 19% over the period since the last survey. It will be interesting to see if this trend is significantly reversed now the works are complete and with the planned service improvements.

No other council or disability contacts provided any comments.

Trade views

There was an improved level of response from the hackney carriage trade to this survey – 14% compared to 5% last time. However, as usual, response from private hire was very low.

The current set of respondees reflected an average of 17 years' experience in the trade, increased from the previous survey. Average working hours had increased from 35 to 39, with most saying they worked six days, with the actual average being just over five days.

Personal vehicle ownership was high at 91% of those responding. There was an even split between those accepting bookings and those not – with 71% of bookings via phone links. These came through five different named companies.

The Interchange was the main rank quoted as being used (40%) with 28% for Bradshawgate and 23% for the Town Hall. This was an increased quoted level of usage for all ranks. 75% said their main source of fares was ranks, although one quoted school contracts as being important.

All drivers that responded felt there were enough hackney carriages in the area.

47% felt fares should be increased, 41% felt they were about right and 6% said they needed to be reduced.

The proportion wanting to retain the limit was reduced to 95% agreement in this survey – but 56% said they would leave the trade if this changed. There were clear views of the benefits of the limit to the public with 43% of responses being it reduced pollution and congestion and a similar proportion saying it meant hackney carriages were always available.

A review of days and hours worked found nearly two thirds focussed work on Saturday nights into Sunday morning. Other than on Friday and Saturday nights there was little activity between 2300 and 0500 by drivers.

Other views given sought more ranks and one (already quoted above) felt the issue of a hospital rank was an important addition that should be worked at.

Formal evaluation of significance of unmet demand

The estimated level of significance of unmet demand is, in this survey, at the highest ever calculated level. However, the current value is 1.04, which is a long way from the cut-off of 80 that would see this observed unmet demand being counted to be significant.

The main change to components of the index is there are now hours in the off peak when there are some delays. This is a typical result from low off peak demand driving vehicles to service on private hire circuits rather than waiting long periods at ranks. For this area, this also could be a result of many vehicles only working the busy periods at weekends, although this is a reaction to low demand levels meaning work is not sustainable at such times.

Synthesis

Although there has been continued decline in the usage of hackney carriages at ranks in the Bolton area, there are also several positive elements coming from this current survey of hackney carriage demand. Demand at the Town Hall rank has returned despite its prolonged closure. Night demand, perhaps with the assistance of the marshals, particularly on Saturday nights, has increased. Usage of the disabled accessibility of the hackney carriage fleet at ranks has also increased. People are less unaware, and more likely to use hackney carriages than in the past. The quality of hackney carriages is generally appreciated.

There might be some support from the public for fare increases, as preferred by drivers, although almost the same level of public felt fares were currently reasonable and it was also clear that people had tended towards more use of hackney carriages in recent times compared to private hire. Hackney carriage driver knowledge of the area was clearly most strongly appreciated which might be a reaction to experience from out of town private hire trips. There is also evidence that people would value improvements to vehicles and drivers which might increase hackney carriage usage.

There is an important opportunity to try to establish a hackney carriage presence at the hospital although this would need identification of clear lines of responsibility at the hospital in regard to this, not a particularly easy task given current pressures on the NHS. It is also possible that demand at the Interchange rank will resurge as train services are developed following the electrification.

People would also like to be able to obtain hackney carriages by phone – which would also be a benefit to those with disabilities given the low level of private hire that have WAV capability. However, there is an issue that current transfer of vehicles from rank service to private hire circuits has led to a deterioration in the index used to measure standards of rank service, although it is also possible this is a result of many choosing not to work the quieter off peak times and to focus on the night demand. There is also some evidence of some giving up operating hackney carriages with some licences available but no longer in use.

Conclusions

The current situation for hackney carriages in Bolton is presently more favourable than it has been for some while. However, there is significant need to seek to take actions that will take advantage of this to the benefit of the public and trade alike.

At the present time there is no evidence of the unmet demand observed being significant in terms of Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act. However, there is concern from the rising level of latent demand as well as seeing some delays in off peak arising possibly from vehicles moving towards private hire style service rather than waiting at ranks off peak.

Given that the current level of unmet demand arose from a lesser number of vehicles being available, the view could be taken that the currently unissued plates be extinguished and a new limit set either at the current level of plates or perhaps one or two above that level to leave scope for some new blood to be introduced were people willing to invest.

An option that could be considered is reducing the formal level of the limit on hackney carriages to 102, with the other three available plates only being for environmentally friendly vehicles, to be defined by local research taking into account availability of infrastructure.

If further plates were handed back, the agreement might be that every second plate returned was kept available but similarly only for environmentally friendly vehicles.

Were the latter view to be taken, there should be consideration of requiring any new plates to be as environmentally friendly as possible, possibly for fully electric or hybrid vehicles, although it is acknowledged these are currently very expensive and that recharging facilities may yet to be fully developed.

A way needs to be found to attempt to develop a rank at the hospital, be this by trade / hospital discussion or with some input from the Council (however this might be possible). This could only occur if a specific working group was set up to focus on this issue. Although this is not the remit of the licensing service, the opportunity should be taken to try to facilitate discussions between the trade and landowner regarding provision for hackney carriages there, with the focus on the fact all such vehicles are wheel chair accessible.

Some thought needs to be given to how the current fleet could be developed and upgraded, particularly with the current pressures towards improving environmental credentials. This may need action in conjunction with pan Manchester licensing moves.

