

**REAR LOADING WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES
NETWORK MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

The Network Management team have been asked to comment on proposals to licence a Hackney Carriage Vehicle that will load wheelchairs from the rear of the vehicle. Consideration has been given to the operation, safety, functionally and deliverability of such a proposal.

Officers have examined the proposal and consider that the safety of passengers could be exacerbated. In order for a wheelchair passenger to enter a rear-loading vehicle, it is necessary for them to be moved into the road either facing, or with their back to, oncoming traffic. This also requires the wheelchair user to be manoeuvred down a kerb.

Some hackney carriage stands are not conducive to rear loading vehicles as the passengers safety may be put at risk by being placed in the road prior to loading. There could also be visibility problems with other drivers not seeing the wheelchair user hidden behind the taxi.

There is also a practical issue for the taxi drivers in ensuring that there is sufficient space behind the taxi whenever they arrive at their destination so the wheelchair user can safely exit the vehicle.

Similar concerns apply to private hire vehicles in that where there are no dropped/lowered kerbs it could be difficult or uncomfortable to move a wheelchair bound passenger from the kerb onto the road. Loading in the road may put passengers and drivers at greater risk from other road users.

There is unlikely to be any additional space on most existing ranks to accommodate rear loading vehicles and they could require expensive redesign of the majority of ranks as dropped kerbs could be needed and ranks may need to be extended in length. To understand the full impact this would have on existing hackney carriage stands across the borough it is recommended that a detailed assessment is undertaken to determine the suitability of the stands and identify whether any engineering measures would be required to accommodate such vehicles. This would have a significant implication on staff resources within the Network Management team and would therefore have to be prioritised in line with other committed programmes of work.