Cambridge City
Hackney Carriage demand survey

January 2026

Executive Summary

This Hackney Carriage demand survey has been undertaken on behalf of Cambridge City Council following the guidance of the November 2023 DfT Best Practice Guidance document, and all relevant case history in regard to unmet demand. This Executive Summary provides the outline of the research undertaken. However, it should not be relied on without reference to the detailed document that follows.

This Report provides documentation of the survey undertaken by LVSA based on your Brief, our responding proposal and confirmation of instructions as received at our Inception Meeting in June 2025. On street interviews were in July, principal rank observations in early July with a smaller seasonal test (with all students back) in late September, driver consultation through the Summer and key stakeholder contact throughout the course of the survey. The full report is documentation of the range of evidence collected to review the present application of a limit on the number of Hackney Carriage vehicles currently operating under the City licensing regulations.

The survey was undertaken in the context of the area being one of growth, strong pro-sustainable transport policies but also focussed on the wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) now the local transport authority for that wider area. This may have future implications on licensing.

The City had a period when there was no limit on Hackney Carriage vehicle numbers. This had two impacts – a reduction of Private Hire vehicle numbers as well as a strong increase in the level of the Hackney Carriage fleet which was wheelchair accessible. The City-based fleet is hence dominated by Hackney Carriages although a lot of South Cambridgeshire and out of town vehicles now supplement the Private Hire offer people experience in the area, meaning the balance of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire is not perhaps as dominant as the fleet might suggest.

A recent challenge to the wheel chair accessible element of the hackney carriage fleet (there being just one such vehicle in the private hire fleet) has been the challenge of their increasing cost to maintain, with many being taken out of service.

The results of this latest survey demonstrate an improved level of service to the public despite increased passenger numbers and reduced vehicle numbers. This suggests the current service is in a good place of equilibrium which need to be maintained.

On this basis, the survey confirms that 270 hackney carriages and 111 wheel chair accessible vehicles provide good levels of service for the public using hackney carriages in Cambridge City. The overall unmet demand / performance statistics (ISUD) (index of significance of unmet demand) show improvement in all cases. Even the high levels of significant unmet demand shown when the private station rank is included in the July data disappear once the October data is used.

In order to maintain the impetus and equilibrium it is recommended that the current limit is retained, but reduced to the 270 vehicle level at the time of survey, and that steps are taken to minimise the potential further loss of WAV style vehicles by amending the current age limit further upwards for those vehicles.

Further actions may be necessary as the inclusive service plan (ISP) is moved forward following the acceptance of this Report.

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1 General introduction and background

Licensed Vehicle Surveys and Assessment (LVSA) is a joint venture between CTS Traffic and Transportation Ltd (CTS) and Vector Transport Consultancy. These two companies have hitherto been the two leading practitioners of Hackney Carriage unmet demand surveys in recent years and who joined forces in early 2017. The combined experience of this joint venture covers in the order of 280 similar studies undertaken since 1999. The contracting company for this survey, CTS, also undertook the previous four surveys for this authority, in 2022, 2017, 2014 and 2012, and is aware of earlier surveys, therefore having unrivalled knowledge of the operation of licensed vehicles in the area.

Cambridge City 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. It retains a limit on the number of Hackney Carriage vehicles licensed. Further historical detail of the specific local application is provided in subsequent chapters. This is 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.

Best Practice Guidance

This review of current policy is based on the Best Practice Guidance produced by the Department for Transport in November 2023 (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".

The revised and updated version of the BPG published in November 2023 made significant revisions and additions to the overall guidance to licensing authorities and followed a wide (and lengthy) consultation and even lengthier wait for issue of the Final version following the draft publication.

It supplements and complements the introduction of the "Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards" (STPHVS) document on 23rd July 2020 (see further detail below). None of these resulted in any material change to the elements regarding unmet demand and its review. In essence the new BPG retains much of the material content regarding unmet demand from its 2010 predecessor.

Overarching Background

Current Hackney Carriage, Private Hire and operator licensing is undertaken within the legal frameworks set by the Town Polices Clause Act 1847 (TPCA). This has been amended 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 (LGMPA) with reference to Private Hire vehicles and operations. The LGMPA applied regulation to the then growing Private Hire sector which was never 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.

Public Experience

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 vehicles' to refer to both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire.

We accept this is at odds with the current Government strict definition that 'taxis' are Hackney Carriages (a term they prefer not to use) and all other vehicles are either Private Hire or minicabs, but a good part of the content of unmet demand work is with those using the service, not those regulating it so we have to ensure those we are consulting with understand exactly what we are discussing with them. There are very few persons outside the licensed vehicle trade who wish to have the exact definitions explained to them.

Taxi Licensing Review

The legislation around licensed vehicles and 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 retains the long-quoted comment "most local licensing authorities do not impose quantity restrictions, the Department regards that as best practice." (but continues not to provide any statistical backing for that comment).

The five most recent reviews of overall taxi licensing were by the Office of Fair Trading in 2003, through the production of the Best Practice Guidance in 2010 (BPG 2010), the Law Commission review which published its results in 2014, the All-Party Parliamentary Task and Finish Group which reported in September 2018, the Government Response in February 2019 leading to a part revision of BPG 2010, and the 2022 consultation on a more comprehensive BPG 2010 review (resulting in the November 2023 version of BPG, which we will term BPG).

None of these resulted in any material change to the legislation involved in licensing and specifically with respect to unmet demand and vehicle limits.

Other groups have provided their inputs, including the Urban Transport Group, the Competition and Markets Authority and most recently the International Association of Transport Regulators, but none of these are legal inputs and the upshot remains no significant change in legislation from that quoted above.

Limitation Policy

With specific 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 investigation 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 same time horizon used for review of the veracity of the limit also be used for rank reviews and accessibility reviews.

The current BPG seeks to align the timeline for refreshing demand surveys with Local Transport Plan revisions, although these are not actually as frequent nor consistent in their timelines as the BPG assumes. The BPG does however clearly state that five years should be the absolute maximum time between a range of surveys including those for unmet demand. It does not preclude earlier undertaking of such surveys if necessary. It would seem prudent for example to repeat surveys in a shorter timeframe were the levels of unmet demand close to becoming significant, or in the case where the level was significant at the survey snapshot.

Present background to licensing trends

A trend occurred which saw a good number of authorities remove their limits on Hackney Carriage vehicle numbers in favour of 'quality control', essentially requiring all new Hackney Carriages to be wheelchair accessible. This led to saloon style vehicles effectively having a limit and also gaining 'grandfather' rights to remain as such, although various developments and changes have been applied. Such requiring of WAV style vehicles is currently more difficult given the pressure on operating costs in conjunction with most WAV tending to be the higher polluting diesel vehicles.

More recent choices have seen authorities wishing to encourage more electric or sustainable fuel vehicles into both the Private Hire and Hackney Carriage fleets, although for some this has seen a strong reduction in the Hackney Carriage fleet numbers, including in London, where many of the remaining non-electric fleet are no longer being replaced when their current limit on age expires.

The latest BPG now encourages distinction between Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles to focus on Private Hire only being distinguished from private cars by having their rear licensing plate, although not all authorities agree with this stance. In general, Hackney Carriages have roof signs although some authorities do allow roof signs on Private Hire, some as long as they only advertise the company and do not say 'Taxi' and others by having the sign at right angles.

For Cambridge at this time, any newly licensed saloon vehicle must be either zero-emission or an ultra-low emission plug-in hybrid producing less than 75g/km of CO_2, unless it is a wheelchair-accessible vehicle. Licensing age limits vary by vehicle type: zero-emission vehicles must be under 15 years old; ultra-low emission plug-in hybrids must be under 12 years old. Petrol, diesel, and standard hybrids must be under 11 years old and are only eligible for licence renewal, not new applications; wheelchair-accessible vehicles must also be under 11 years old.

To help with distinction between type of licenced vehicles, Hackney Carriage vehicles are required to be silver in colour and display an Avery 813 grass green gloss stripe along both sides of vehicle, following the vehicle's natural lines, with breaks on the front passenger and driver doors for Council crests. HCV must also display a pale blue Cambridge City Hackney Carriage identification plate on the rear and be fitted with an illuminated roof sign. The sign must show "TAXI" in black on a yellow background at the front and "Cambridge Licensed Taxi Cab" in black on a red background at the rear, and remain illuminated whenever the vehicle is available for hire.

In contrast Private Hire Vehicles must not be silver in colour and are required to display door signs showing the operator's name, contact details, and the wording "Private Hire: Pre-booked only." They must also display pale green Cambridge City Private Hire identification plates on the front and rear, securely fixed to the exterior. Roof-mounted signs and any wording such as "taxi," "cab," or "for hire" are prohibited, and vehicles must not display crests or similar markings.

Legislative Additions

There have, however, been some actual changes to legislation (not guidance) put in place over recent years.

The Deregulation Act 2015 had two clauses relevant to taxi licensing – relating to length of period covered by licences (Section 10) and allowance of operators to transfer work across borders (Section 11) (both enacted October 2015).

In November 2016, the Department of Transport (DfT) undertook its consultation regarding enacting Sections 165 and 167 of the Equality Act 2010. These allowed for all vehicles capable of carrying a wheelchair being placed on a list by the Council (Section 167) leading to any driver that uses a vehicle on this list having a duty under Section 165 to:

- Carry the passenger while in the wheelchair
- Not make any additional charge for doing so
- If the passenger so chooses to travel in a seat to make provision for proper and safe carriage of the wheelchair
- To take such steps as are necessary to ensure the passenger is carried in safety and reasonable comfort
- To give the passenger such mobility assistance as is reasonably required

Since enactment in April 2017 issues with discrimination have not reduced as much as expected and further change occurred with one of two 2022 Acts put in place (see below).

The two 2022 Acts make small but significant changes. The 2022 Acts are the "Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety Act) (31 March 2022)" and the "Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) (28 June 2022)".

The first makes it mandatory for any licensing authority in England that has information about a taxi (Hackney Carriage) or Private Hire vehicle (PHV) driver licensed by another authority that is relevant to safeguarding or road safety concerns in its area to share that information with the authority that issued that drivers' licence.

The second amends the Equality Act 2010 to place duties on taxi and PHV drivers and operators such that any disabled person has specific rights and protections to be transported and receive assistance when using a taxi or PHV without being charged extra for doing so.

Regard has also been had to the Statutory Taxi and Private Standards July 2020 which were published on 21 July 2020 and represented a milestone in transportation regulation, because for the first time the safeguarding of children and vulnerable people were put right at the heart of the taxi licensing system. This publication also noted that a more complete review of all sections of the 2010 Best Practice Guidance would occur in due course and consultation on a draft of this new document ran from March to June 2022.

The "Protecting Users Statutory Guidance" (now the "Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards" (STPHVS) was issued in July 2020 for application and advice of such application to DfT by the end of January 2021.

For completeness, STPHVS seemed to require by the end of January 2021 the following:

- Making publicly available a cohesive taxi licensing policy document
- Clearly documented ways the licensing authority will share information between relevant stakeholders
- Provision of a robust system for recording complaints that is clearly made known to passengers
- Sufficient training for those making decisions about licence issue
- Clear assessment of option of mandating CCTV in vehicles
- Specific requirements for Private Hire company records

However, no clear enforcement of this was ever observed and even the focus on the new BPG is now being overshadowed by discussion about local authority reorganisation and the potential shift of licensing not only to the new authorities but also often further up to the relevant transport authority (which are often overarching over large areas).

Further, the plans to introduce Section 161, and the determination of a proportion of WAV that any fleet must have by the Secretary of State (a quota), are a long way from even any consultation being undertaken. This issue was considered by the Law Commission but they stated 'we did not consider quotas of wheelchair accessible vehicles to be a suitable issue for treatment within a national licensing framework' (Law Commission Final Report para 12.60), nonetheless they reiterated that any such quotas should be decided by individual licensing authorities in response to local needs. They also quoted a DPTAC suggestion the quota should be over 30% and that the Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled People had suggested a minimum of 50% (Law Commission Final Report para 12.61). A 35% quota was suggested by an earlier European Research document – "Economic Aspects of Taxi Accessibility" (International Road Transport Union, 2001).

A much earlier Government plan that all Hackney Carriages would become wheelchair accessible style also failed to see the required consultation about this occur, and that plan never moved forward. The European Research was one outcome from that proposal, but as already noted its conclusion was that full wheelchair style fleets would rarely be economic in the situation where the provision made was by individuals.

Review of unmet demand using industry standard 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, notably the addition of the latent demand factor with respect to the measurable part of that demand.

This tool effectively summarises the level of service to the public in the form of an index taking into account various elements including average passenger delay (APD), proportion of non-peak hours with APD a minute or more, proportion of all passengers travelling in hours with APD a minute or more, a seasonal factor, a peakiness factor and a latent demand factor. Where the index result is 80 or more this is taken to denote that the observed unmet demand result is significant. It must be remembered that the index is exponential so it can quickly increase as values deteriorate in the direction of unmet demand growth.

Some of the application has differed between Scottish and English authorities. 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 snapshot taken every three years. However, the three-year survey horizon became generally accepted given the advice of the BPG and most locations that review regularly did within that timescale, at least up to the beginning of the pandemic.

The DfT had 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.

The current BPG confirms again the 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", a timescale which pre-COVID most authorities kept to. During COVID DfT dissuaded studies of unmet demand, and the current BPG now sets the period as a maximum of five years.

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". This BPG applied at the time of the undertaking of the surveys for this study.

Unmet demand case history

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).

2019 saw three challenges with respect to surveys of unmet demand. All three found in favour of the current methodology being undertaken. A key focus was the need for a robust and up to date independent survey report being available.

In one case it was made clear the current guidance is based on the 2010 BPG, which supersedes previous notes and DfT advice, whilst in another case having a valid survey meant those challenging had no case for their proposed challenge, and in the final case an authority was clearly told they could not rely on a very old survey which itself could not be produced. In the end a fresh survey was undertaken, finding no unmet demand, but undertaken on the established standards only.

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 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.

Cross Border and Sub Contracting Implications

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.

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

The present situation

The days when the main aim of a demand survey was checking if passenger demand had changed to see if supply remained sufficient have now been replaced by a much wider research need to identify both demand and supply side changes (such as drivers working shorter weeks, more time by drivers undertaking contracts or diversifying as delivery drivers, changed passenger use of ranks and locations arising from matters such as reduced rail travel, etc).

Even long-standing areas with limited Hackney Carriage vehicle numbers have been impacted by having spare Hackney Carriage vehicle licences available for the first time in decades. However, our experience suggests that even spare plates and reduced demand can still result in unmet demand increasing as a result of change in the range of elements that need to balance to provide better public service.

The upshot of all the changes in legislation 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 (Law Commission, Taxi and Private Hire Services, Law Com No 347, May 2014, ref CM8864) 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 used for demand surveys also be used for rank reviews and accessibility reviews. In the end, no legislative change resulted, and more recent discussions and the November 2023 Best Practice Guidance are assumed to be the Government response.

Alternatives

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 wheelchair 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. Such restrictions can also be in place within areas that also retain a limit on vehicle numbers.

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 wheelchair 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 (no longer produced), and the Metrocab (no longer produced).

Others allow a wider range of van style conversions in their wheelchair 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. A secondary issue arises in that many larger powered chairs, becoming more common, either need a van style version with tail lift or are unable to be carried by Hackney Carriage or Private Hire at all due to vehicle loading restrictions.

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 wheelchair 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.

More recent considerations have added how greater and more speedy introduction of more sustainable vehicle propulsion might be encouraged in the licensed vehicle fleets.

The new Best Practice Guidance also adds para 9.3 quoting "The Competition and Markets Authority was clear in its 2017 guidance "Regulation of taxis and Private Hire vehicles: understanding the impact of competition" that "Quantity restrictions are not necessary to ensure the safety of passengers, or to ensure that fares are reasonable."

To summarise, the Department for Transport Best Practice Guidance only references 'quantity restrictions' and that not imposing them is regarded by the Department as 'best practice'. Further discussion of this is provided in Chapter 8 below including details of the numbers of authorities that retain such quantity restriction.

Conclusions to chapter

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 make use of, 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 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 (or in some cases a mixed set of conditions, e.g. Hackney Carriage drivers being able to drive either whilst Private Hire cannot drive Hackney Carriage). 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.

For Cambridge, there remain a small number of Hackney Carriage only drivers' licences but the bulk of the drivers have opted to take dual licences allowing them to drive whichever kind of vehicle is most appropriate to their needs.

2 Local background and context

Key dates for this Hackney Carriage demand survey for Cambridge City are:

- appointed LVSA early June 2025
- in accordance with our proposal of March 2025
- as confirmed during the inception meeting for the survey held early June 2025
- this survey was carried out between June and November 2025
- On street pedestrian survey work occurred in July covering a Tuesday, two Thursdays and a Friday
- the video rank observations occurred in early July and October 2025 with the latter covering the busiest two ranks and reviewing impact of the student population on these
- Licensed vehicle driver opinions and operating practices were canvassed during August and September 2025 by an all-trade questionnaire
- Key stakeholders were consulted throughout the period of the survey
- A draft of this Final Report was reviewed by the client during December 2025
- and reported to the appropriate Council committee following.

The City of Cambridge

Cambridge City is one of five district councils within the county of Cambridgeshire. The City has a current population of 149,963 from the latest 2023 estimates for 2023. A key different factor about Cambridge City is that it is surrounded tightly by the South Cambridgeshire hinterland which is a separate licensing authority. Levels of cycling are very high, as are levels of commuting given the two key rail routes to London. The authority also services a much wider hinterland beyond pure City borders.

In terms of background council policy, 2017 saw the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) formed to take strategic transport powers and be the local transport authority for the entire area. This is important for licensing as current Government thought sees taxi licensing being moved to the transport authority level in due course (albeit far from being agreed for some while).

Wider transport developments have included the St Ives Busway project, a key section of which runs through and south of the City centre near to the rail station. A very strong pro-bus / pro-sustainable transport policy has long been in place, supported by a strong pedestrianisation of the central core, which has no car access between 10:00 and 16:00.

The CPCA is developing the draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP). Cambridgeshire continue to develop transport strategies for its part of the area. LTP3 has been superseded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough LTP (2020) and the emerging LTCP that itself builds on and replaces that document. It seeks to be a 'more ambitious community-focussed transport strategy to deliver the Combined Authority and partners' priorities. Key actions are to address the climate emergency, tackle inequalities, prioritise health and wellbeing, both physical and mental, and to ensure continued investment in delivering an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network that works for everyone.

The LTCP vision is 'a transport network which secures a future in which the region and its people can thrive'. A focus is on comprehensive connectivity. Other documents more locally focussed include the "Cambridgeshire Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan".

The present Greater Cambridgeshire Air Quality Strategy 2024 -2029 currently has the low emission taxi policy under Key Priority 1: Regulatory Policies & Development Control (it should be noted that the term 'taxi' in this context means both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles). The 'taxi' policy encourages low emission vehicles, in order to reduce emissions within urban city areas.

As part of the 'taxi' policy, 19 dedicated 'taxi'-only charging points have been installed across the city, funded through various sources. Additional incentives and regulatory measures have been introduced to promote the adoption of ultra-low emission and electric vehicles within the 'taxi' fleet. These include full or partial licence fee reductions for fully electric and ultra-low emission vehicles, respectively, as well as extended age limits, 12 years for ultra-low emission vehicles and 15 years for zero-emission vehicles.

