

Drivers worry taxi stand set to stay

An ongoing dispute about the location of the taxi stand at Matiatia is escalating. Taxi drivers and tour operators say they're losing money daily, but local board and Auckland Transport representatives say the summer traffic trial is going well.

The trial began on 8 December and will run until 13 April at which time it will be assessed.

"As far as the trial is concerned it's early days, but it seems to be going well at this stage," an Auckland Transport spokesperson told *Gulf News* on Monday after sharing three pictures of people lining up in the new taxi stand located in the 30-minute parking area.

"There is a significant number of people queuing. The aims of the trial were for things to be safer and more orderly - so this seems to have been fulfilled."

Local drivers, however, say that they are no longer visible to people departing the ferry terminal after the taxi rank was moved to the 30-minute car park zone. They also say it favours the Fullers Explorer buses and is causing safety issues in the public parking area.

"We are having to explain ourselves to locals who think we are taking their parks in the 30-minute zone. It's unsafe," Sasha Krueger of Easy Transport told *Gulf News*.

"Doubledecker tour guides are touting for business on the wharf and approaching people when they come off the ferry. Now people walk out of the terminal and they see just the doubledeckers and the regular buses. We can't compete. This is going to mean that some of the local operators go under."

Some drivers say they are laying complaints with the Commerce Commission and a spokesperson told *Gulf News* one complaint had been received so far, although it has not yet been reviewed.

"The Commission assesses all complaints we receive against our enforcement criteria. The length of time this takes depends on several factors, including how many other complaints we have received at the time," a representative said.

"Now people walk out of the terminal and they see just the doubledeckers and the regular buses. We can't compete."
- Sasha Krueger, Easy Transport

"Once the complaint has been assessed, a decision will be made on whether to investigate further or not. We receive thousands of complaints each year and are not able to investigate all of them."

Waiheke Local Board deputy chairperson Bob Upchurch said he visited the taxi stand between 9.45am and 10.45am on Saturday 11 January to see how things were going and said the taxi drivers there "didn't appear to be locals".

"Basically, there isn't much we can do at this stage. The reason the taxis were taken out of the keyhole area was due to health and safety issues."

Mr Upchurch says he understands the location-based concerns some drivers have but says people seem to be finding them "pretty well".

"I think having them where the current

drop-off is was probably a better situation for the drivers, but there was a petition, and over 1000 respondents said visitors were being prioritised over locals, so the change was made as a result of that upheaval at the end of last year."

The deputy chair says he will work to ensure a traffic plan for Matiatia is decided on at a much earlier date next summer.

"There will be a full review when this finishes in April. I will be pushing to finalise something much sooner next time. We need to have public consultation for the 2020-2021 trial."

In response to drivers saying Auckland Transport has favoured Fullers360 by allowing doubledeckers in the keyhole along with regular public buses, Mr Upchurch said Fullers360 was never part of the decision-making process.


"It was the board and AT - all large buses are allowed in the keyhole area. There was no collusion with Fullers, but I can understand there is some bitterness there."

Many operators like Sasha Krueger of Easy Transport say they are concerned that since Auckland Transport and the local board spent more than \$50,000 to implement the trial, the makeshift taxi stand will remain as a permanent fixture.

"We will look at ways to tweak it and make it better," says deputy chairperson Bob Upchurch. "But there won't be any major changes this summer."

Taxi drivers and tour operators plan to address the local board on the issue at the first meeting of the year on 29 January.

• *Sophie Boladeras*




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Week 2: 6-12 January 2020

RAINFALL mm		MAX TEMP °C		MIN TEMP °C	
Island	City	Island	City	Island	City
M	0.0	M	21.4	M	13.5
T	0.0	T	20.5	T	12.5
W	0.0	W	22.5	W	13.1
T	0.0	T	22.1	T	14.9
F	0.0	F	23.1	F	13.0
S	0.0	S	24.0	S	14.4
S	0.0	S	27.3	S	15.3

RAINFALL TOTALS		MAX AVERAGE °C		MIN AVERAGE °C	
Week	0.0	Week	23.0	Week	13.8
2018	0.0	Month	23.0	Month	14.5
By Ave.	6.4	Historic	24.2	Historic	16.1

RAINFALL: LAST 12 WEEKS vs PREVIOUS 2 YEARS

2017/18 2018/19 2019/20

43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 1 2

Data by WeatherWise Auckland. 029 4029 0100.