

# Talking Taxis

## Fuel subsidy to combat taxi costs and improve disability services

The Government has approved a \$5 fuel subsidy for diesel-powered MPT vehicles which will commence before Christmas. The subsidy is geared towards improving operators' viability, which will result in improvements in the service to people with disabilities.

The \$5 diesel subsidy will be paid to the driver of the MPT for each TUSS wheelchair job undertaken. It comes on top of the 4.8% fare increase awarded the taxi industry in October.

The subsidy will provide immediate financial relief to current operators to encourage them to continue the MPT service and to attract new participants to the industry.

The fuel scheme is only one part of the Government's commitment to improving MPT services both for operators and for people with disabilities who use MPT services.

The Minister has given approval for this scheme to operate over the next 18 months. Details of the scheme will be available shortly.

## MPT Buyback

Legislation that would have seen the buyback of 56 Multi-Purpose Taxi (MPT) plates has not passed through parliament. Non-government members of the Legislative Council blocked passage of the legislation, sending it off to the Standing Committee on Legislation over the Summer.

The purpose of the buyback scheme is to drive down costs of operators and improve service to customers.

Under the buyback arrangement, each of the 56 MPT (transferable) plate owners would have been offered at least \$108 000 to give up ownership of their plate. This scheme is expected to cost around \$6.2 million.

The majority of MPT operators supported the legislation. They had lobbied the Government to introduce the buyback scheme which is only one part of the Government's commitment to improving MPT services.

The opposition parties' refusal to join the Government in supporting the MPT buyback means that the buyback cannot go ahead before the New Year.

## Ongoing Multi-Purpose Taxi (MPT) Cadetship Scheme

There have been many enquiries about MPT cadetships since the close of applications for the first trial scheme.

A second MPT Cadetship Scheme is therefore scheduled to run until 30 June 2006. This will be an open program with up to 10 cadetships available for suitable applicants. The scheme will be launched in January 2006.

The cadetships will fund each cadet's entry costs, including taxi driver training, with the MPT driver training costs paid for by the two appointed MPT Co-ordinators.

If you are a Perth taxi driver who is interested in assisting the elderly and people with disabilities, and wish to apply for a cadetship, please contact Natalia Kostecki on 9216 8060.

## New Multi-Purpose Taxi (MPT) Co-ordination appointments

The Director General has appointed Swan Taxi Cooperative and Black & White Taxis as MPT Co-ordinators. The appointments takes effect from 1 October 2005 and will be for an initial period of 2 years with an option to extend to a maximum of 5 years.

The appointment of two MPT Co-ordinators is intended to provide choice for MPT customers and MPT operators.

From 1 October 2005 MPT operators have the choice of affiliating their taxi with either of the MPT Co-ordinators. Also, in a first since the introduction of MPT coordination, MPT customers will have choice of taxi company when ordering a MPT.

Both MPT Co-ordinators will have to maintain a fleet of at least 30 MPT taxis under the terms of their appointment.

MPT taxis are required to give priority to the transport of customers travelling in their wheelchair or scooter.

Customers can order a MPT by telephoning:

Black & White Taxis – Maxi Taxi: 136 294

Swan Taxis – Easy Access Perth: 9422 2240

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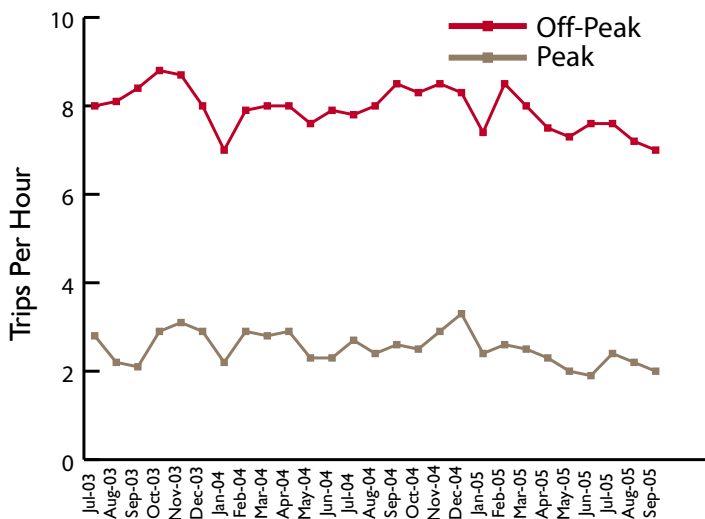
## MPT Industry Activity - July to September 2005

Every Quarter, the Government receives data from the Taxi Dispatch Services (TDSs) that provide valuable information about taxi demand through TDSs and service levels. Taxi demand is very seasonal so it is best to compare the data with the same period in previous years.