The goal is to achieve a 100% electric or ultra-low emission hybrid 'taxi' fleet by 2028, subject to the availability of wheelchair-accessible vehicles with suitable technology. South Cambridgeshire has also implemented a similar policy.

The City Councils taxi policy has required all HCV since 1999 to be WAV. However, to support the air quality action plan, it was agreed by members that 50 WAV plates could be traded in for Electric vehicles. This would still leave 50% of the HCV fleet as WAV.

Concerns have been expressed by disability passengers that there is lack of availability for WAV when needed. However further investigation indicated it was not a lack of vehicles but lack of drivers to take these bookings.

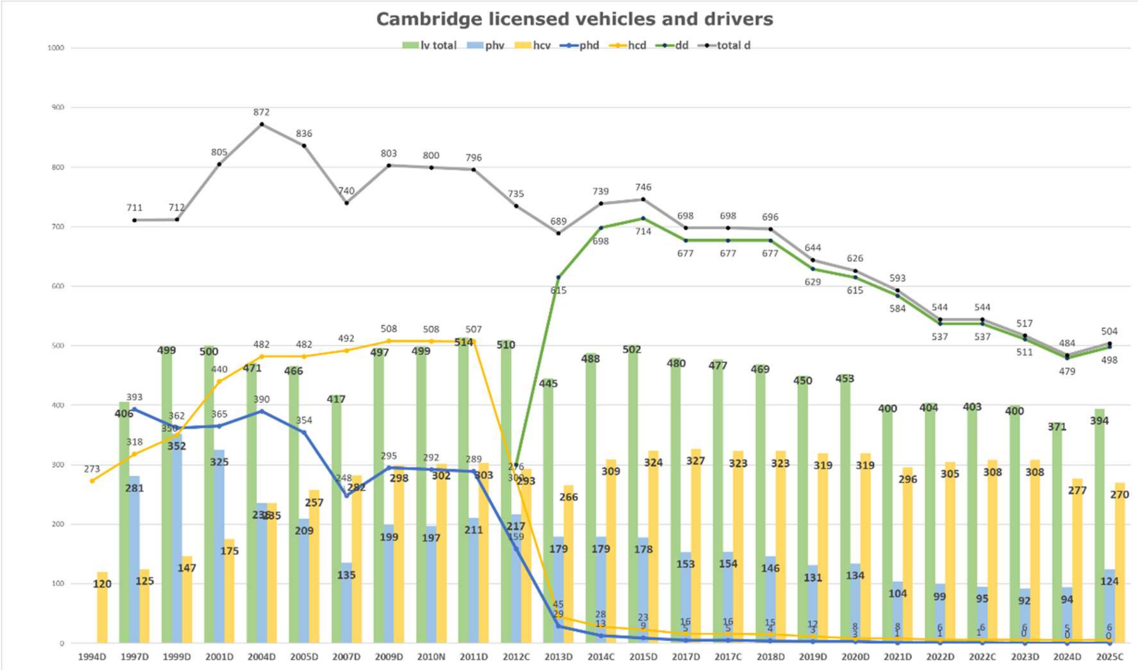
In summary, the principal references in all the local transport plan and air quality policy in regard to 'taxis' is to encouraging all vehicles to use as sustainable fuel as possible, including provision of charging points and requirements of vehicles in the fleet. In these 'strategic' documents little else is referenced to 'taxis'. This is counter to the latest BPG encouragement that Hackney Carriage and Private Hire policy and information should be aligned with and included in such higher level strategic documents (and is not the case in many other areas, where key references are to the value of licensed vehicles reducing the overall need for car ownership, and therefore reducing car travel, as well as providing for those with more specific mobility needs hard to meet by 'public' transport.)

Extent of Licensing Authority Powers

The nature of the authority means that rank provision is principally via the County Council, with the City having input, but not full control of the traffic regulation orders required.

All licensing authorities have full powers over licensing the vehicles, drivers and operators serving people within their area. Cambridge City has chosen to utilize its power to limit Hackney Carriage vehicle numbers, this was reintroduced in January 2015 and is kept under review every 3 years.

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.



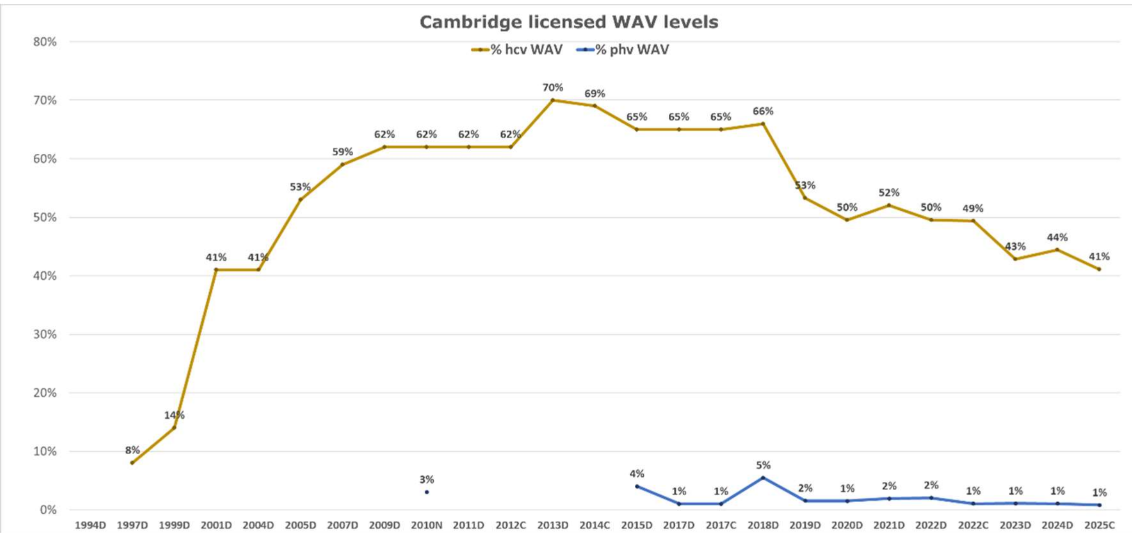
Licensing Statistics from 1994 to date

The graph shows a very complex history of vehicle numbers in the area since the start of DfT statistics. In 1997 when both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire numbers were first formally recorded nationally, the Hackney Carriage fleet was 31% of the total and limited. Removal of the limit saw a transfer between the two parts of the fleet resulting in Hackney Carriages being 68% of the total by 2007 whilst overall total vehicle numbers generally remained very similar. Hackney Carriage vehicle numbers were then re-limited with numbers relatively similar from 2015 to the start of the pandemic. Private Hire numbers in that period generally reduced (although some of that was transfer of operation to South Cambridgeshire Private Hire).

The pandemic knocked back both fleet sizes, although the Hackney Carriage fleet numbers returned more quickly, from 2022 onwards, whilst Private Hire numbers continued to fall until very recently. Since 2023, Hackney Carriage vehicle numbers have reduced, whilst in the most recent statistics the number of Private Hire has once again risen. Whilst at peak, 77% of the locally licensed fleet had been Hackney Carriage, at the time of the survey this number had reduced to back down to 69%.

In terms of driver numbers, the transfer of vehicles to Hackney Carriage saw a similar transfer of drivers. However, around 2012, dual driver badges were issued and most transferred across to these. The latest Council statistics suggest 504 drivers exist for 394 vehicles across the total licensed vehicle fleet of the City, suggesting a good proportion of potential for vehicle sharing by drivers. Just six of these drivers remain only able to drive Hackney Carriage with no Private Hire only left since 2023.

Information is also available from these sources to show how the level of wheelchair 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 wheelchair accessible. In some areas, to strengthen the ability of the public to differentiate between the two parts of the licensed vehicle trade, licensing authorities might not allow any WAV in the Private Hire fleet at all.



Levels of WAV provision in the fleet

For Cambridge City based vehicles, almost all wheelchair accessible are those within the Hackney Carriage fleet. The present level of 41% is much lower than that at the peak (70%) but is still a very high value for a mixed fleet, although this has predominantly been achieved by the period when all new Hackney Carriages had to be wheelchair accessible. There are a handful of similar vehicles in the Private Hire fleet, but this proportion has reduced more recently to just a single vehicle.

Operator numbers peaked early at 37 in 2005, then dropped back to 20 in 2018, rising again and remaining stable at 25 or just over since 2020, with the current number 23.

In terms of the latest full DfT statistical survey, undertaken for March 2024, covering all English licensing authorities, excluding London, (but adding in the latest Cambridge values, and correcting two erroneous Kent values) the national average level of WAV hcv is 38%, with the WAV PHV level at just 3.2%.

There are three authorities in England without any Hackney Carriages at all. A further four have no WAV vehicles in their fleet at all, whilst nine more have WAV only in their PHV fleets. 53 English authorities have fully WAV Hackney Carriage fleets. The remaining 198 English authorities with mixed (WAV and saloon) Hackney Carriage fleets have an average WAV level of 22%.

Cambridge is therefore at a much higher level with its current 41% of the hcv fleet WAV style. Taken in context of mixed fleet authorities, Cambridge is 40th highest in terms of the level of WAV proportion of the Hackney Carriage fleet. Listed with all English authorities excluding London, including those fully WAV, Cambridge would be in 20th place overall of the 267 authorities for the proportion of the total fleet that is WAV style. Taken in context, if all was equal, people in Cambridge would tend to find four out of every ten Hackney Carriages was WAV style, and for the whole fleet just under one in three would be WAV style. For context, the overall WAV proportion is similar to the values for both Manchester and Stockport. The highest proportion of total WAV in the total fleet in England at 2024 was 71% for Worcester and 70% for Stratford upon Avon, with the third place authority Coventry having 59%. Oxford lies 80th with just 14% total WAV in the total fleet despite having a fully WAV Hackney Carriage fleet.

We understand that 121 vehicle plate numbers would retain grandfather rights to be saloon style. However, of these, there are now only 107 licensed and the other 14 plates have therefore lost their protected status given that they do not exist per se.

There is a further complication within the current Cambridge operation in that the station rank requires a supplementary permit. We have been advised that there are 167 such permit holders, or 64% of the fleet. It is understood that the bulk of the 107 grandfather rights saloon vehicles have station permits and tend to focus operation at the station. This means a higher proportion of WAV style vehicles will tend to be found in the city centre. Our full survey found 21% WAV in the station vehicles (was 20% in 2022 and 32% in 2018) but 41% of the St Andrew's Street vehicles WAV (was 54% and 78%); with the value for the station lower in the November test (19% now, was 26% 2022), but up to 68% at John Lewis (in 2022 maximum was 80% at St Andrew's Street, Church, this value was 100% this time but for just two vehicles).

The relaxation to allow some plates to transfer from WAV to fully electric has been successful. However, the relaxation on wheelchair accessible age criteria will soon end and could lead to a further reduction in their numbers. This is even more true given that the development of electric WAV, electric taxis and overall electric infrastructure is still nowhere as far advanced as was expected, nor as far as might be needed to enable this transfer to occur within the stated timetables.

Further, the currently spare wheelchair accessible plates not on issue have seen no interest at all in being taken up.

These issues are discussed further in the synthesis section.

Reviews of Limit Policy

Cambridge City undertakes regular review of its policy to limit Hackney Carriage vehicle numbers in line with the BPG. There had been surveys in at least 1992, 1995 and 1999, with the limit removed in favour of new vehicles having to be wheelchair accessible in 2001. Further surveys were carried out in 2012 and 2014, the latter which led to re-application of the limit in January 2015.

A further survey was carried out in 2017, in which no unmet demand of any significance was observed and the decision was therefore made to retain the limit. There were plans to review limit in 2020, however due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was put on hold as it was not an appropriate time to complete and the survey prior to this current one was in 2022.

Rail Station Patronage

The table below provides nationally available information for the Cambridge City national rail stations. This is based on the formal estimates made annually by the DfT for every national rail station in England, Scotland and Wales (some 2,586 locations). The information ends in March of each year but tends to only be released in December of each year to allow for verification.

It is not based on actual passenger counts but is taken as the industry standard measure. The latest data was released in early December 2025.

There is only one national rail station within the City boundaries at this point in time.

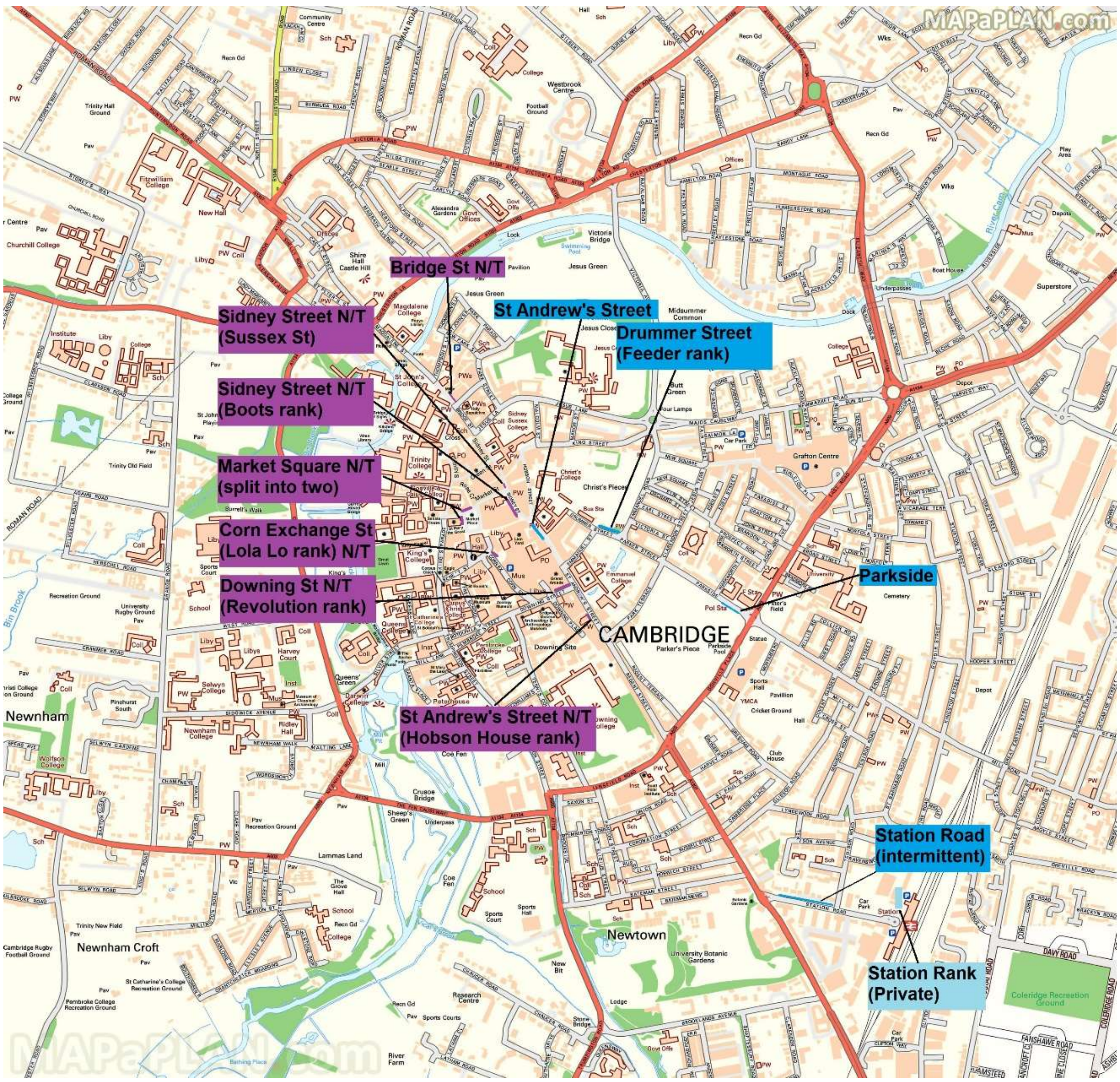
Rail year (ends March in last year noted)	Entries / exits	Growth / decline
Cambridge (46th was 37th)		
1997 / 1998	3,909,257	
1998 / 1999	4,281,743	+10%
1999 / 2000	4,679,635	+9%
2000 / 2001	4,868,452	+4%
2001 / 2002	5,154,062	+6%
2002 / 2003	5,478,112	+6%
2003 / 2004	Not collected	
2004 / 2005	6,060,475	+11%
2005 / 2006	6,137,423	+1%
2006 / 2007	6,522,309	+6%
2007 /2008	6,997,887	+7%
2008 / 2009	7,571,838	+8%
2009 / 2010	7,661,146	+1%
2010 / 2011	8,245,416	+8%
2011 / 2012	8,823,236	+7%
2012 / 2013	9,168,938	+4%
2013 / 2014	9,824,859	+7%
2014 / 2015	10,420,178	+6%
2015 / 2016	10,954,212	+5%
2016 / 2017	11,424,902	+4%
2017 / 2018	11,530,158	+1%
2018 / 2019	11,983,320	+4%
2019 / 2020	11,599,814	-3%
2020 / 2021	2,300,528	-80%
2021 / 2022	6,952,780	+202%
2022 / 2023	9,341,600	+34%
2023 / 2024	10,033,088	+7%
2024 / 2025	10,597,572	+6%
2021/2 to 2024/5	Increase since last survey of	52%

3 Patent demand measurement (rank surveys)

As already recorded in Chapter 2, control of provision of on-street ranks in Cambridge City is principally under the auspices of the County Council who has overall highway powers for the full City area.

Our rank methodology involves a current review both in advance of submitting our proposal to undertake this Hackney Carriage 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).

A map of ranks, provided by the Council, is below:



In terms of change since the last survey, there has been no change.

The Station Road location which was outside what is now the Clayton Hotel has been removed by the highway authority and they have confirmed that length of road is now covered by double yellow lines, with no intent to reinstate rank provision there.

Other ranks remain the same as they were, with the feeder system for St Andrew’s Street main rank still supplemented by drivers using mobile phone messaging to move between this rank and the main location due to reduced trust in the call-on system.

Those in the central area are night only given the full daytime pedestrian system. The ranks added in 2017 remain in place.

The trade refers to key ranks using a colour code:

- Yellow – St Andrews Street / Christ’s College rank
- Red – Drummer Street feeder
- White – Parkside
- Black – station.

Variation in demand

The council were keen to understand how demand varied over time at key ranks. The only way to undertake this is by observation of activity at each rank for sample periods of time. It was agreed this time to undertake the main survey of rank operation during July (June in 2022) (Summer) with a supplementary 72-hour observation of the two busiest ranks once University students had returned and were established (in October in 2025 (was November 2022) (Autumn). The 2017 survey saw the two 48-hour observations in June (Summer) and the main rank work in October (Autumn).

Station Rank

This rank is directly outside the pedestrian exit from the station. It is slightly further away from the exit / entrance than it used to be but still provides around 14 direct spaces in two lanes on a paved brick surface. There is a canopy to provide some passenger shelter from rain provided in the middle of the rank. The area also has a drop-off and pick-up area for other vehicles further away from the station, and then a single lane exit from the full area. Pick up is from the passenger side, though being a separate rank, would safely allow loading from both sides, with plenty of space for ramps. Additional vehicles at busy times can wait in the station car park to feed through to the rank.