9 Recommendations

On the basis of the evidence gathered in this Hackney carriage unmet demand survey for Bolton, our key conclusion is that there is no evidence of any unmet demand for the services of hackney carriages either patent or latent which is significant at this point in time in the Bolton licensing area. The committee is therefore legitimately able to continue the present policy limiting hackney carriage vehicle numbers, and retain this at the present level. This decision could be supported if challenged.

An option exists whereby the current trade could be supported by reduction of the numerical limit to the presently existing number of hackney carriages.

There is an alternative option that reduces the limit but leaves a small number of licences available which could be available perhaps to those willing to invest in more sustainable vehicle types.

As far as possible, action needs to be taken to attempt to help development of an active rank at the Hospital.

Appendix 1 – Industry statistics

Bolton

Limit up to 1986 and from 2004 onwards

	hcv	phv	lv total	hcd	phd	dd	total d		Ops	% hcv WAV	% phv WAV
1994D	115			150				**1994D**		100	
1997D	110	677	787	141	1035		1176	**1997D**		100	
1999D	100	733	833	154	1076	154	1384	**1999D**	56	100	
2001D	104	706	810	150	1001		1151	**2001D**	48	100	
2004D	104	706	810	150	1001		1151	**2004D**	48	100	
2005D	104	706	810	150	1001		1151	**2005D**	48	100	
2007D	104	706	810	150	1001		1151	**2007D**	48	100	
2009D	104	706	810	150	1001		1151	**2009D**	48	100	
2010N	110	1350	1460	150	1500	_	*1650*	**2010N**	*62*	100	
2011D	110	1222	1332	162	1564		1726	**2011D**	75	100	
2012N	110	1211	1321	145	1447	_	1592	**2012C**	72	100	
2013D	110	1250	1360	153	1540		1693	**2013D**	72	100	
2014N	108	1185	1293	*150*	*1550*	_	1699	**2014N**	*84*	100	
2015D	105	1575	1680	146	1559		1705	**2015D**	95	100	
2017D	99	1452	1551	134	1640		1774	**2017D**	58	100	0.3
2018D	102	1521	1623	138	1731		1869	**2018D**	75	100	1
2019C	99	1537	1636	136	1829		1965	**2019C**	75	100	

Note: Survey in 2004 identified 108 hcv and 750 phv; in 2007 council numbers were 109 and 987

Appendix 2 – List of ranks

Rank / operating hours	Spaces	Comments
24-hour ranks		
Bolton Interchange	Approx. 15 spaces	Rank within structure of Transport for Greater Manchester bus station at the Bolton Interchange railway station
Town Hall	11	Back in use for 2019
Knowsley Street	3	Adjacent to Market Place
Nelson Square	3 spaces 24 hr + 3 spaces 0600-1900	Two sections of rank operating in day-time (see below)
Night ranks		
Bradshawgate Northbound	Approx. 10	Northbound, should feed Nelson Square ranks (see below), operates midnight to 0600 only
Bradshawgate southbound	9	Three sections of rank in lay-bys, all operate 1930 – 0600 (3 + 2 + 4)
Churchgate	16	Operate 1930 – 0600
Nelson Square	4 spaces night only (plus 3 spaces, all day provided above)	Section of rank on left hand side within Square, supposed to be main location for picking up passengers in this area, fed by northbound Bradshawgate rank, also to be used for hackney carriage vehicles to obviate need for 'u' turns on Bradshawgate which are now banned. Operating 1930 to 0600. Two other sections of rank are daytime – at head of square and on right hand side on exit side.
Informal rank locations – NONE		
Out of town locations		
Farnworth		Occasional use by one vehicle reported
Middlebrook retail park		Provided when area opened, not used
Private rank location		
Horwich Parkway station		On railway land, within car park, unused

Appendix 3 – Timetable of rank observations

Please see separate document

Appendix 4 – Detailed rank observation results

Please see separate document

Appendix 5 – Detailed on street interview results

Please see separate document

Appendix 6 List of Stakeholders consulted

Key consultee	Response
Supermarkets	
Asda, Farnworth	Y
Asda, Manchester Road	Y
Sainsbury's, Trinity Street	Y
Lidl, Derby Street	R
Morrison's Atlas Mills	N
Aldi, Trinity Street	R
Morrison's, Blackhorse Rd	N
Hotels	
Holiday Inn, Bolton Central	Y
Premier Inn, Bolton West	Y
White's Hotel, University of Bolton	Y
Britannia Hotel	N
Mercure Bolton	N
Restaurants / Cafes	
Coast to Coast, Middlebrook Retail Park	Y
Ask Italian, Middlebrook Retail Park	Y
Achari	N
Olympus Fish and Chip Restaurant	R
Ciao Napoli	R
Entertainment	
Grosvenor Casino	N
University of Bolton Stadium	N
Cineworld	R
Light Cinema	R
Octagon Theatre	R
Public Houses	
Millstone	Y
The Dragonfly	Y
The Alma Inn	N
The Spinning Mule	N
The Sweet Green Tavern	N
The Elephant and Castle	N
Jolly Carter	N
Three Pigeons	N
Night Clubs	
Level	N
Swan Hotel	N
Post Office	R

Other key stakeholder groups	
Police	Y
Badge for Bolton	Gone?
Trade – via questionnaire and reps	Y
Council Highways	N
Council redevelopment	N