### Wheelchair trip demand

MPT wheelchair work through the TDS decreased overall this quarter. Off-Peak is the time of highest demand for wheelchair customers.

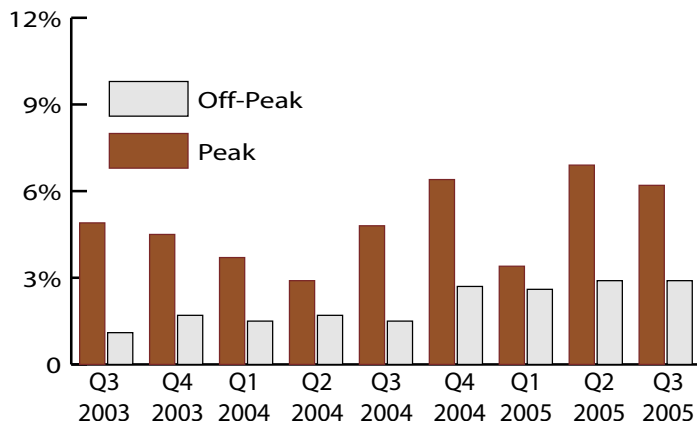
**Wheelchair Demand: Jobs Per Hour**



### MPT Jobs Not Covered

A Job Not Covered is when the taxi does not turn up. The level of jobs not covered in the Off-Peak jobs (time of greatest demand) is showing a trend of increasing although is still lower than the conventional taxi jobs not covered.

**% Customers Not Picked Up**



## Diesel excise rebate for MPTs?

The Minister, the Hon, Alannah McTiernan, has written to the Federal Treasurer explaining the effect of diesel prices on MPTs and have requested him to amend the eligibility criteria for the fuel grant under the Energy Grants Credits Scheme (EGCS).

The EGCS's purpose is to cut the costs of businesses. Qualifying businesses may obtain a rebate of about 18.5 cents per litre on diesel purchased by them and used for an eligible activity. MPTs do not currently qualify mainly due to an exclusion from the scheme of all vehicles under 4.5 tonnes.

The plight of MPT operators was explained to Mr Costello, as was the importance of the contribution of MPTs to the quality of life of Western Australians with mobility disabilities.

The Treasurer has been requested to amend the scheme so that the transport of people with mobility disabilities in a MPT would attract a diesel rebate.

## Taxi Users Subsidy Scheme (TUSS) Info

For TUSS vouchers currently in use:

- **YELLOW** voucher – entitles member to a 50% subsidy only.
- **PURPLE** voucher – entitles member to a 50% or 75% subsidy. Members receive 50% subsidy unless travelling in a Multi Purpose Taxi in their wheelchair or with their scooter, in which case they receive a 75% subsidy.
- **GREEN** voucher – entitles member to a 50% or 75% subsidy. Members receive 50% subsidy if travelling without their wheelchair or scooter, and 75% subsidy if travelling with their wheelchair or scooter whether it is in a conventional taxi or a Multi Purpose taxi.

A current membership card and book of vouchers must be handed to the driver at the start of each trip. If there are no vouchers or the membership card is not current then the passenger pays full fare.

The name on the member's card must be the same as the name on the book of vouchers (mailing label).

By making a trip and accepting a voucher sometime later the driver is contravening the Conditions of Use and is liable for prosecution.

### Carrying family members

Drivers are reminded that they are prohibited from knowingly transporting immediate family members and accepting a TUSS voucher as part payment of the taxi fares.

Immediate family includes husbands or wives (including de facto partners), parents, grand parents, sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, nieces and nephews.