Access to and from Station Road towards the city centre is along Tenison Road and Great Northern Road. Buses have priority at the Tenison Road / Station Road junction meaning that vehicles leaving the station have to give way to buses from the station together with a small amount of other vehicles.

St Andrew's Street and feeder

This main council provided rank gives six to seven spaces just south of the junction with Sidney Street right at the start of the pedestrianised area of the main city centre. The rank is located on the western side of this one-way northbound road. Loading is from the passenger side, with driver side loading dangerous due to the passing traffic, including many buses. Although the pavement is wide, pedestrian volumes may cause issues when loading wheelchairs.

The rank has a feeder site with nine spaces in Drummer Street, just near the bus station. The main rank has optical detectors linked to a sign at Drummer Street which should change to confirm spaces are available, to reduce over-ranking and the obstruction to through traffic this might cause at the main location. Drummer Street loading, if used, is from the driver side. The location also has public toilets meaning it can act as a rest rank at times.

We were advised that issues with the call-on system mean that drivers using this rank tend to use a text service to confirm available spaces rather than trusting the call-on system. This also allows for vehicles arriving directly along St Andrew's Street rather than passing via Drummer Street. Some passengers do take vehicles from the feeder rank. The provision for further excess vehicles along Emmanuel Road did not return after having been temporarily removed.

Parkside

This rank is a five-space location on the southern side of this one-way road, just north of the long-distance coach stops for Cambridge. Vehicles load from the passenger side of the vehicle, with any driver side loading being dangerous due to passing traffic. There would be plenty of space for wheelchair loading although this would block the pavement at the time of use, although there is no fence and parkland to the immediate rear. It is also now one of the locations of the electric charging points.

Sidney Street, near Sussex Street

This night-time rank, formally available from 1900 to 0700 only, is on the western side of the street between Market Street and Sussex Street. The highway is brick tiled at this point so any attempt at painting markings would be futile, even if legally possible. The location is marked on two low bollards at either end of the two spaces provided. There is no other signage or any pedestrian guidance to the location, with the only real advertising being vehicles sitting there.

Sidney Street is one way northbound and only accessible between 16:00 and 10:00. Loading from either side would be possible given the slow speeds, although usage of wheelchair ramps could be difficult given the overall narrowness of both pavement and street.

Sidney Street, near Petty Cury (Boots rank)

This location is directly outside the Boots store just north of Petty Cury. It is again on the western side of the one-way northbound road although this location has a wider road and pavement than the rank above. Again, it is only marked by signs on low bollards at either end, with brick paving again making any other marking very difficult. This is also subject to the restriction of no access from 10:00 to 16:00.

Market Square

This area is also within the pedestrianised area only accessible to vehicles between 16:00 and 10:00. The Square surrounds the market stalls. There are two sections of rank, both available 19:00 to 06:00 only. Both have five spaces. The western side rank is near to Great St Mary's Church and with tarmac road surface does have clear road markings. It is a clearway at other times, but loading is allowed from 16:00 to 19:00 and 06:00 to 10:00. However, the rank often tends to have one space taken up by large waste bins used for the market. Loading would be possible from either side, although the passenger side pavement is relatively narrow. This rank is marked 'taxi rank covered by CCTV'.

The section of rank on the northern edge has signs and small bollard signs but with brick tiled paving no road markings. It is in a layby although the pavement here is much wider, and again loading would be possible from either side of the vehicle given the very low traffic speeds and volumes here. For this survey, this section of rank tends to be the head of the rank used at most available times whilst the western edge rank tends to be a feeder principally used only when the main rank is full of vehicles.

Bridge Street

This rank is located in the pedestrian zone of this Street, with access allowed for buses, taxis and vehicles needing to get to properties in Bridge Street South. This is not part of the central area pedestrianisation and does not have as stringent access arrangements. The road is one-way northbound, and the rank is on the eastern side of the road. This means that passengers need to enter from the driver's side, although passenger side loading is possible but with caution given the passage of buses. It is located in a layby which has four spaces, but signing only on small bollards.

St Andrew's Street, Baptist Church (Hobson House rank)

This rank has clear larger street sign marking but again being on brick paving, no road markings. The site can also be used for loading 07:00 to 10:00 and 16:00 to 19:00 and for disabled badge parking between 10:00 and 16:00. Passenger loading is from the passenger side with a relatively wide pavement nearby. Further, driver side loading would be unsafe given the volume of buses passing immediately adjacent to the rank.

Unlike many other ranks, the adjacent road is two-way, albeit bus and taxi only southbound, so vehicles could service it from the driver side heading southbound.

Downing Street (Revolution rank, John Lewis)

This rank has five spaces which take over from the bus stop at this location between 22:00 and 06:00. The rank is well-signed but road markings only define the bus stop and not the use as a taxi rank. Pedestrian loading would be from the passenger side. The John Lewis building overhang effectively provides shelter at this location, the only council rank to have such a facility. Observations suggest that lighting at this location may be an issue.

Corn Exchange St (Lola Lo rank)

This 2017 introduced rank is a two-space location in a lay-by right at the northern end of this one-way street, near to an exit from the nearby shopping centre. The passengers must enter from the drivers' side given the road layout. Passenger side loading would be possible given the slow other traffic speeds, but wheelchair loading here would be disruptive to other traffic. The rank operates from 19:00 to 07:00 only every day and is otherwise a loading bay.

Access from this location follows the one-way route out to Wheeler Street, Bene't Street and Trumpington Street, so can be fairly lengthy possibly suggesting the likelihood of vehicles waiting here could be quite low.

Rank observations

There were two elements to the rank observation programme. The wider, all-rank coverage (Summer, main) was undertaken from 05:00 on Thursday 3rd July 2025 until 06:59 on Sunday 6th July. This was again marginally extended from the previous coverage to meet current needs for robust data sampling. The two busiest ranks at St Andrew's Street and the private rail station location were observed during October over a period running from Thursday 16th October at 06:00 through to 06:59 on Sunday 19th October (Autumn).

High level review of rank operations

In the order of 950 (770 2022) hours of video footage were obtained at rank locations in Cambridge during the main survey. All these hours were 'quick-watched' to identify hours when the ranks were:

- Busy (three or more licensed vehicles or passenger groups in any hour)
- Quiet (licensed vehicle or passenger activity for one or two vehicles or passengers in any hour)
- Unused – no Hackney Carriage or passenger activity in an hour
- Parked in by private vehicles for most of the hour

Where a rank was not legally in operation, any licensed vehicle activity was also noted in the first two categories but otherwise those hours were excluded (some 33% (39% in 2022) of the total hours collected). Of the remaining hours, 24 (43% 2022) were busy, 13% (9%) quiet, 3% (9% 2022) simply parked in and 60% (34% 2022) unused though legally available.

The diagram below presents the results of the overview analysis.

Day and Hour		St Andrew's Street	St Andrew's Street, Drummer St Feeder	Parkside	Bridge St	Market Hill		St Andrew's St, Church	Sidney St, superdrug	Sidney St, Boots	Downing St, John Lewis	Corn Exchange St	Station, Private, Feeder	Station, Private
Thursday	6	I	I	I	x	x	x	I	I	P	x	I	I	I
	7	Q	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	8	B	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	9	B	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	10	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	11	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	12	B	B	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	13	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	14	B	Q	Q	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	15	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	16	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	17	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	18	B	Q	Q	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	19	B	Q	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	x	I	I	B
	20	B	Q	I	P	I	I	I	I	I	x	I	Q	B
	21	B	Q	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	x	I	I	B
	22	B	I	I	I	P	I	Q	I	Q	I	Q	I	B
	23	B	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	Q	I	B
Friday	0	B	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	Q	I	B
	1	B	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	B
	2	B	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	Q	I	I	I	Q
	3	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
	4	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	P	I	I	I	I	I
	5	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	B
	6	Q	I	I	x	x	x	I	I	P	x	P	I	B
	7	Q	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	8	Q	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	9	B	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	10	B	B	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	11	B	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	12	B	I	Q	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	13	B	I	Q	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	14	B	Q	Q	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Q	B
	15	B	I	Q	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	16	B	I	Q	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	17	B	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	18	B	B	Q	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	19	B	B	Q	I	I	I	I	I	I	x	I	I	B
	20	B	B	Q	I	I	I	I	I	Q	x	I	I	B
	21	B	B	Q	I	I	I	I	I	I	x	I	I	B
	22	B	B	Q	I	I	I	I	I	Q	I	I	I	B
	23	B	B	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	B
Saturday	0	B	I	I	I	I	Q	Q	I	B	B	Q	I	B
	1	B	I	I	I	I	Q	I	I	Q	Q	Q	I	B
	2	B	I	I	I	Q	B	I	I	Q	Q	Q	I	B
	3	B	I	I	I	I	B	I	I	Q	I	I	I	I
	4	B	I	I	I	I	B	Q	I	Q	I	I	I	Q
	5	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
	6	B	I	I	I	x	x	I	I	P	x	I	I	Q
	7	B	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	8	B	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	9	B	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	10	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	P	B
	11	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	12	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	P	B
	13	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	14	B	B	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	15	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	16	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	17	B	Q	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	18	B	I	I	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	I	B
	19	B	B	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	x	I	I	B
	20	B	B	Q	Q	I	P	I	P	Q	x	P	Q	B
	21	B	I	I	Q	I	P	I	P	Q	x	I	I	B
	22	B	I	I	Q	I	Q	P	P	Q	I	Q	I	B
	23	B	I	I	I	I	Q	P	I	Q	I	I	I	B
Sunday	0	B	I	I	P	I	Q	P	B	Q	B	I	I	B
	1	B	I	I	I	I	Q	P	B	I	B	I	I	B
	2	B	I	I	I	B	B	P	B	B	B	B	I	B
	3	B	I	I	I	I	B	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
	4	B	I	I	I	I	Q	I	I	Q	I	I	I	I
	5	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
	6	I	I	I	x	x	x	I	I	I	x	I	I	Q

Considering the overview, it is clear only the main two ranks operate at all times. Some use is seen of the part-time ranks on Thursdays, but none of the hours are ever busy. Friday sees some busy hours in those ranks, and Saturday many more. Parking in the lesser used ranks is an issue Thursdays and Saturdays but less so on Fridays.

Rank usage – weekly estimates

In order to set the observed rank usage in context, the July full survey (Summer) programme results were used to estimate typical weekly usage of Hackney Carriages by rank in Cambridge at this time. The table below also compares these results to the June-based surveys for the two top ranks, and to the previous (2022, 2017 and 2012) Summer survey data results. The table below is listed in order of the rank with highest usage from the full 2025 estimates first (irrespective of if the rank is private or otherwise). Values shown are estimated weekly passengers at each location.

Rank	2025	2022	2017	2017, June-based	2012
	Flow	Flow	Flow	Flow	Flow
Railway Station (private)	15,372 (70)	13,389 (63)	13,263 (49/63)	21,445 (59/71)	14,145 (45)
St Andrew's Street	5479 (25)	4,694 (22)	7,668 (28/37)	8,908 24 (29)	12,290 (38)
Market Square	447 (2)	947 (4.5)	3,307 (12)		586 (2)
Sidney St, Boots	363 (1.7)	462 (2.2)	0		1,200 (4)
Sidney St, Superdrug	90 (0.4)	255 (1.2)	540 (2)		3,000 (9)
Downing St	78 (0.4)	123(0.6)	569(2)		n/a
Corn Exchange St	8 (0.0)	Unused	4(0.0)		n/a
Bridge St	7 (0.0)	619(2.9)	431(2)		462(1)
Drummer St		582(2.7)	965(4)		91(0.0)
Market Square Feeder		128(0.6)			
Parkside	Unused	6(0.03)	244(1)		302(1)
St Andrew's St Church	Unused	Unused	32(0.0)		Not covered
Total	***21,844***	***21,204***	***27,023***		***32,076***
Comparison to previous	***+3%***	***-22%***	***-16%***		

The table demonstrates how dominant the railway station rank remains in the overall picture. In the full rank survey, it now takes some 70% (was 63% 2022) of all passengers (increased from the 49% of 2017 despite changes to rail usage). St Andrew's Street follows second, but with just 25% (22% 2022) of the total level of passengers. Between these two, they now account for 95% of all estimated passengers in 2025.

Market Square is the next, but in 2025 only has 2% (was 4.5% 2022 and 12% 2017). Sidney Street, Boots has 1.7%, actually not much reduced from the volume and share in 2022 (2.2%). The remaining four ranks seeing any passengers all see 90 or less estimated passengers per week.

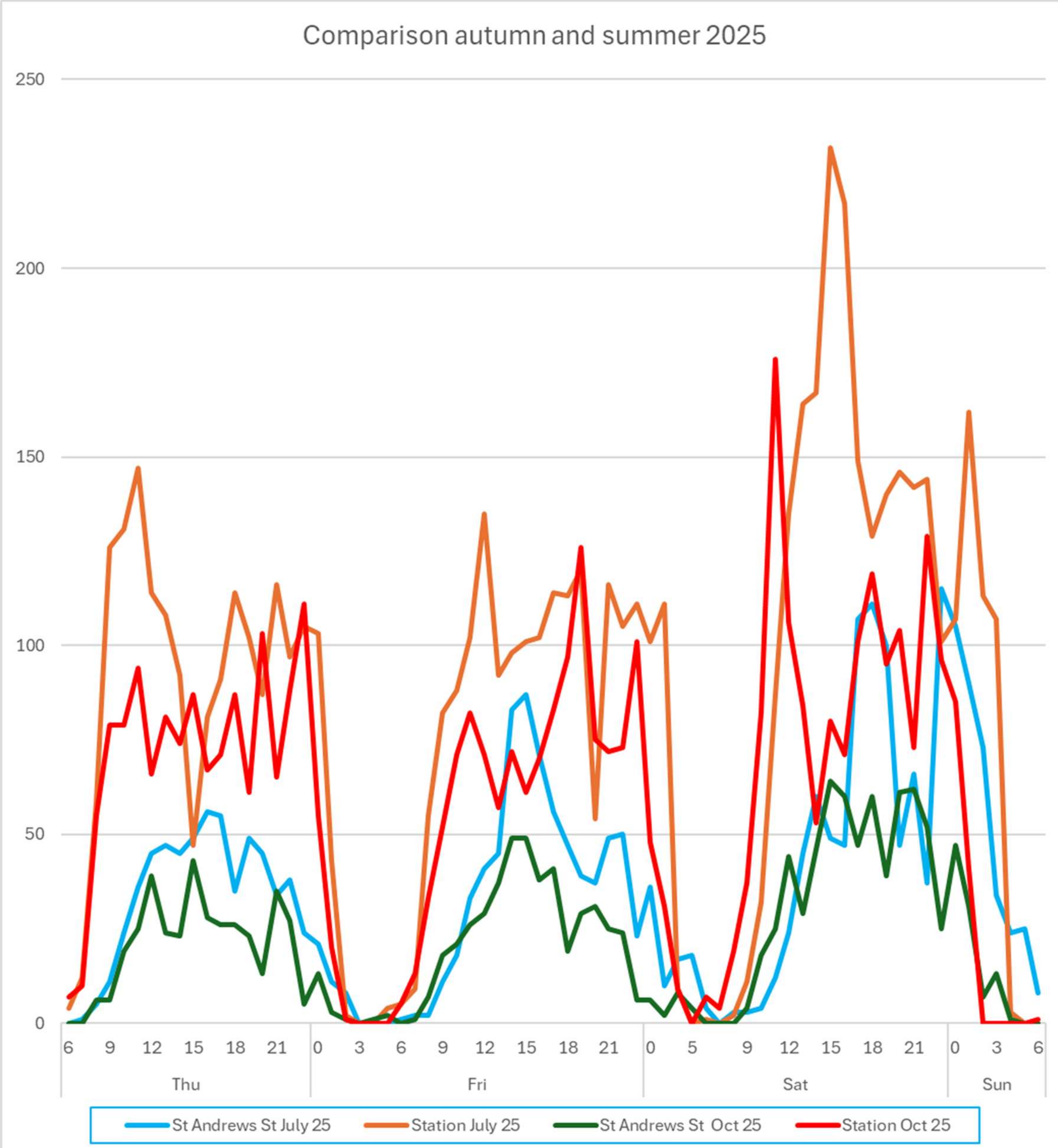
Overall, total estimated weekly patronage based on the full survey was 21,844 passengers. This reverses the downwards trend seen in every survey since 2012.

The two busiest ranks were re-surveyed over a 72-hour period in October (Autumn) to identify potential impact of students being back in the City. This survey covered the station and St Andrew's Street (including its Drummer Street feeder). The total estimated weekly patronage from these locations was 32% (9% 2022) lower than the equivalent Summer values. This confirms that the early Summer data is a more robust test of unmet demand given it has higher overall demand levels.

Comparing the two sites, the station Autumn patronage is down 29% and St Andrews Street and its feeder 39%. In 2022 the central area rank had increased in the Autumn observations.

Comparing the Summer and Autumn flows and just considering those two locations, in Summer the station provides 72% of total passenger numbers across the two sites; in Autumn the share for the station rises to 75%.

The graph below compares:



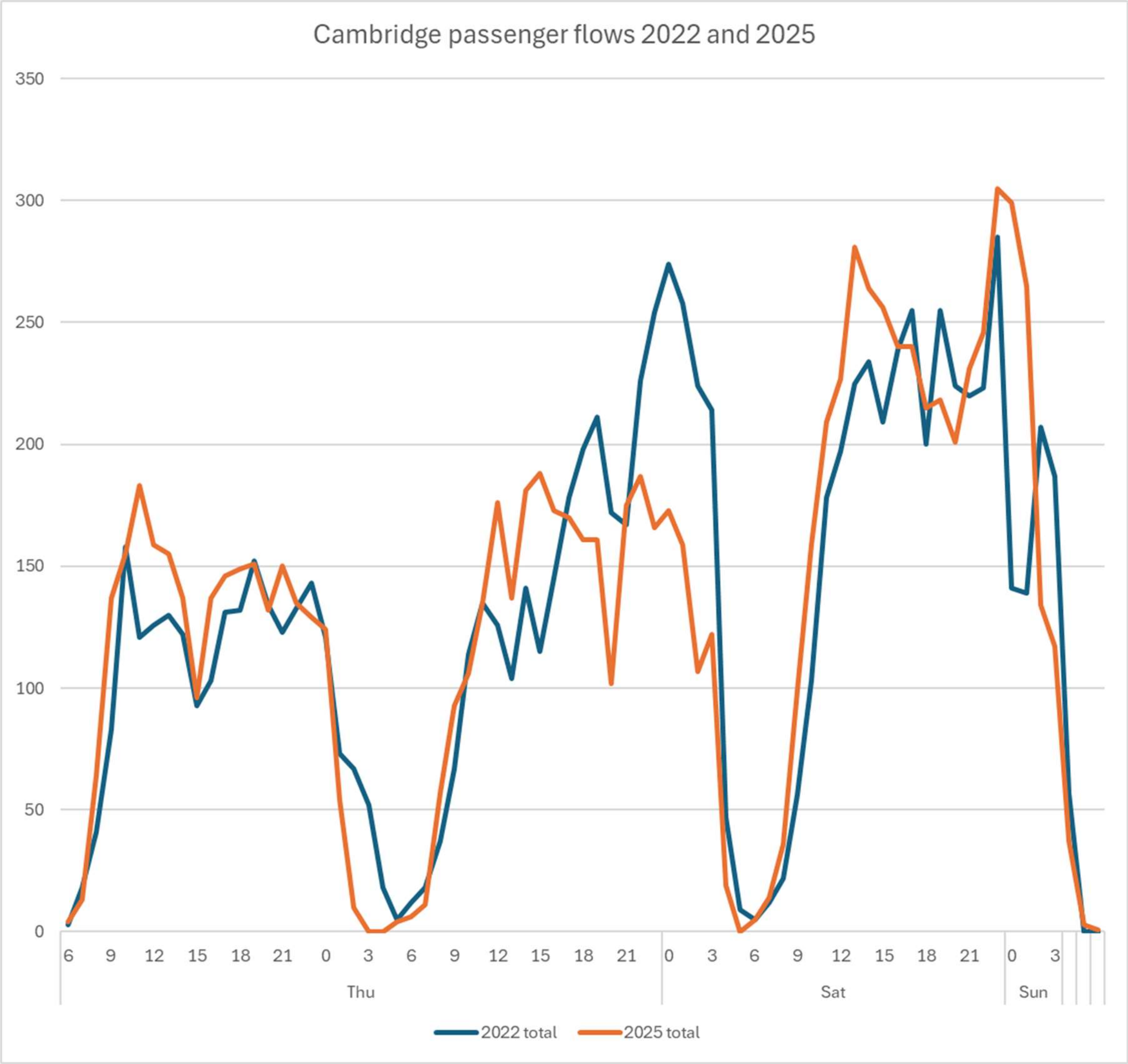
This shows early Summer station flows being higher in mornings Thursday and Friday but more similar later; on Saturdays the early Summer flows peak earlier for the morning peak (but to a lesser degree), with overnight flows much lower in the Autumn values. The patterns for St Andrews Street are much more similar, albeit lower in Autumn, although the Saturday early Summer flows afternoon and evening are much higher.

Reviewing the daily data also shows a change in pattern, with the station 24% (21% 2022) down on the Thursday but 29% (41%) down Friday and 37% (44%) down on the Saturday. St Andrews Street saw more consistently reduced flows in Autumn with 39% reductions on the Thursday and Friday and 38% on the Saturday.

The graph also suggests that the principal difference at the station on the Thursday and Friday was much lower morning peak flows in the Autumn, although Saturday saw an earlier and higher, sharper, morning peak. It is unclear why this occurred.

Overview of ranks

Graphs were produced to compare the data collected in a visual manner. The first graph shows the overall results of the Summer main survey but for total passengers over the surveyed days. This is compared to 2022 total flows for all ranks.



This graph shows how demand increases from Thursday to Friday and Saturday although the difference between the last two days is not as great, but more so than in 2022. In each case the 'day' covers 06:00 one morning to 05:59 on the next day. There are more hours in 2025 with zero flow (two early hours of Friday and one early hours of Saturday) compared to just one in the early hours of Sunday in 2022. Saturday flows are mainly higher than in 2022.

For both 2025 and 2022 the peak flow was the 23:00 hour on the Saturday. The level in 2025 was marginally higher at 305 passengers compared to 285 in 2022.

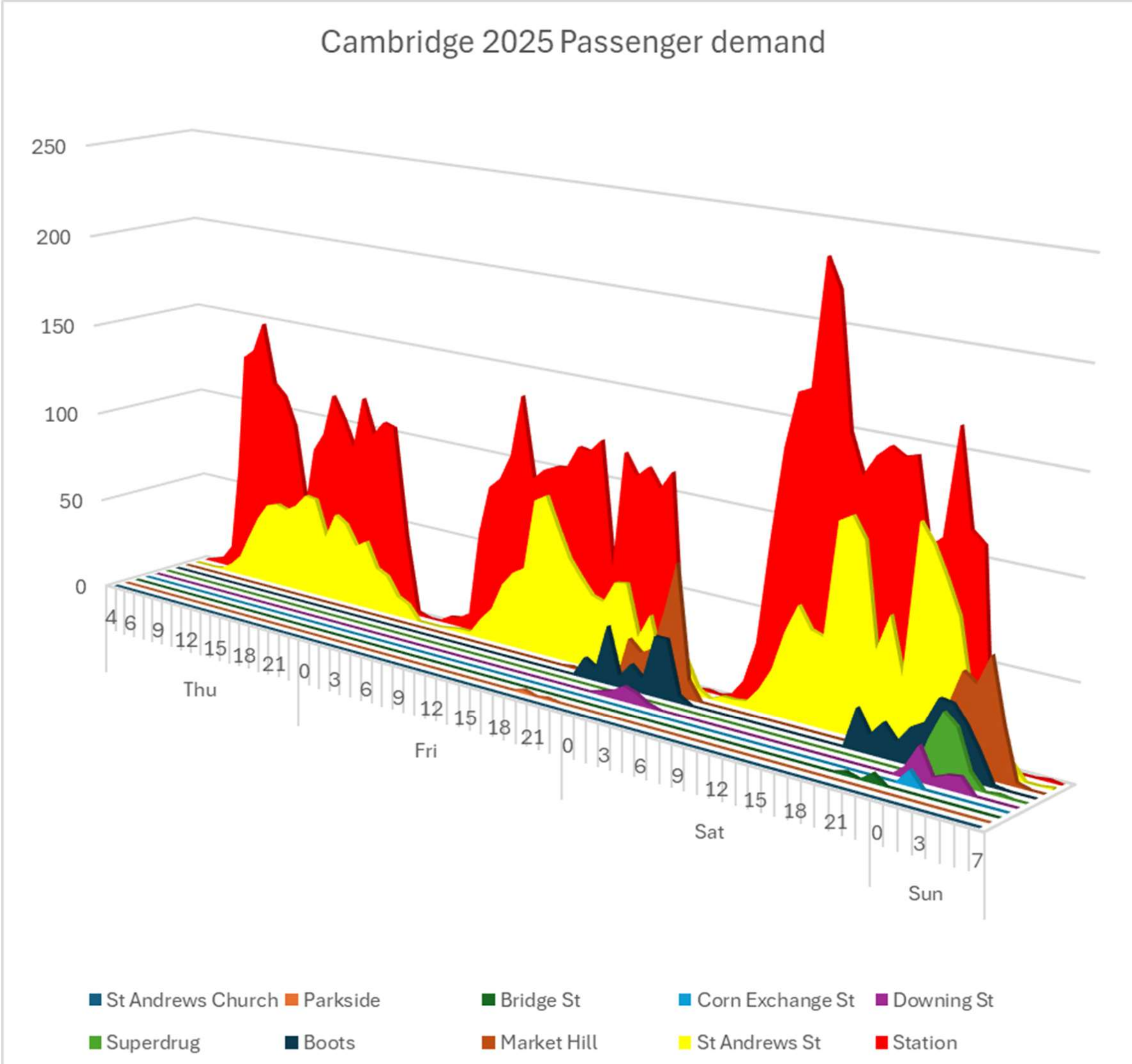
The second peak in 2025 was 22:00 on Friday night, two hours earlier than that in 2022, and much lower (187 compared to 274).

The average flow over the 72 hours observed was very similar – 129 in 2025 and 133 passengers in 2022. Thursday 101 (95 2022), Friday 124 (144 2022) and Saturday 179 (161 2022). The peak flow to average ratio is 2.36, up from 2.14 in 2022.

The current demand profile is therefore marginally more peaky than in 2022, shown by the Saturday passenger levels being 45% higher than Friday which was 22% higher than Thursday. The equivalent 2022 values were 12% and 51%, the opposite way round.

Flows by day and rank

A graph was produced showing demand by rank and hours.



This demonstrates graphically the general dominance of the station rank followed by the St Andrew's Street rank. This is very similar to 2022 and 2017. On all days there is a clear morning peak at the station rank. Flows at the station taper off towards the end of main rail service operation.

St Andrews Street still tends to be fairly equal throughout Thursday but has a more peaked profile on Fridays and even more peaked on the Saturday. As already noted the lesser ranks are now much less used, with main use being on Saturdays with some on Fridays, all in evenings during their hours of operation. Market Hill is the most peaky with Boots seeing longer periods of operation during the evening, but Superdrug this time only used on the Saturday evening. The rank near John Lewis was only used Fridays and Saturdays.

Vehicle activity levels at ranks

The full database of all vehicle and passenger movements at or near the taxi ranks was inspected. 18,710 (23,429 in 2022) different records of activity were obtained over the hours at all ranks. 67% (71% 2022) of these records were of vehicle movements either arriving or departing the location. Of these, 94% (88% 2022) were Hackney Carriage movements. 2% (4%) were local Private Hire vehicles, 4% (3%) private cars and 0.4% (2%) goods vehicles.

59% (45% 2022) of all the observations of vehicle movements were at the station rank, followed by 27% (20%) at St Andrews Street and 4.4% (9%) at Market Hill. The two Sidney Street locations accounted for 4.5% (8%) of total movements. This further confirms the strong focussing of demand at the two main ranks.

The level of Hackney Carriages observed by rank location varied from 1% (32%) to 99% (96%) of all movements. The values nearest to 100% were for the ranks that were best designed to exclude other vehicles – the Station and St Andrews Street. Contrary to the general increased focus on less ranks, for this survey Hackney Carriages were seen at some point at all ranks observed. This was just two vehicles each at Corn Exchange Street and St Andrews Street Church.

Levels of WAV style Hackney Carriage activity

Over all the Hackney Carriage vehicle movements, 30% (34%) appeared to be wheelchair accessible style vehicles. This is lower than the 41% (50%) within the fleet suggesting many WAV may not service ranks, but the relationship between these two values remains similar between the two survey years.

The levels of WAV at ranks varied from 21% (20%) to 68% (75%) with the lowest value being that for the Station rank (related to the high proportion of saloon vehicles having permits for the station)(21% appeared to be WAV there). In the October survey the value was 19%, very similar.

Downing Street and Market Hill had the highest levels (although these could be focussing on WAV that had larger capacities to meet demands here) (68% and 66% respectively)– exactly as in 2022. St Andrews Street actually saw 41% of its vehicles WAV which equates to the level in the fleet. In October this value was 43%, again very similar.

During the course of the survey period, 14 (11 in 2022) records were made of wheelchair usage at the ranks. There were eight (six 2022) such movements at the Station rank, five (three) at St Andrews Street and one at Sidney Street Boots. In 2022 there had been one at Bridge Street.

The Autumn 2025 observations saw four wheelchair passengers at St Andrews Street rank and two at the station. At both locations one of these saw the person loaded into the vehicle, with the other cases seeing people transfer to a seat with their chair loaded into the vehicle separately.

There were a further 108 (58) observations at ranks where a person visibly appeared disabled and needing assistance in the Summer observations in 2025. Again, the bulk were at the two main ranks with 75 (29) at St Andrews Street and 31 (25) at the Station. The balance of two were at Sidney Street, Boots.

Passengers leaving rank on foot

288 people were recorded leaving areas around the ranks without taking Hackney Carriages in the Summer observations. 45% of these were at the station rank (130 people) and 37% at St Andrews Street. 9% were from Sidney Street Boots with 3.5% at Market Hill. There were four groups of five, six groups of four, 16 of three and 33 of two people. Some of these might be legitimate reasons not related to shortage of vehicles, e.g. having waited with a friend who was taking a Hackney Carriage, but some will be related to people unwilling to wait for a vehicle to arrive.

In the Autumn surveys just two people were observed leaving the ranks without taking a Hackney Carriage, with both of these being from the station feeder rank which would not normally see any passengers using vehicles in any event.

This is in line with the reduced level of observed passenger numbers at both locations in the Autumn surveys in 2025.

Active Hackney Carriages

Information was gathered during the main survey of the level of vehicles active on the three days of the July (Summer) survey. 1797 different vehicle observations were obtained during five separate 2-hour sample periods near to the two main active rank locations (593 on the Saturday - there had been 550 on the Saturday in both previous surveys of 2022 and 2017).

The full set of observations were matched against the current plates lists for Cambridge City. Of the set, 37% were not confirmed as local Hackney Carriage or Private Hire. These were checked against available lists for South Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Wolverhampton and some other nearby licensing authorities. 96% were South Cambridgeshire Private Hire, 3% Peterborough vehicles and 0.7% (five plates) from Wolverhampton. There were three other non-Cambridge City plates, one each from Huntingdon, West Suffolk and Whittlesford (which may well have been legitimate journeys).

For Cambridge City, there were 713 Hackney Carriage saloon plate observations, 63% of the total, 305 Hackney Carriage WAV (27% of the total), 110 Private Hire and one Private Hire WAV. For this survey there were a total of 210 different plates (280 in 2022 and 271 in 2017) legitimate Hackney Carriage plates observed over the full three days.

For this survey there were 668 plates (266 2022 and 276 2017) found to be out of town vehicles. 641 (182) were found to be South Cambridgeshire (371, (136 2022) different plates) with 5 (13 2022) (5, 6 (2022) plates) Wolverhampton and none (71 in 2022) vehicles for whom it could not be verified who they belonged to or if they were typographical errors.

During the course of our sample observations, we observed 78% (51% 2022 and 74% 2017) of the current Hackney Carriage fleet. This is similar to the earlier pre-pandemic levels. The Thursday saw 53%, Friday 51% and Saturday 55%. 27% of the fleet were observed on all three days.

One plate was seen 30 times over the three days. Another was seen 20 times, with all others 15 times or less. 20% were only seen once, 14% four times, 11% both six and two times, 10% three times and 8% five times. The remaining frequences were seen 7% or less, many just two vehicles for that frequency.

Considering the legitimate Cambridge Hackney Carriages, this survey found the observations represented 25% and 17% of the total fleet on the Thursday, 27% and 18% of the total fleet on the Friday and 25% (15% 2022 and 41% 2017) and 22% (15% 2022 and 45% 2017) on the Saturday.

For St Andrews Street, the proportion of the Hackney Carriage fleet seen is shown in the table below:

	Afternoon	Evening	Night
Thursday	18%	13%	15%
Friday	17%	11%	16%
Saturday	17% (16 2022, 31 2017)	19% (13 2022, 55 2017)	14% (10 2022, 59 2017)

On weekdays, most vehicles are active during the afternoon periods, with the lowest proportions in evenings, and second highest at night. For this survey the peak level of activity in terms of proportion of the fleet active was Saturday evenings when some 19% of all vehicles were observed passing along St Andrew's Street.

With respect to wheelchair accessible plates, the table below shows the proportions by day by period in terms of the proportion of plates active as well as the share of all observations:

		Station		St Andrew's Street		
		Afternoon	Evening	Afternoon	Evening	Night
Thursday	Plates	30	34	27	33	23
	All Obs	32	35	32	34	22
Friday	Plates	25	27	33	32	32
	All Obs	22	25	36	35	32
Saturday	Plates	28	34	36	35	21
	All Obs	30	35	34	34	16
Spread	Plates	25-30	27-34	27-36	32-35	21-32
	All Obs	22-32	25-35	32-36	34-35	16-32

Both sites show a similar pattern in that both the number of specific plates and the number of vehicle movements increase from afternoon to evening, but reduce for the night sample. In both cases the St Andrew's Street values are higher than those for the Station. The Friday values at the station are all lower. Highest values at St Andrew's Street are marginally for Saturdays for the number of active plates. In no case does the level of plates get particularly close to the proportion of 41% in the total fleet.

In terms of vehicles focussing on one location, of the observations, 18% (34% 2022 and 10% 2017) of vehicles were only observed at the station, 19% (45% 2022 and 30% 2017) only at St Andrew's Street, and the remaining 63% (12% 2022 and 60% 2017) were observed passing both locations. This suggests a change from 2022 back towards less of the fleet just focussing on the station.

If this proportion applies to the full fleet, this suggests no more than 49 (102 in 2022) vehicles only service the station, with a further 169 serving both (218 total), whilst there are 167 (170 in 2022) permit holders at present, suggesting that there must be other vehicles we did not observe that do not follow the same pattern as those observed and which probably serve neither station or St Andrews Street.

Rail station flows

Using the latest rail passenger information, released in December 2025, the station saw 52% passenger growth from the time of the previous survey. For 2025, the average week sees 105,976 passengers leave the station; of these, assuming all come from the station, 15% leave using Hackney Carriages from the rank (based on the early Summer observations).

Flows have still not returned to the maximum of just under 12 million entries and exits recorded in the year ending March 2019 (there was a drop of 3% in the year ending March 2020). The present entries and exits total some 10,597,572 with the station currently seeing the 46th highest flow in the national rail statistics.

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). This element was added following a court ruling and is the most recent addition to the basket of elements that comprise the index of significance of unmet demand (ISUD), see further later.

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. This also acts as a validation on rank activity observations, what drivers have said and also other evidence received.

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 (eg of students, or a sub-centre), although conclusions from these separate samples can only be indicative taken alone.

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.

For this survey, the census suggests an even split between males and females. The full sample saw about 2% more males interviewed in 2025 (it had been about the same in 2022 and 6% more males in 2017). The census split for the interviewable ages saw 41% (was 38% in 2022) in the 15-29 younger group, 37% (was 39%) in the mid group (30-54) and 22% (23%) for those above (a relatively youthful profile, and appearing to be getting more so). For this survey, the younger group was again heavily under-represented (21% interviewed compared to 41% census) with mid and higher age groups therefore over-represented, in 2022 there had been was an almost equal response between the census and our sample for the middle group, but under representation for the younger group compared to the older by around 22%. This could, as in 2022, increase Hackney Carriage usage against Private Hire and particularly against apps. In 2017 the 31-55 age group was overrepresented by 14% at the expense of the other two groups, with 11% less of the lower age bracket and 3% less of the older bracket.

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, some 199 people were interviewed in the streets of Cambridge. About half were interviewed on Thursdays and a quarter each on the Tuesday and Friday.

81% (78% 2022) of interviewees said they were from the Cambridge City area. Of those not from the area 46% were from nearby "CB" postcodes, 23% were from Northamptonshire and 15% from London. The others were from Derby, Lincoln and Nottingham.

Interviewees were asked if they had used a licensed vehicle in the Cambridge City area in the last three months. In total, 55% (74% in 2022 and 2017) said they had.

19% (31% 2022) of the total said those trips were only by Hackney Carriage, 18% (26%) were only by Private Hire and 19% (17%) by either form of licensed vehicle. The main switch was away from using licensed vehicles, but more so for use of specific types rather than use of both kinds of vehicle.

All were asked how often they used a licensed vehicle in the Cambridge area and all provided frequencies (including 29% saying 'never'(was 14% 2022)). When weighted by the level of frequency value for the survey was 3.5 (1.5, 2022; 2.4 2017) trips per month.

When people were asked in regard to frequency of Hackney Carriage trips, these values reduced to 2.0 (1.2 in 2022 and 2017). This suggests 57% (77% last time) of trips made use Hackney Carriages. This is slightly more than the almost even split implied from the choice of type of licensed vehicle question above.

People told us how they normally obtained a licensed vehicle in the Cambridge City area. 29% (47% 2022, 37% 2017) of respondents said from a rank. 21% (2% 2022 and 4% 2017) said they hailed. 36% (41% 2022 and 47% 2017) used a telephone, 1% (1% 2022 and 6% 2017) a direct free phone and a further 13% (continuing the increasing trend from 1% 2017 to 8% 2022).

Just six (nine in 2022 and 11 in 2017) different companies were named by those saying who they used when they booked licensed vehicles by phone. Just half of these had been mentioned in 2022. For this survey, the top score of 32% went to a large app-based company (who has 13% 2022 and 2% 2017). Two new companies mentioned this time gained 20% each. Another company gained 11% of mentions but is now believed to have ceased trading. One of the previous companies mentioned reduced its share marginally from 6% to 5% whereas the previous top company, now taken over by a larger group and renamed to its national identify, reduced its share from 59% in 2022 and 51% in 2017 to just 7% now. The final company was another new entrant with 5%.

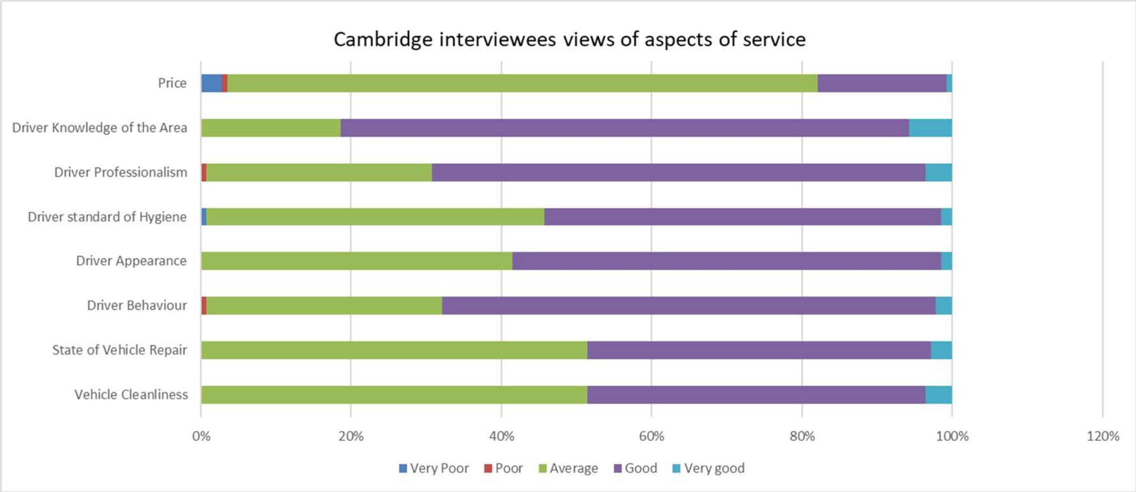
36% of those responding with levels of use of Hackney Carriages said they could not remember the last time they used one. None could not remember seeing a Hackney Carriage in the area.

In terms of ranks people were aware of, just four (22 in 2017, seven in 22) different names were provided. These represented three active ranks (four and one rank no longer existing in 2022). No alternative names were given this time apart from an even split between people naming Drummer Street and those naming St Andrews Street.

The top rank mentioned was the station, with 49% (70% in 2022). Overall 24% (15%) mentioned Drummer Street, St Andrews Street was third with 23% (13%) and 5% mentioned the Boots rank. Last time 3% mentioned Market Square.

37% (54% 2022 and 73% 2017) of those responding said that they used the ranks which they had mentioned. The highest level of quoted usage was for Drummer Street (45%), then St Andrews Street (42%), then the Station (33%) and finally Boots (18%).

People were asked their views of various aspects of the service provided to them when using local licensed vehicles. The graph below provides the results:



For the 2025 survey, four elements had top scores of good, and three top scores of average, with no 'very good' top score. This suggests significant drops since 2022 when all aspects of the service score at least 60% or more as 'very good'. However, as in 2022 the number of poor or very poor scores was low (but more than in 2022). Best score was for driver knowledge, and as normal worst was price. This suggests the large changes in companies has not been a benefit to peoples' views of the service.

Interviewees were asked what would encourage them either to use Hackney Carriages or to use them more. 98% (75% last time) said 'if they were more affordable'. The only other items scoring, both 1% each, were better vehicle quality and more Hackney Carriages they could phone for.

93% responded to the question about need of adapted vehicles. 72% (85% in 2022 and 95% in 2017) of those interviewed said they did not have, nor knew anyone who did have, any disability that meant they needed an adapted vehicle when travelling by licensed vehicle. The remaining 28% were those saying they knew someone that needed a WAV. In 2022, 15% were split between 11% knowing someone needing a WAV and 4% knowing someone needing an adapted vehicle other than WAV. This suggests need for adapted vehicles appears to have grown, with a focus on WAV style, and now exclusively so.

For this survey, people told us if they had ever given up waiting at ranks for a Hackney Carriage. This time just eight said they had. All six that named locations were actual ranks, shared equally between the main three named ranks. This implies the latent demand factor overall is 1.04 and that for the station 1.01, and other ranks 1.03, compared to 1.049, 1.0439 and 1.0049 in 2022 (all reduced) and 1.07, 1.05 and 1.02 for 2017, showing a continual reduction.

The small number who had given up told us what they did in that situation to get where they wanted to go. 38% (40%) walked away and hailed away from the rank location, 50% (30%) made a booking and 13% (20%) caught a bus.

A very high 95% (89% 2022) said they felt there were enough Hackney Carriages in the Cambridge area at this time. This question was answered by 76% (56%) of those interviewed.

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 one stakeholder but we have tried 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.

Given the general low current response to key stakeholder requests, we also set up a form which was distribute by email and other electronic methods. The overall response was very low. Many acknowledged receipt of their opportunity to respond but provided nothing further.

Supermarkets

No responses were received

Hotels

One guest house told us they had used and recommended one local company for over 25 years and had never received a single complaint. Their quote was 'always reliable always on time'. No others responded.

Public houses

One pub responded to inform us they had not had any feedback about licensed vehicles, either positive or negative. No others responded.

Night clubs

No responses were received

Restaurants

No responses were received

Hospitals

No comment was made by the hospitals in the area.

Police

One response was received from the police (see below for summary)

Disability

One response was received from disability representatives (see below for summary)

The overall response from the two respondents noted above confirmed that both were aware of those they represented who used local licensed vehicles. One said people got licensed vehicles using their own phones, the other asked them to book vehicles for them. Both were aware of ranks. One group had received no complaints, the other had. The police told us they often were asked to book licensed vehicles for people leaving a custody location. They used a range of firms, and never received any complaint about the service provided, although they said that the nature of the usage may mean people don't really want to interact with the police any further having left.

The disabled representative told us that they found the existing licensed vehicle stock had many inaccessible features (but did not explain further). A key concern was where drivers were not willing to provide appropriate assistance to customers with disabilities needing help.

Rail and other transport operators

Neither the rail station operator or other local transport operators had any comment.

Nationally available information regarding passenger throughput at the station has just been updated to cover up to the end of March 2022. This shows that Cambridge is now the 37th largest used station on the English, Welsh and Scottish rail network, with some 6.9m trips per year entries and exits for the last available year, ending March 2022. The last pre-pandemic year saw 11.6m and the year between then and now just 2.3m.

Assuming 52 weeks in a year and halving the total passengers to get those leaving the station suggests around 66,400 persons per week might leave Cambridge station. Using the estimate weekly 13,389 Hackney Carriage passengers observed for a typical week suggests around 20% of people arriving at the station leave by Hackney Carriage from the rank. With others leaving by Private Hire this suggests licensed vehicles are very important to the station operation. Other contacts within the City might be able to compare this to levels of bus, cycle, walk and car departures.

Other Council contacts

No other council contacts made any response.

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 behavior.

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. For this survey, a copy of the letter and questionnaire were passed to the Council who issued them to 503 dual licence drivers in late July 2025. A three-month response time was given, including three requests being sent in total, closing in early October 2022. A total of 73 (167 in 2022) responses were received. This is a 15% response, 2022 saw a 32% response, 2017 22%.

The information received was checked to identify any duplicate entries, of which five were identified and removed. Another driver reference could not be validated and that entry was also removed, reducing the return number to 67.

The vast majority, 91% (92% 2022) of respondents said that the licensed vehicle trade was their only or main source of income. 6% (3% 2022) said they worked in the trade part time but had other sources of income. 3% (2%) worked in the trade part time with no additional source of income. For the 2025 survey there were no drivers that identified themselves as either not working and not intending to return (one in 2022) or working at the time of the questionnaire but planned to return when demand increased (four in 2022).

All told us the kinds of vehicle they drove. 75% (78% 2022) said they drove Hackney Carriage, 16% (17%) both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire and 7% (5%) just Private Hire. This suggests a very similar sample profile to that in 2022, albeit with less numbers.

Drivers were asked which trade group they were associated with. 65% (61% 2022) said they were not affiliated with any group. For those with a group 24% (22% 2022) were with one group and 6% (7%) with another. 10% (6%) named a company as who they were affiliated to, with 5% just saying 'Hackney Carriage' (in 2022 a small number gave other answers including a Union).

Hackney Carriage drivers were asked the style of vehicle they drove. All Hackney Carriage and dual respondents responded. 65% said saloon, 24% side-loading WAV and 8% rear-loading WAV. The remaining 3% (two vehicles) gave more detail, i.e. 'estate hybrid' and 'saloon EV'.

On average, respondents had 16.8 (15 2022 and 12 in 2017) years' service in the Cambridge city licensed vehicle trade, although quoted years ranged from one to 48 (same in 2022, 45 in 2017). This is counter to national trends where as people retire experience tends to be lost. The average for 2025 was highest for PHV drivers (21 years), then 17.3 years for Hackney Carriage and 11.2 for those saying they drove both kinds of vehicle. The maximum years was 48 for PHV, 35 for hcv and 31 for those driving both.

The category with the most number of drivers in year terms was 11-15 years with 21%, 16-20 yeares with 18%, 21-25 with 15% and 26-30 with 12%, a good spread. Just 19% had under five years and 7% 6-10 years.

The most frequently worked number of days was six (43% (42% 2022, 31% in 2017) followed by seven days (25%, 16% 2022 and 26% 2017) and five days (22%, was 34% 2022 and 30% 2017). No other numbers of days gained more than 3% of responses. Four and three days both gained this level (was 5% 2022 and 10% 2017 for four and 3% and 1% for three). In 2025 the overall averages were 5.8 for hcv, 5.7 for 'both' and 5.4 for PHV.

In terms of hours, the average was 48.6 (was 46 2022 and 47 2017). The maximum quoted was 86 (96 in 2022) hours with 9% (6% 2022) of all quoted hours being 71 or more. This suggests increased levels of working since 2022, possibly as more drivers have returned confident there is now sufficient demand for them to operate.

18% worked 36-40 hours, 15% 46-50 and 11% each 56-60 and 41-45. Just 17% worked 35 hours or less.

90% (89% 2022 and 79% 2017) said they owned their own vehicle whilst 12% (10% 2022 and 16% 2017) said someone else also drove their vehicle. Just five told us when others drove their vehicle but all responses varied with no clear domination.

63% (60% 2022) said they accepted pre-bookings with 69% (81% 2022) being via a company. 9% (4% 2022) said via various apps, with one (3%) additional naming an app. For 2025, 14% said 'phone'.

When split by type of vehicle people said they operated, the PHV value was as might be expected higher at 80%, with hcv 62% and 'both' 58%. 75% of PHV obtained via an operator with the remaining 25% by phone. For hcv the shares were 67% and 17% and for 'both' 71% and zero. For both the remainder, 29% obtained bookings via an app, with one Hackney Carriage (4%) also doing this and another naming an app they got bookings through.

Drivers were asked the ranks they served most frequently. Many gave more than one response. Of the total responses, 28% (27% 2022) said St Andrew's Street, 31% (26%) the station, 14% (17%) 'city centre' and 8% (11%) Drummer Street. Market Square was quoted 5% (6%) of times, Parkside 3% (5%), Boots 2%, Superdrug 1% (in 2022 Sidney Street was quoted by 3%). Two mentioned Addenbrooke's Hospital and one each mentioned four suburbs plus an operator.

A moderate number told us the issues that affected their choice of shift. From all the responses, the most frequent response, with 23% (26% 2022 and 22% 2017) was working to suit family commitments, 13% (11% 2022, 32% 2017) avoiding heavy traffic, 4% (7% 2022 and 2% 2017) avoiding difficult customers, 4% (as in 2022) around school contracts. 13% in various forms said they had to work longer due to the volume of other vehicles also servicing demand.

98% (93% 2022) felt there were enough Hackney Carriages in Cambridge at the present time. In fact, other than those not responding, all but one respondent said 'yes'.

The same was true for if the limit should remain. All those responding, including all Private Hire respondents, said it should remain. Just one Hackney Carriage driver disagreed. This resulted in a 98% response that the limit should be retained

Respondents were asked how they felt having a limit on Hackney Carriage vehicle numbers benefitted the public. Most of those suggested it prevented over-ranking and brought benefits in terms of reduced pollution from extra vehicles. Some pointed out it kept the trade viable and working hours reduced.

Just one Hackney Carriage driver, who rented their plate, disagreed with the limit, mainly because it meant they could not have their own plate. Their main arguments against related to several owners having more than one plate and overcharging for its rent.

Comments about external vehicles and app-based and Private Hire bookings all being used to meet demand were increased from 2022.

Respondents were asked how often they got wheelchair customers from the rank, bookings and contracts. The most frequent response was 20% (37% 2022) for ranks and 12% (20%) for contracts on a monthly basis. Next most frequent (15% and 3% (20%) respectively) was weekly

For those getting customers seeking to transfer from a chair, the monthly value was highest for ranks and booking, but again there were now very few contracts.

In all six cases, 'never' was the highest score, increasing from rank to booking to contract, and apart from rank always higher for transferring than for rank. This suggests most that travel using wheelchairs in Cambridge tend to do so from the ranks which is not typical.

The kind of work normally undertaken by drivers was sought. Many gave multiple answers. Of all the responses, 58% said immediate hire work, ranks, 25% immediate hire work bookings, 8% said school contracts and 7% advanced hire work. The 2% saying 'other contracts' explained they were for serving adults with learning difficulties. None said chauffeur or corporate work.

Not all Private Hire provided percentages of their weeks' work, but of those that did 12% of Hackney Carriages worked full time at ranks, 42% worked between 75% and 98% and 22% worked 40% to 70%. For those driving both kinds of vehicle, 18% worked full time at ranks and 35% worked 75% to 98% of their time there.

No Private Hire and no dual driving respondents said they undertook schools work. For the Hackney Carriage giving proportions, two said 5% of work was school contracts, one each said 10%, 15%, 19%, 35% and 55% and three said half their work. This was 18% of the responding Hackney Carriages.

Drivers told us the periods they worked through the week. The table below shows for all respondents, Hackney Carriage and Private Hire to demonstrate the overall level of stated working as a proportion of all responses:

Day/period	All responses	Hcv only	PHV only
Monday	15%	15%	15%
Tuesday	14%	14%	15%
Wednesday	16%	16%	15%
Thursday	16%	16%	15%
Friday	17%	17%	15%
Saturday	13%	13%	18%
Sunday	9%	9%	6%
05:00-13:00	32%	31%	58%
13:00-20:00	43%	42%	39%
20:00-23:00	18%	19%	0%
23:00-05:00	7%	8%	3%

In terms of by day of week, there is little difference between the total response and the Hackney Carriage response. The responses given suggest Private Hire work more on Saturdays but less on Sundays.

With reference to periods of the day worked, the respondents we obtained said most of the Private Hire worked morning shifts, followed by afternoon with none late evening and few overnight. This correlates with when most bookings are made.

Drivers were asked to provide how their work was shared between different options, adding up to 100% for a full week. The results are shown below:

	All responses	hcv	PHV
Phone	20%	21%	61%
Rank	67%	68%	0%
Hailing	4%	4%	7%
School Contracts	5%	7%	0%
Other	3%	0.0%	31%

The Private Hire is a small sample of just five respondents. It suggests responses were mainly from those working for companies and using apps, with the hailing element a typical understanding of what an app booking is. About 7% of the responding Hackney Carriage undertook school contracts. It is possible that Private Hire mainly undertaking schools or other contract work may have felt the questionnaire was not relevant to them, given its focus on Hackney Carriage operations out of necessity.

Drivers were asked if those that drove a non-WAV style vehicle had ever considered operating a WAV. Just 19% had. Three further responses said they had driven WAV but had found them too expensive. Responses why people would not consider included their high expense to purchase and run, and the low level of work experienced by drivers for that style of vehicle.

When asked to provide suggestions about how WAV operation might be encouraged 8% repeated their response that they did not think more were needed. 38% felt there were no viable options available to increase the numbers. 54% made suggestions including subsidies, free licences, reducing number of tests and other revision (not stated) to licensing requirements.

25 (72 in 2022) took time to use the other comments option. Six of these sought restriction on out of town registered vehicles operating in the city. Two wanted a limit on Private Hire vehicle numbers. Others reiterated that the Hackney Carriage work at ranks was reducing mainly because people were choosing apps and bookings rather than risking going to ranks.

Two made comment about why they felt there were less WAV – one that the real problems was Private Hire not investing and the other that it was because the requirement for all new plates to be WAV had been removed.

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.

For clarification, unmet demand almost certainly exists in each and every area where Hackney Carriages operate. What is important from the point of view of policies limiting vehicle numbers is if the overall level of unmet demand identified can be counted as significant. The rule of thumb, accepted as an industry standard, is that a value below 80 means there is unmet demand, but it is not significant. A value of 80 or more means the index has identified unmet demand, and that it is significant to the degree that consideration should be given to at least increasing the current level of the limit, if not revising the policy per se. However, none of this is statutory or fixed and despite the apparent preciseness of the index and the cut-off level, final judgement remains with the committee who are required to be certain there is no unmet demand which is significant when they retain a limit policy.

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. This does not deny unmet demand, just makes it clear that the level cannot be counted as significant under the ISUD definition of significance of unmet demand.

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.

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 to 1.2 for January / February.

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.

The table below shows each component of the index over recent surveys to keep the values in context. The focus of this study is the performance of the service at this point in time, but the context is very important in order to understand the direction of travel of the levels of service over time.

Survey Date	2025		2022		2017		
	Summer		Summer		Autumn		
Element	Co only	All ranks	Co only	All ranks	Co only	All ranks	All data
Average passenger delay (mins)	0.08	0.43	0.22	0.9	0.067	0.067	0.267
Off peak level of delay	12.5	39.58	23.21	36.11	25	25	29.55
General incidence of delay	1.17	16.01	6.96	30.47	1.36	0.66	9.29
Peakiness of Demand	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Seasonal Factor	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Latent demand	1.03	1.04	1.0049	1.049	1.05	1.07	1.07
Overall index of unmet demand	1.25	285.6	35.16	1039	2.4	1.18	78.3

Note: overall index taken from detailed calculation in model, not rounded nos. above

The latent demand factor taken from the on-street interviews for the full survey is 1.04 (1.049 2022). When focussed only on those giving up at the station, the value for the station itself is 1.01 (1.0439 2022 and 1.02 2017). For council ranks only, therefore excluding the station, the value is then reduced to 1.03 (1.0049 2022 and 1.05 2017). This latter value is the one which should be used to test council only rank performance.

For this survey, inspection of the overall profile of demand suggests that there are a number of peaks at different times, such that demand for the area cannot be considered to be peaky at this time. This has the effect of meaning the overall index of significance of unmet demand remains at the calculated level rather than being reduced by the influence of issues related to having to meet a key peak in demand. This remains true for this latest survey so that the value remains at 1. The ratio between peak flow and average is now 2.36, slightly increased from 2.14 in 2022, but still short of levels that would confirm a peaky demand profile (in the order of 4 or more).

Data was collected in both Summer and Autumn at the two main ranks. However, the station rank is a private rank, and were unmet demand here to be found to be contributing to the significance of the overall unmet demand, this could not be counted towards the need for extra plates as the Council cannot influence the extra requirements which reduce supply at that location.

We undertook a test using the industry standard ISUD calculation based on the full set of Summer rank data as in 2022. This saw average passenger delay reduced for 2025 to 0.43 minutes from just under a minute (0.9 minutes) in 2022, off peak delay index 40 (over 36 2022), general delay index 16 (over 30 2022) resulting in a reduced level of the ISUD unmet demand index at 285.6 for 2025, compared to the very high level of estimated unmet demand at 1039 in 2022. However, as already noted, the station rank is subject to a further restriction not controllable by the council, limiting the fleet available there much more strongly.

Removing the performance of the station rank from the evaluation provides strong reductions in overall average passenger delay to 0.08 (0.22 2022) minutes, some reduction in the off peak index to 12.5 (23 2022), a strong reduction in the general delay index to 1.17 (just under 7 in 2022) and a resulting index of significance of unmet demand at 1.25 (35.16 2022), well below the cut off value of 80 which would be counted as suggesting unmet demand was significant.

In all cases, both with and without the station performance, the 2025 performance is strongly improved compared to that in 2022. The only marginally negative change is the slight increase in the off-peak parameter value for the full data set, which is normally taken as a symptom of vehicles needing to work from Private Hire or other booking platforms to make ends meet.

The calculation excluding the station is a more representative value for use by the council in reviewing its limit policy and covers the operation in the City which the council has full control over and therefore confirms that for council-provided and controlled locations there is unmet demand, but it is not significant.

This level of index means that the limit policy can be retained without any need to issue any further licences and can see the current level of licences held at the present value.

The performance of the station rank in 2025, though improved, remains of concern. The improvement is also in the face of some increase in passenger numbers, and reasons why this has occurred are discussed below in the synthesis section.

However, it remains true that the permit cannot fully be held responsible given better service has been seen in previous years even with same permit system in place. Further discussion of the overall issues regarding this are discussed below drawing in other evidence such as that from the plate review.

8 Detailed Accessibility Questionnaire

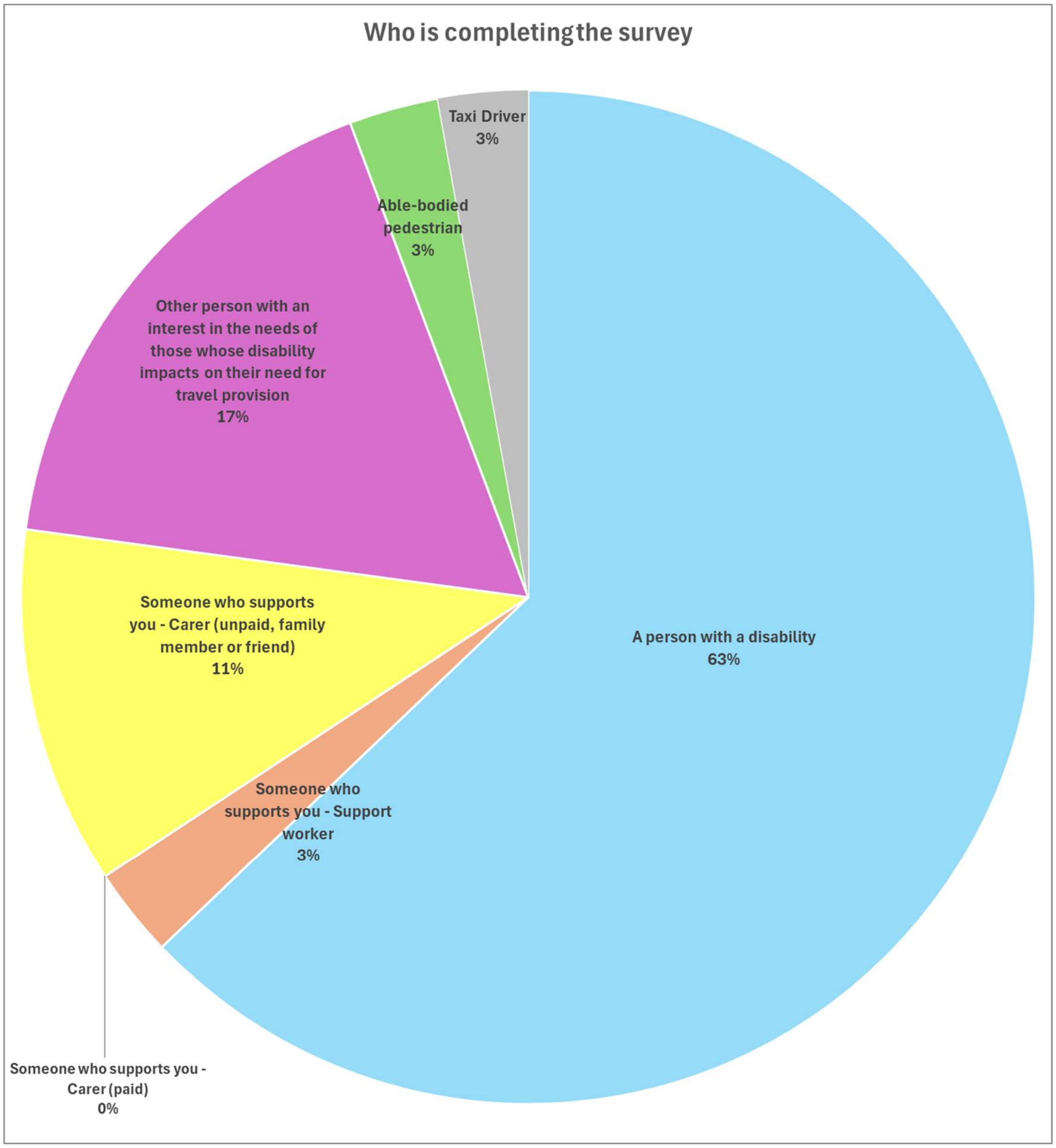
A 25-question detailed accessibility questionnaire was prepared and issued by the local authority and the other authorities within the wider combined authority. This was available from mid November and throughout December 2025 using an on-line survey platform. 110 responses were obtained. These were from:

- Cambridge City 34%
- Peterborough 23%
- South Cambridgeshire 15%
- Huntingdon 13%
- Fenland 8%
- East Cambridgeshire 5%
- Lincolnshire 1%
- West Suffolk 1%

For the purposes of this report, only the Cambridge City responses (37 in total) have been analysed in full. The other responses were checked for any references to trips to and from Cambridge City, with a reduced level of analysis undertaken for those 16 responses.

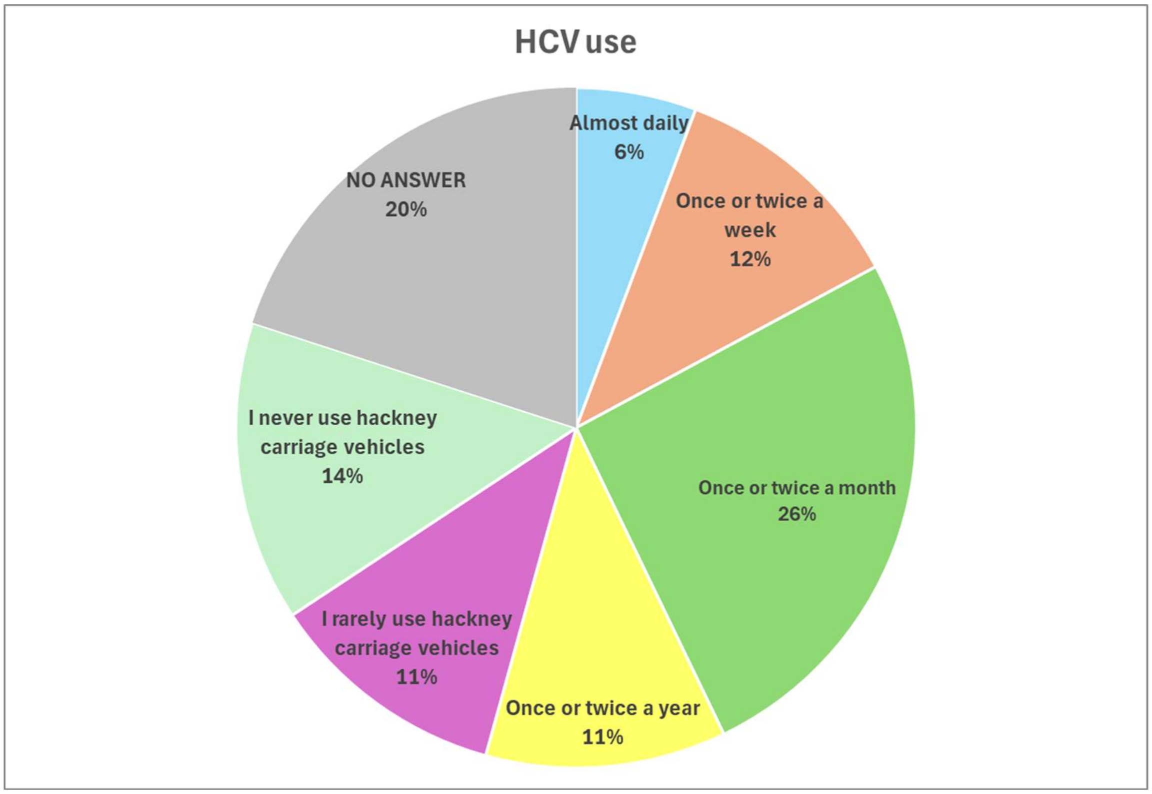
Two of the Cambridge City responses were deleted as they did not contain any responses. This left 35 responses. 69% of these provided their age groups – for those responding 63% were 40-59 years old, 21% 20-39 and 17% 60-79. There were no responses from any other age groups.

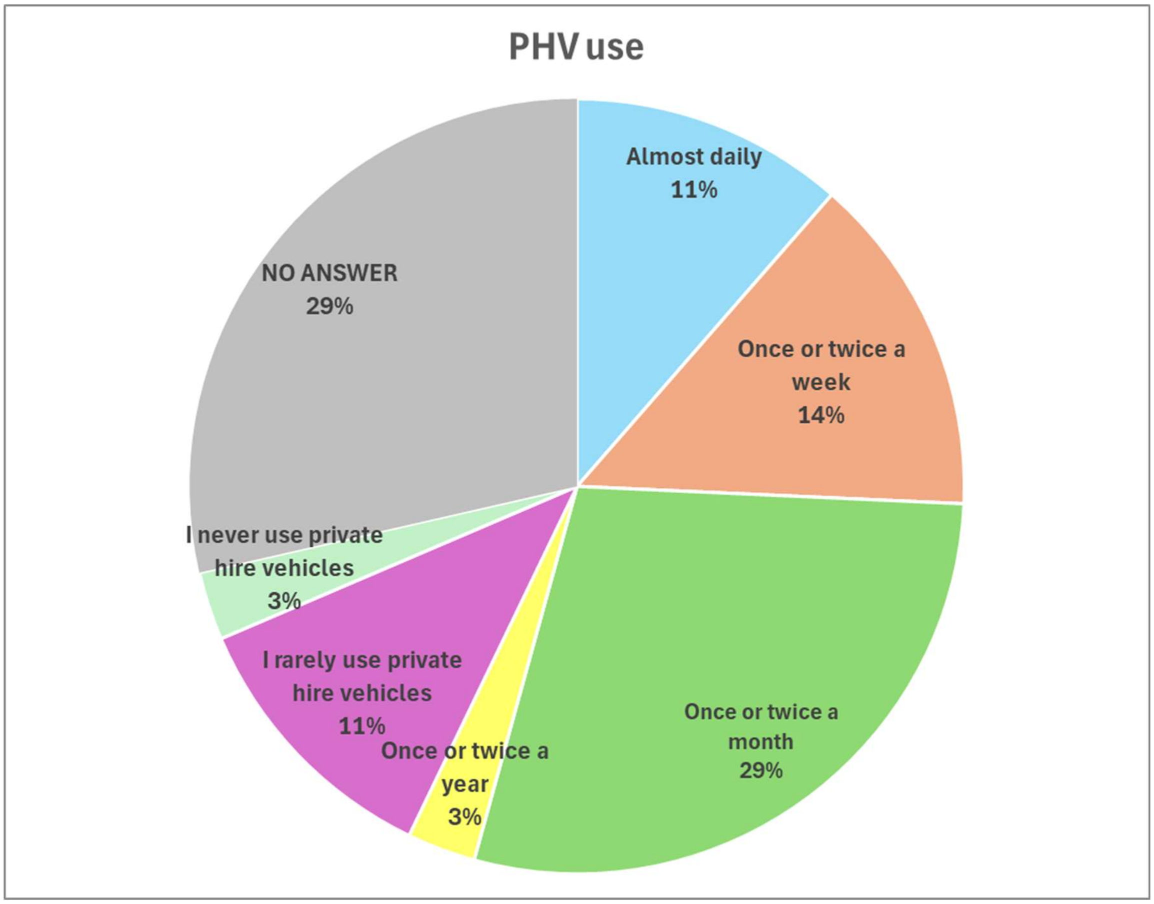
The chart below shows who completed the Cambridge surveys:



63% of those responding said they were a person with a disability. 17% was someone else (not disabled) but with an interest in the needs of those whose disability impacts on their need for travel provision, 11% were carers that supported a disabled person, 3% were support workers, plus one taxi driver and one able-bodied pedestrian.

The charts below show quoted levels of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire usage:


HCV use
Almost daily
6%
Once or twice a week
12%
Once or twice a month
26%
Once or twice a year
11%
I rarely use hackney carriage vehicles
11%
I never use hackney carriage vehicles
14%
NO ANSWER
20%


PHV use
Almost daily
11%
Once or twice a week
14%
Once or twice a month
29%
Once or twice a year
3%
I rarely use private hire vehicles
11%
I never use private hire vehicles
3%
NO ANSWER
29%

Respondents said how often they used Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles. Using the same factors as in the public attitude surveys suggests respondents made 1.9 Hackney Carriage and 3.2 Private Hire trips per respondent per month. The most frequent level of trip making was one or two per month, followed by one or two per week. A small number (two respondents for Hackney Carriage and four for Private Hire) said they used them almost daily. 14% of respondents said they never used Hackney Carriages with 3% never using Private Hire, but with a further 20% hcv and 29% PHV not giving any response. This suggests the sample provides views for users and non-users alike.

People were asked to summarise statements that best summarised their health condition, being allowed to answer as many of the seven stated responses plus chance to state other items. 54% provided one response, 20% two, 17% three and 3% each none, four and five. 77% of all respondents stated 'mobility'; 34% 'long-standing health condition'; 29% "mental health"; 11% "communication" and 9% vision. There were none with hearing issues. 6% provided other issues, both being those suffering from ME/chronic fatigue syndrome.

Considering all quoted statements, mobility accounted for 46%, long standing health 20% and mental health 17%, with all others 7% or less.

These suggest a reasonable cover of different types of disability within the survey, making the survey representative.

Specific 'assistance' elements were also asked about. 49% said they needed just one aid; 29% two, 14% none and 3% each either three, six or seven. The mention of seven aids was not for a single person but by the person representing a number of persons. They included mention of hearing aids, with the other mention of hearing aids by another carer (who listed six total aids).

40% of respondents said they needed a wheelchair all of the time, 29% walking aids such as a rollator, walking sticks or crutches, 29% said they needed a chaperone or carer with them at all times. 26% said a wheelchair some or most of the time and 11% a mobility scooter some or all of the time. 6% said an assistance dog and 6% hearing aids, with 3% a mobility scooter all the time and the final 3% a mobility car. None said sight aids.

With respect to the overall share of aids within total mentions 26% were a wheelchair all of the time, 19% each walking aids and chaperone, 17% a wheelchair some or most of the time and 8% a mobility scooter some or most of the time.

These figures suggest 43% of aids used are a wheelchair but that they are used by 60% of those responding (the two who were carers who mentioned both wheelchair full time and part time have been removed).

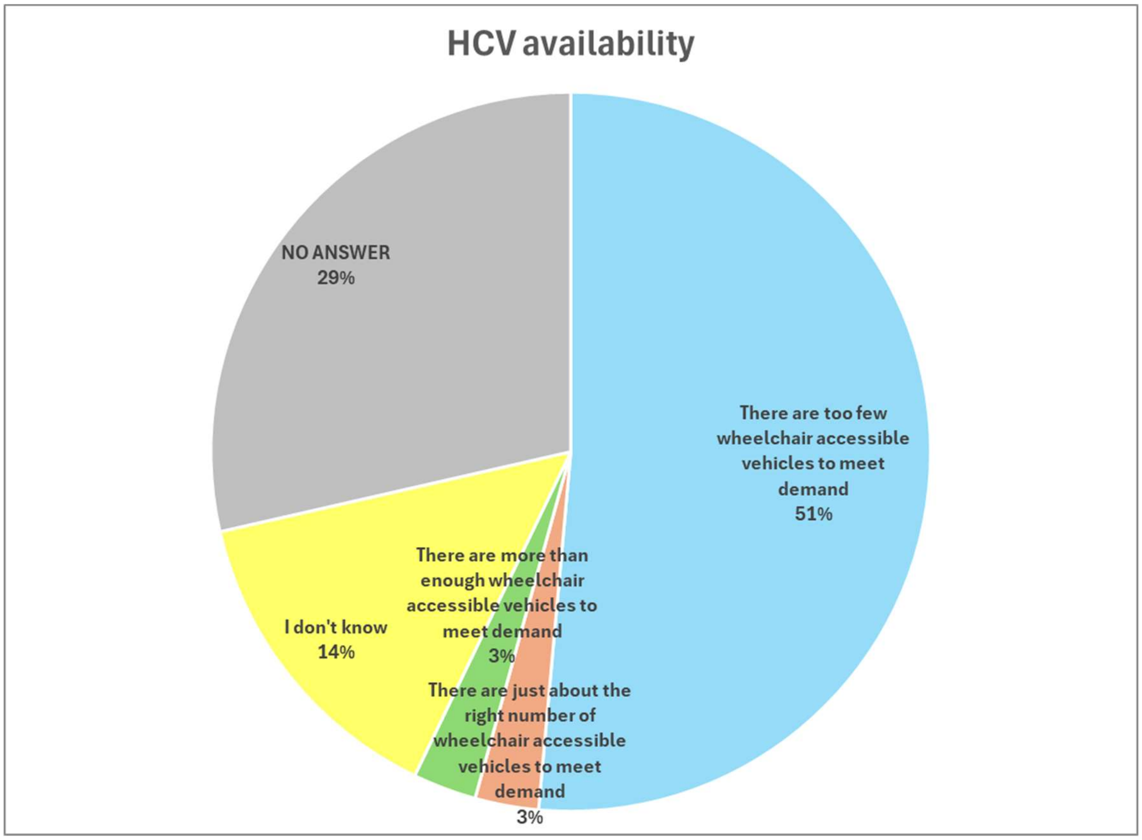
Respondents were asked to provide statements best describing their needs when using both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles. Of the 11 statements, 40% chose two, 29% one, 23% three and the remaining 9% none.

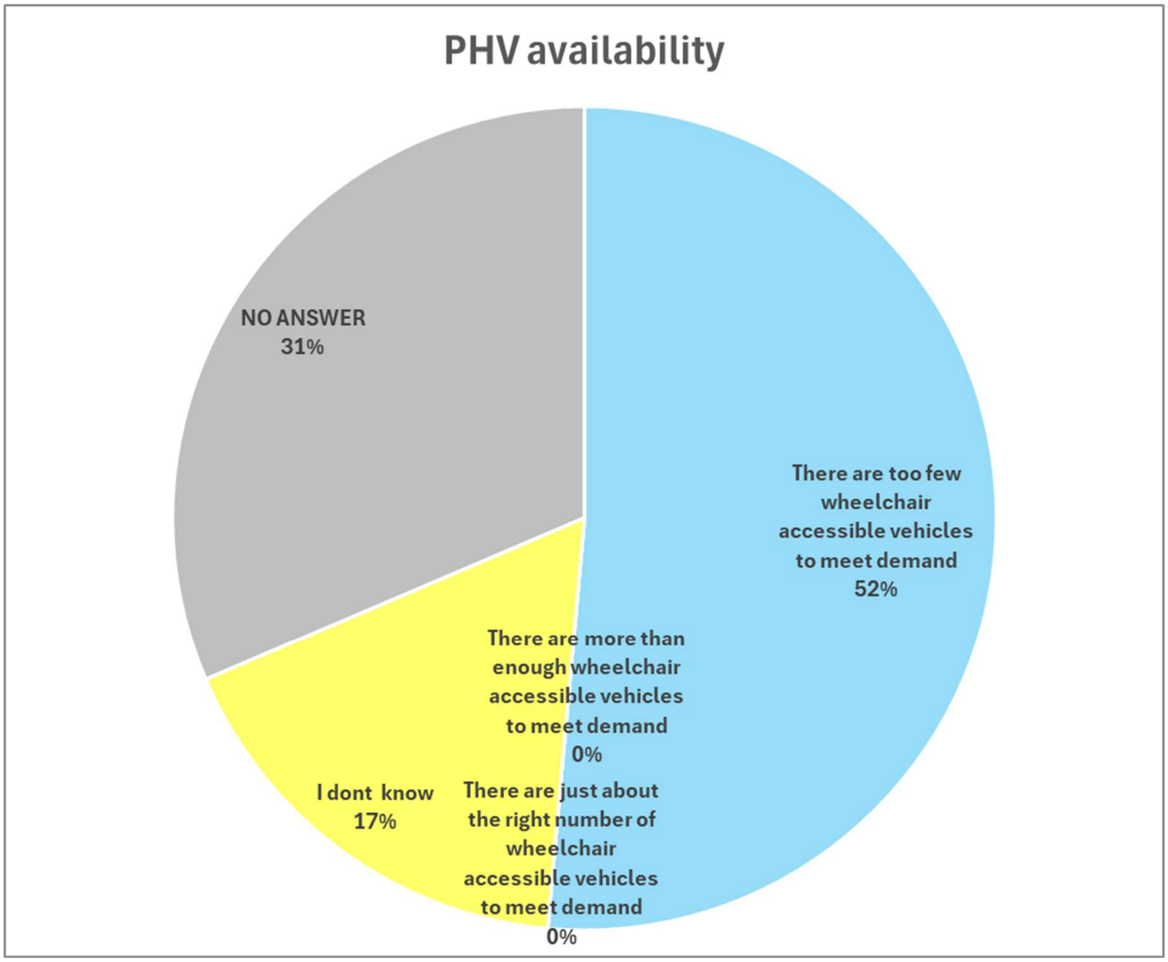
43% of respondents, the top number, said they would require the (booked) Private Hire vehicle to arrive on time. This also provided 24% of total mentions, again the most important matter. 34% of respondents said they were wheelchair users and would need a WAV style vehicle (19% of total mentions).

29% would require a text to tell them the vehicle had arrived (again for Private Hire bookings)(16% of total mentions). 17% (10% of total mentions) said though they were wheelchair users they would not need a WAV. The same level said they would need a driver to knock at the door on arrival (again for bookings). 14% (8%) said they would find it hard or impossible to step up into larger WAV so would need a saloon vehicle. 11% (6%) would need the driver to advise someone else the person had been collected and delivered safely. 6% (3%) would need help to transfer from their chair to a passenger seat. 3% (2%) for each said they would need the operator to provide them a vehicle and driver able to carry them with their assistance dog, or be courteous to others and park safely. None said they would need assistance getting to the vehicle.

Respondents were asked how Hackney Carriage vehicle drivers and Private Hire drivers met their current needs. 49% (46% PHV) gave no answer, 46% (40% PHV) gave one, and 6% (11% PHV) gave two answers, with 3% of PHV giving three answers. 20% of respondents and 35% (28% PHV) of all mentions were "drivers do not seem to understand my disability or travel needs"; but on the contrary 17% (29% PHV (30% mentions, 40% PHV) said "drivers do enough to enable me to travel". 13% (11% PHV) (25% mentions, 16% PHV) felt that drivers did not take any reasonable steps to assist them when travelling. The final response saw 6% (11% PHV) of people (10%, 16% PHV of mentions) state "drivers usually go above and beyond to assist me when travelling". These comparisons seem to suggest better service provided by Private Hire.

The charts below summarise the views about sufficiency of vehicle availability with special reference to wheelchair accessible vehicles:


HCV availability
NO ANSWER
29%
There are too few wheelchair accessible vehicles to meet demand
51%
There are more than enough wheelchair accessible vehicles to meet demand
3%
I don't know
14%
There are just about the right number of wheelchair accessible vehicles to meet demand
3%



Views if there was sufficient balance between the availability of WAV in both fleets was sought. 51% of respondents in both hcv and PHV cases said there were too few WAV. 29% gave no response for Hackney Carriages and 31% for Private Hire. 14% hcv and 17% PHV said they were not sure. For Hackney Carriages 3% each said either there were the right number or there were more than enough, with no similar responses for the PHV element. This response is similar between the two forms of vehicle and provides the dominant view of a lack of sufficient WAV in either fleet.

Respondents were asked what they would do were they unable to find a suitable Hackney Carriage or Private Hire vehicle when they needed one. 26% of respondents gave no response for Hackney Carriages and 37% for Private Hire. 40% and 26% gave one response, 31% and 23% two, none and 9% three and 3 and 6% four.

The main response for both types of vehicle was that people would not attend their activity or appointment with 31% of respondents saying that in both cases (28% and 26% of total mentions of that action). For Hackney Carriage, 26% said they would phone a Private Hire operator (23% of mentions).

Next equal for Private Hire was 20% (17% of mentions) who said either call a friend or family member to ask for a lift or use other methods with a similar number saying use other methods, mainly bus, but including dial a ride, a Private Hire booking or train. The two next equal options for Private Hire users with 14% of people and 12% of mentions was waiting for a suitable vehicle or using a bus. For Hackney Carriage next two equal were 11% of people, 10% of mentions calling a friend or family member, or using the bus. 11% for Private Hire (10% mentions) and 9% for Hackney Carriage (8% mentions) said they would get to the activity or appointment themselves, either walking or using their wheelchair.

For Hackney Carriage 9%/8% said either waiting for a suitable vehicle or using their own car or dial a ride. 9% of Private Hire (7% mentions) and 6% of Hackney Carriage (5% mentions) would choose a less optimal vehicle that meant they needed more assistance to use. Finally, 3% of Hackney Carriage respondents (3% of mentions) were use of community transport.

These responses show a wide range of reactions with the top one being nearly a third of people would not attend their activity or appointment – a major life-affecting decision.

The sphere of travel was sought for each person responding, to identify if their travel was fully within their administrative area, all the time, some of the time, or a mix. Some recoding of answers was undertaken for consistency. For both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire the bulk of people (54% hcv, 46% PHV, 79% and 73% of total mentions) were that they travelled within their local area the majority of the time. 6% for Hackney Carriage and 11% for Private Hire (8% and 18% of mentions) said a mix of outside and within area journeys. The remaining 9% of hcv and 6% of PHV (13% and 9% of mentions) were internal travel some of the time. This suggests the bulk of journeys by those with disabilities tend to be within Cambridge City for these respondents.

Destinations used for trips were identified. 29% of Hackney Carriage and 37% of Private Hire respondents provided no response. 29% of hcv and 23% of PHV gave two responses; 20% and 17% respectively gave one, 17% and 11% three, 3% and 11% four and 3% (hcv only) provided all five possible answers.

The largest response, with 51% of people for hcv and 46% for PHV (33% and 32% of mentions respectively) was for hospital appointments. Next, both vehicle types scoring 37% (24% and 26% of mentions) was other health appointments. Third, with 26% hcv and 29% PHV (17% and 20% of mentions) was visiting family and friends. Fourth, with 23% of hcv and 20% of PHV (15% and 14% of mentions) were leisure appointments.

17% hcv and 11% PHV (11% and 8% of mentions) stated other destinations, including work, travel to the station, shopping, business, university, work, funerals and parties.

The overall responses suggest that medical needs take the bulk of reasons for those with disabilities to travel by either Hackney Carriage or Private Hire. These are clearly very important trips and have significant impact if not abel to be undertaken.

A question was asked if operators used to book Private Hire vehicles were currently meeting the needs of respondents. Nine responses were provided. 37% gave no response, 20% each one or two responses, 11% three, 9% four and 3% five.

Largest response for 31% of respondents and 22% of total mentions was that they were usually unable to get a Private Hire vehicle if needed instantly. 26% (18%) said they found operators are never, or rarely able to provide a suitable vehicle. A further 23% (16% of mentions) said 'usually operators tell me they do not have a suitable vehicle available'. 14% (10% of mentions) said they did not tell operators they had a disability due to the worry of potential discrimination. The same amount said they did not use Private Hire because of previous experience that none would be available.

On the more positive side, 11% (8% of all mentions) said if they told operators about their needs they were usually happy to find them appropriate transport, with a similar number saying they could get a service if they booked sufficiently far in advance. However, some of the lengths quoted were less than helpful – one being told a month, another a week, another a day, and another 24-48 hours but that they should expect that booking to be up to an hour late (for a full WAV) – meaning that person said they mainly travelled using a fold- up chair to minimise this.

9% (6% of mentions) said the service they received from Private Hire operators was good – this was three people. All three quoted one other point, two saying 'if they told operators they were usually happy to find' and the other saying they didn't inform operators for fear of discrimination.

Nine statements were provided for people to advise us if any had applied to them. 51% of respondents gave no answer. 23% quoted one, 6% each two, three or five, and 9% quoted four.

Both saying five statements applied were persons with a disability answering for themselves. Both said they had been refused transport by an operator or driver for reasons related to their disability. Both said a driver had refused to transport them because they were in a wheelchair. Both had been made to feel uncomfortable by a driver because of their disability.

One had booked a vehicle which was found to be not suitable for them to use when it arrived. The other person had booked through an operator but their journey was refused by the driver when they arrived. Both provided extra information – one saying they had to dismantle their wheelchair to allow them to be taken to work, the other saying that drivers made they feel uncomfortable by asking why they were in their chair. That person also said they never advised Uber that they were in a wheelchair as they knew the request would always be refused.

31% of respondents and 28% of all quoted statements were that people had been made to feel uncomfortable by drivers due to their disability. Next most quoted were four statements all being stated by 17% of respondents and 15% of total mentions. These were being refused transport by an operator or driver for reasons related to their disability, being refused because they were traveling in a wheelchair, having a booked vehicle arrive that was not suitable, or other comments (not taking taxi vouchers, booking not arriving meaning person had to get family member to take them in an unsuitable vehicle, with two saying they had been clear to explain they needed a WAV but that the vehicle sent was not WAV. One mentioned they were sometimes told their electric chair was too large to be transported.

Respondents were asked if any of the above statements applied to them, if they had reported the issue to their local authority. Just four respondents, 11% of the total for Cambridge City, had done so, including both of those noted above mentioning five statements that had applied.

13 people, 37% of all responding for Cambridge City, said they had not. Five were unaware of options – they did not know who to ring, did not know how, did not know they could(2) or that they should. One did not know they could report a booking not arriving. One simply said they asked the operator not to send the driver they had received before who had refused them. One said the internet was not available to report when they tried.

One said the process was too onerous and that in any case they did not feel penalties were severe enough or they feared not being believed. Three others said they did not believe there was any point reporting, with one saying they did not think reporting would change anything given that they had done so in the past but had seen no action taken.

Respondents were asked to suggest changes that might improve the situation in Cambridge City for passengers with disabilities. Eight options were given plus the opportunity to provide their own suggestions. 29% gave no response; 14% chose four, 11% each chose one, five or six, 9% each two or three and 3% chose seven options.

The person choosing seven options was one of the two quoted above who had quoted five statements applied.

The most chosen options were more wheelchair accessible vehicles and any driver or operator found to actively discriminate should have their licence revoked. Both obtained response from 46% of respondents (16% of total mentions of both statements). Next three with 37% of respondents and 13% of total mentions were disability awareness training for drivers, for operators, and more council enforcement. 29% of respondents (10% of total mentions) said a wider range of wheelchair accessible vehicles, for example those not so high off the ground, with the final score for 17% of people (6% of total responses) being specific comments including recommending priority be given to disabled customers when requesting a regular vehicle, an emphasis on not driving or parking on pavements or in cycle lanes, any operator not providing wheelchair accessible vehicles to have their licence revoked, clean seats and vehicles (and a request for specific driver types that could be seen to be discriminatory), making drivers aware they should not refuse taxi vouchers and companies allowing booking of special vehicles within their fleet.

Two thirds of respondents provided a summary of their experience. Of these, 39% said it was satisfactory, 26% bad, 17% dreadful, 13% good and 4% excellent.

Options were provided for people to say why they gave a particular response. Three of those stating 'dreadful' gave extra explanation. Two said late arrivals or no-shows caused them to miss hospital appointments. One just said it was impossible to get a wheelchair accessible taxi, either hcv or PHV in Cambridge.

Three of those saying 'bad' provided extra response. One was mainly concerned about poor driving and poor driver attitude. The other two made it clear even if a wheelchair accessible vehicle was booked the operator said they could not guarantee the time it would arrive or if it would arrive at all. One person admitted they did have an electric wheelchair that needed a specific vehicle type of which one company only had two available, but also explained the extra anxiety given by the operator explanation of how hard it was to meet their booking.

Five that replied satisfactory gave extra information. These are quoted in full below:

"Most of the time during the day I do get a taxi even if I have to wait longer. Where I ring the taxi company the operator always says that I could wait anything up to 2 hours for one. If I'm going out for the evening then I don't bother going, as the accessibility is zero."

"Often difficult to get a taxi at the time required, even if a booking has been made in advance."

"Some are very good, others bad, I dread having to call them as you never know which you're going to get.

"Taxi is my main transport mode, unfortunately you just have to take the inconsistency and potential discrimination on the chin because you need to get on with your life unfortunately but it can be quite jarring and disruptive"

"It is too hard to get around as a wheelchair user. I specifically bought a folding wheelchair where I previously had a rigid frame to combat the issues I had taking taxis, as this chair is able to go in the boot of a car where my previous chair could only be transported in a WAV."

One person stating 'good' said *"most of the time the drivers are accommodating, however you get some who are disrespectful or rude"*

One person stating excellent said in addition "always been courteous and helpful".

Twelve other comments were provided, again given in full:

"A lot of wheelchair users in the Cambridge area would find a list of only taxi firms with whom you can reliably pre-book a wheelchair taxi on the Cambridge City Council website very useful."

"I have a friend who's a wheelchair user and I have been witness to the treatment she's received many times. The biggest point I wish to make is an issue around cabs cancelling jobs in progress or not taking jobs where the passenger is disabled. It appears that taxi drivers will take these jobs easily if they are not busy but as soon as things get busier, they will cancel or refuse jobs where a disabled passenger needs assistance so they can take the quicker and easier jobs. I have literally watched a girl call the taxi firm that is already booked to collect a disabled passenger and the taxi is overdue for pick up and watched as the girls taxi showed up and collected her. I know it must be difficult to prove. The taxi company were tackled about this and other instances and their response was that as the drivers are all self employed, they can't be forced to take a job."

"I really hope Cambridge City Council can one day have a taxi service suitable for all. I would use taxis a lot if I knew I could rely on them."
"I recently came home from Stansted airport, when the trains were on strike. I arrived by coach, to be told that there wasn't any suitable taxis to take me home. And that it wasn't their problem, so it was obviously my problem for having a disability!!!"
"I would like the taxi card scheme to be available to those receiving attendance allowance. I was too ill to apply for PIP & now I'm not eligible. It can cost £33-£40 for a 2-way hospital visit"
"Most of the Cambridge Taxi firms that state on their website that they have WAVs tell you that they don't when you try to get one. One company tells you that they

have them but that you can't book them because they don't have many and they might not have one available! I've never seen a wheelchair accessible taxi at a taxi rank (I did give up looking some time ago)."
"50/50 pleasant & kind v grumpy & unhelpful"
"Again, some drivers are helpful, but others will refuse to provide a service to me when they see I am a wheelchair user"
"Again generally rude. Drive recklessly with no due care. Dirty seats and car."
"I have found it impossible to book a wheelchair accessible Private Hire taxi in Cambridge."

"As a pedestrian, there is a constant problem of taxis/PHVs driving/parking on pavements and cycle lanes, which is an offence and must never be done. Also there is far too much overtaking on Mill Road Bridge, access to which is a privilege given to taxis who should not be abusing it. These are endemic problems."

(One further comment requesting specific ethnicity for drivers was not felt suitable for reporting)

As noted above, 14 interviews from other areas also referenced people travelling from those areas to Cambridge or parts of Cambridge City. The relevant parts of these are summarised below.

Two were from Fenland, four from Huntingdon, seven from South Cambridgeshire and one from West Suffolk. One of the Fenland respondents used both hcv and PHV to Cambridge and back. The other used hcv from Cambridge station to Addenbrooke's Hospital and return.

Two of those from Huntingdon used both kinds of vehicle to and from Cambridge whilst the other two used them to Addenbrookes Hospital and back. One of these respondents commented that they felt comfortable with their local Huntingdon drivers but that those from Cambridge made them feel uncomfortable, but did not give any more detail.

The West Suffolk respondent mainly made the point that a mixed hcv fleet was the best option.

Three of the South Cambridgeshire respondents used hcv to Cambridge station, another two to Cambridge and two to Addenbrookes Hospital, but did not say if they undertook that journey direct from home or via the station.

One person made the point that the taxi card for South Cambridgeshire is much more restricted than that for Cambridge City.

These are the principal comments from the non-Cambridge City respondents and show that some do use Cambridge City vehicles as well as their own local ones, and have views about the Cambridge City fleet.

Overall, the general picture from the disability survey is that, though there are good points and valued service, there are also a good number of issues, although more are with the Private Hire or booked journey elements than with Hackney Carriages per se. The responses cover most disabilities and needs but also show need for passenger education in terms of their need to feed back to licensing any issues they encounter.

9 Summary, synthesis and study conclusions

This Hackney Carriage demand survey on behalf of Cambridge City has been undertaken following the guidance of the BPG and other recent case history regarding unmet demand and its significance. This chapter first summarises each chapter in turn, and then draws together a synthesis, firstly in terms of demand and if and how any unmet demand is significant in terms of Section 16 of the 1985 Transport Act, and secondly in terms of how currently developing Cambridge policies might be taken forward.

Background and context

This survey was undertaken by LVSA based on the Council Brief, our term consultancy agreement and our updated proposal of March 2025 as confirmed and developed at our June 2025 inception meeting. On street interviews were in July, rank observations principally in early July but with supplementary tests at the two main ranks undertaken in October, drivers were consulted in August / September, with key stakeholders contacted throughout the survey period.

Cambridge City has a growing population and is also influenced strongly by the surrounding neighbouring South Cambridgeshire hinterland. Both cycling and rail commuting make the transport background of the City relatively unique. The picture is further influenced strongly by pro-sustainable transport policies supported by a long term pedestrianisation of the central core, and a developing busway rapid transit. In due course this may be supported by possible light rail developments. The station location continues to increase licensed vehicle use significantly with it a moderate distance from the central core and many other key destinations (including Addenbrookes Hospital).

The City remains part of the wider Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), which is now the local transport authority for a wide area. Actions have included 19 dedicated 'taxi' only electric charging points (for both hcv and PHV), which together with other measures seek to meet the goal of a 100% electric or ultra low emission hybrid taxi fleet by 2028. Part of the support for this saw 50 WAV style plates traded for electric vehicles.

The history of vehicle numbers in Cambridge City is complex with impacts from removal of an initial limit on Hackney Carriage vehicle numbers, return of that limit, impacts of having a large neighbouring authority and the impact of the pandemic on fleet size. At peak, the hcv fleet was 77% of the total fleet – by the time of this survey that had reduced to 69%.

Drivers have had dual driver badges since 2012 with no Private Hire only drivers remaining and just a handful of Hackney Carriage only.

Most of the WAV style vehicles in the fleet are in the Hackney Carriage element, although present levels are 41% compared to the 70% at peak. This is much higher than the 22% average for mixed hcv fleets at the time of the last DfT survey in 2024.

Some plates retain grandfather rights to be saloon style, but their numbers are reducing and are now down to 107 vehicles. A further complication is that the station rank requires a separate, rail-station led permit, which the council has no control over; with 167 such permits in place at the time of the survey. It is understood many of these are the grandfather rights vehicles which impacts the overall level of WAV likely at the station rank.

Regular review of the limit policy and level of vehicles occurs, although there was a gap in surveys brought about by the pandemic, increasing that gap to five years, although the present survey followed the 2022 one using the former 3-year interval, partly arising from wish to review the impact of the policy allowing some WAV to transfer to more sustainable fuel without WAV stipulations.

Although Cambridge station national rail patronage is 52% higher than in the 2022 survey, the station itself has dropped back from being 37th largest to being 46th for the latest survey (data ending March 2025), with just over 10.5 million passengers (compared to the maximum recorded of nearly 12m in 2018/2019).

Rank observations

Since the last survey, ranks have been stable although the Station Road rank has now gone altogether.

A high level review of rank operation found 60% (34% 2022) of available rank hours unused with 3% (9% 2022) of the same total blocked by parked vehicles. 24% (43% 2022) of these hours saw the relevant ranks busy. For the 2025 survey, only the main two ranks are used at all times with others mainly only used significantly on Fridays and more so Saturdays.

Our main rank observations were in Summer with the busiest two ranks seeing repeat observation in Autumn testing the impact of the full return of students to the City. Both sets were undertaken whilst schools were still operating.

Estimates of average weekly passenger demand for Summer 2025 show the continued and increased dominance of the station rank, which provides 70% (up from 63% in 2022 and 49% in 2017) of all passengers. St Andrew's Street provides 25% (22% 2022 and 28% 2017) with Market Square just 2% (was 4.5% 2022 and 12% 2017). The top two ranks now provide 95% (85% 2022 and 77% 2017) of all passengers.

For 2025, against national trends, the overall total estimated flows from the Summer full observations show a marginal increase in total passenger numbers (up 3% from 2022 but still below the higher 27,023 of 2017 and the 32,076 of 2012.

The Autumn rank survey found estimated weekly patronage for those two sites some 32% lower than the Summer values. In 2022, the central area rank had shown increased patronage in the Autumn flows. Saturday station flows were most reduced in the Autumn.

The peak flow hour in both 2022 and 2025 remained the 23:00 hour on the Saturday of the Summer surveys. The 2025 level was marginally higher than 2022. Average hourly flow in the Summer was just slightly lower than in 2022 (129 2025 and 133 2022). The new profile in 2025 is marginally more peaky than that in 2022. The share of total vehicle movements was now 59% at or near the station rank compared to 45% in 2022. The two Sidney Street shares reduced from 8% to 4.5%.

The level of vehicles that were local Hackney Carriage within the vehicle observations at the rank increased from 88% in 2022 to 94% in 2025, with the main reduction being in local Private Hire seen near ranks.

The proportion of the observed Hackney Carriages that were WAV was reduced overall from 34% to 30%.

An increased 14 (11 in 2022) people were observed using wheelchairs, eight (six) at the Station, five (three) at St Andrews Street and one at Boots (as in 2022). In 2022 there had been one wheelchair using passenger at Bridge Street.

The sample plate activity surveys were extended in 2025 to cover all three days. Of the total 'taxi' vehicles observed, 37% were not confirmed as either local Hackney Carriage or Private Hire.

Of this number, 96% were South Cambridgeshire Private Hire, 3% from Peterborough and 0.7% from a distant licensing authority.

78% of the local Hackney Carriage fleet were observed over the three days – with 53% on Thursday, 51% Friday and 55% Saturday. 27% of the fleet were seen on all three days. In 2025 the share of vehicles servicing both main ranks returned to 63% (12% 2022 but 60% 2017).

The current station usage sees 15% of arriving passengers leaving the station in Hackney Carriages from the rank there. In 2022 this was 19%.

On street public views

199 (276 in 2022) people were interviewed in the streets of the City. The result was 55% (74% in 2022 and 2017) said they had used a licensed vehicle in the last three months. The main switch away from licensed vehicles focussed more on use of specific types with those saying they used both having increased share.

When using frequency levels, 3.5 (1.5 2022 and 2.4 2017) used total licensed vehicles in terms of total trips per month against 2.0 (1.2 in both 2022 and 2017) for Hackney Carriages. This suggests 57% (77% in 2022) use Hackney Carriages. This is much higher than the 29% (47% 2022 and 37% 2017) stated as being from ranks. This might relate to the high level of Hackney Carriages now operating on booking circuits and apps.

In 2025, the top company named was a large app-based company that had increased its share from 2% 2017 to 13% 2022 to 32% now. Two other new companies first mentioned in 2025 gained 20% each. Although 36% of people could not remember when they last used a Hackney Carriage, none said they could not remember seeing them in the area.

People were aware of three (four in 2022) active ranks. The station still got most mentions (49% compared to 70%in 2022) followed by Drummer Street (24% compared to 15% 2022), St Andrews Street (23%, 13% 2022). The only other rank mentioned was the Boots rank.

The level quoting they used the ranks they named reduced (37% 2025, 54% 2022 and 73% 2017). Drummer Street was most quoted as used (45%).

The review of service perception found significant drops since the high levels of 2022. It appears the changes in companies have not benefitted public views. The key focus, with 98% of responses this time, was if they were more affordable (75% in 2022).

The level of people saying either that they needed a WAV, or knew someone who did, was increased again from 2022 and 2017, rising from a net 5% (2017) to 15% (2022) to 28% in 2025. Most of those needing an adapted vehicle said it would be a full WAV style vehicle. This was in contrast to 2022 when the 15% split 11% for WAV and 4% for other adaptation.

Latent demand values were reduced in 2025, with the station value being 1.01 (1.0439 2022 and 1.02 2017), 1.04 (1.049 2022 and 1.07 2017) for all ranks (1.07) and 1.03 (1.0049 2022 and 1.05 2017) for just council ranks.

95% (89% 2022) of the public responding to the question (76% now, 56% 2022) said they thought there were enough Hackney Carriages in Cambridge at this time.

Key stakeholder views

As expected, there was just a single response from a disabled group. They said all they represented would get local taxis by phoning them. They were aware of ranks but their key comment was 'inadequate wheelchair accessible taxis and not enough of them'. No further comment was made nor any contact provided.

Trade views

A good 15% (32% in 2022 and 22% 2017) of all dual drivers contacted by the Council responded to our invitation. Validation removed six entries, five being duplicates.

91% (92% 2022) of respondents told us the licensed vehicle trade was their only or main source of income. The remaining 9% worked part time, two thirds with other income.

75% (78% 2022) of respondents were drivers of Hackney Carriages, 16% (17% 2022) both kinds of vehicle and 7% (5% 2022) only Private Hire.

In terms of alliances, 24% (22% 2022) of respondents were with one trade group, 6% (7% 2022) with another, 10% (6%) with a company and 65% (61% 2022) without any formal allegiances, a very similar split.

68% of Hackney Carriage and dual respondents said they drove saloon vehicles, 24% side-loading WAV and 8% rear-loading WAV.

Yet again, evidence suggested those responding had increased their years of service, (16.8 in 2025, 15 in 2022 and 12 in 2017). However, the days and hours worked suggested people were working marginally more hours than in 2022 (48.6 compared to 46 2022 and 47 2017).

Vehicle ownership levels were similar as were those sharing vehicles. Levels of accepting pre-bookings were up a little (63% compared to 60%).

In terms of ranks, St Andrews Street saw 28% (27% 2022) and the Station 31% (26% 2022). 5% (6%) said Market Square, 3% (5% 2022) Parkside, Boots 2% and Superdrug 1% (in 2022 3% said Sidney Street (which rank there not specified)).

In terms of what matters affected when people worked, suiting family commitments remained top at a similar share (23% compared to 26% 2022) with avoiding heavy traffic second (13% compared to 11%) but with 13% now saying they had to work longer to make up for the volume of non-Cambridge based vehicles servicing demand.

98% (93% 2022) felt there were enough Hackney Carriages at the present time. All those responding, including all Private Hire respondents, supported retention of the limit with just a single Hackney Carriage driver disagreeing. This meant 98% of those responding supported retention of the limit policy. Reasons given were that it prevented over-ranking, reduced pollution, kept the trade viable and working hours reduced. The single driver wishing to see the limit removed wanted their own, rather than a rented, plate.

In total, 58% said they normally undertook immediate hire from ranks, 25% immediate hire from bookings, 8% school contracts and 7% advanced hire work. 12% of Hackney Carriages said they worked full time at ranks. 18% of responding Hackney Carriages mentioned school contracts, but no Private Hire respondents mentioned them.

In terms of periods and days worked Fridays were highest for Hackney Carriages and Saturdays for Private Hire, with both seeing Sundays lowest. Hackney Carriage spent 8% of periods overnight and 42% in afternoons, with Private Hire stating 58% for morning periods and none for the late evening.

In terms of shares of work in a typical week, 68% of Hackney Carriage was from rank, 21% from phone bookings, 7% from school contract, and 4% from hailing.

Just 19% of those driving a non-WAV style vehicle had ever considered operating a WAV, with most saying they cost too much to purchase and run, and provided low levels of specific work. 54% suggested means of encouragement including subsidies, free licences and reduced levels of testing.

There were less 'other comments' – 25 in 2025 compared to 72 in 2022. Six of these sought restriction on non-Cambridge licensed vehicle operations.

Formal evaluation of significance of unmet demand

For this survey, an initial test using all the July data found high and significant levels of unmet demand. However, apart from the off peak factor, all levels in 2025 were either the same or lower than in 2022, such that the level of significance which was 1039 in 2022 was now 285.6. Overall average passenger waiting time was reduced from 0.9 to 0.43 minutes.

Considering the council controlled ranks, i.e. removing the station, took the overall factor to just 1.25. This similar value was 35.16 in 2022. In this case, all values were reduced between 2022 and 2025. Average passenger delay was just 0.08 minutes. This is a good result given the fact that overall passenger levels have marginally increased, which should lead to increased significance of unmet demand.

The Autumn top two rank test did not find such high levels of unmet demand taking both sites together – with the overall index just 2.49, average passenger delay 0.08 minutes, off peak factor 14.29 and the overall level of delay being 2.1%. This suggests the station issue was mainly an early Summer one. This does suggest that tourist flows are more dominant than any impact from students returning to the City in the Autumn.

Synthesis

It is encouraging that overall rank-based passenger numbers in 2025 are marginally increased on 2022 levels. This is against national trends of continued reduction in usage of Hackney Carriages from ranks. This is also good given other evidence suggests that app-based licensed vehicle use has increased strongly, and that Private Hire competition in the area is high. Many people now make use of both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire choosing the most appropriate vehicle style to suit, rather than having preference for one or other type of vehicle. There is some suggestion that the Private Hire company changes have not all been positive for the public, which may have led to some people using Hackney Carriage.

It also appears that Hackney Carriages tend to service more night demand and periods when demand is lower against Private Hire.

Despite the increased levels of Hackney Carriage usage from ranks, the focus of usage has concentrated further on the two main ranks. The other central area ranks now appear to only be used on Fridays and Saturdays with very little use of other ranks on the Thursday (and presumably earlier in the week).

Levels of service to those with disabilities appear to have improved if the usage information is taken as a proxy for improved levels of service.

The comparison of the two main ranks between Summer and Autumn confirms that tourist demand for Hackney Carriages has more impact than the return of students to the area.

Although there is strong concern from the Hackney Carriage trade regarding non-Cambridge city vehicles, the data collection found that the vast majority of non-City vehicles remained those from South Cambridgeshire, with other authority vehicles a minority (albeit a noticeable one). What does seem to have changed from 2022 is the increased dominance of app-usage in the area.

Disability survey

A good level of response was obtained from this survey both from Cambridge City respondents and from a smaller number of wider area respondents (including Fenland, Huntingdon and South Cambridgeshire) who confirmed they made use of Cambridge City licensed vehicles as well as those from their own area.

The overall response was mixed, with some good reports of provision made for those with disabilities, but quite a bit more of issues, although the main focus of problem tended to be with issues with booking of vehicles with some poor service from both operators and drivers, the two sometimes combining to lead to problems being compounded.

A quick win from this review is the need to publicise the kinds of issues that people should be talking to the licensing section about, and how they can do that, as well as publicising good examples of service (as identified in this report at ranks) and even more clearly ensuring wide knowledge of the outcomes of review of any reported issues.

Conclusions

The levels of service to the ranks have all improved compared to 2022, although the Summer data suggests that station flows exceeded the ability of the fleet to cope (although even this situation had improved since 2022). This is not an issue the Council can easily influence given the additional permit requirement further suppressing supply of vehicles. At the time of the Summer survey 62% of the active Hackney Carriage fleet had station permits.

The index levels of significance of unmet demand confirm no need for additional plate issue at this time. The improved levels of services despite increased patronage and reduced active vehicles is notable. This does imply the current fleet is more active in meeting passenger demand than it has previously been.

The report shows :

- The good overall service provided at ranks
- The fact that so many disabled take advantage of the rank service provided
- The level of WAV that remain
- The level of sustainable fuel usage of the fleet
- What and how people can report issues

It also demonstrates that many disability issues are related more to companies and booked trips than to rank operation.

Issues are approaching with the impending end of the period when wheelchair vehicles can be retained. At the present time, the development of both the physical infrastructure as well as actual vehicles to provide the replacement fleet have not progressed to any level near that needed to enable this change to occur without harmful loss of further wheelchair accessible vehicles. The disability survey suggests there are insufficient vehicles in the public mind, although the rank survey work suggests there are presently around the right number enabling those that use ranks to feel well-provided for. The shortage mainly relates to vehicles allied to bookings.

The fact that the current number of WAV style plates not on issue see no interest in take-up is also an issue that needs to be faced and clearly documented / validated. There are several options:

- Retain them for a future change of use (option 1)
- Reduce the limit to the current level of active vehicles (option 2)
- Remove the limit altogether (option 3)

What future use might be made of the unused plates is a difficult issue at this time as it could lead to unintended consequences, such as further loss of wheelchair accessible plates. Option 1 is therefore not worth pursing.

Benefits of Option 2 are ensuring that the current vehicles which are clearly providing good service are rewarded for doing so and protected from entry of further vehicles that might dilute the potential earnings currently on offer.

Retention of the limit at the current time, at either level of vehicles, is supported by the bulk of the trade, and would maintain stability at this time as well as supporting the present Hackney Carriage trade as in above. It would also encourage the present trade who are doing a sterling job servicing the public to continue to do so without the potential for new entrants to identify and cream off any key demand.

Removal of the limit would introduce instability into the current situation, which our survey suggests is very balanced and operating to the benefit of passengers and trade alike. That option should also be discounted

In summary, the current unmet demand survey finds that, despite increased patronage and a reduced number of Hackney Carriages (270 at the time of the survey, of which 111 were wheelchair accessible), the performance demonstrated by the ISUD index shows good service to the council ranks; the rank observations showed that a good, and marginally increased, number of people both in wheelchairs and with other disabilities, were making use of the service at ranks. Even the station seeing significant unmet demand (which the local council cannot change due to the extra permit), saw lower levels than in the previous survey, and further, the Autumn test found that service levels at that point were also very good.

This suggests that the best way forward for public and trade alike would be:

- Retain the limit policy
- Reduce the limit on number of Hackney Carriage vehicles to 270
- Modify the age limit on WAV vehicles adding a further two years

10 Recommendations

There is no need to issue any further plates.

The spare WAV plates should be eliminated as there is no demand for them, and no evidence of poor service to those with disabilities in the rank-based market.

There is need to review the potential high level of loss of further WAV plates in light of full change to electric or sustainable styles being untenable on the current timetable due to factors of the overall industry and electric vehicle market.

Rank locations should be marketed to the public.

The good service enjoyed by a number of disabled persons, both wheelchair and other disabilities, as identified in the survey, should be marketed to the public.

It is accepted that the major issue for those needing disabled accessible transport is with the pre-booked market for these services, a national issue which can be taken forward further by development of an Integrated Service Plan, which demonstrates the issues and some of the actions being taken. An outline ISP will be provided by the consultant of this report once the conclusions of considerations of this current report are finalised and confirmed.

Means of reporting issues of service with the licensed vehicles, drivers, and operators needs to be reiterated and communicated to the public.

Any problems solved by enforcement or other methods should also be clearly marketed to the public, not just in Cambridge City but the wider area.