2. The ECMT-IRU Taxi Vehicle Design Recommendations

When considering the design recommendations made in this paper, it should be borne in mind that these represent a template for the future. It is not intended – nor indeed would it be realistic – to expect the design changes to be made immediately or in the near future. Rather they should be regarded as a guide for the medium- and longer-term development of taxis that can be safely and comfortably used by the majority of disabled people. It is recognized that it is impossible to provide for 100% of wheelchair users without reducing the operational viability of the vehicle for the operator and other passengers. There will be a small proportion of people who, because of the size of their wheelchair or the nature of their disability are unable to access taxis or indeed other forms of mainstream public transport. They will continue to need specialist door- to-door services.

The ECMT-IRU recommendations for taxi vehicle accessibility are based on two design levels:

Type One: Wheelchair Accessible Taxis: accessible vehicles capable of carrying the majority, but not all, passengers who travel in their wheelchair as well as people with other disabilities.

Type Two: Standard Accessible Taxis: vehicles with features designed to make use by disabled people easier, but which would only be able to carry a wheelchair user who can transfer to a taxi seat.

It is recommended that fleets of taxis used for regular services should be composed of **a combination of these two types of vehicle**. The proportion of each type within the taxi park is likely to vary from place to place, both within and between countries. This is a matter for decision by national and local governments.
The recommendations include specific design guidance for the key features of these taxis. For the wheelchair accessible vehicles these include the height and width of passenger doors, headroom inside the taxi, the space allocated for the wheelchair user and the acceptable ramp gradients for wheelchair access.

The guidance is expressed as a recommended dimension and a minimum acceptable measurement, thus providing a range rather than a single figure. In addition, performance criteria, which describe how each feature should work in practice, have been included in the recommendations. This has been done to ensure that current manufacturers of accessible taxis would not be excluded from the taxi market. However, it is hoped (and expected) that over time, the design of vehicles will move towards achieving the recommended standards.

The recommendations also include guidance on other features that can help to make the use of taxis easier for disabled people. These include seat design, provision of grab handles, colour contrast, interior lighting, induction loops and taxi meters that are clearly visible and which give the fare audibly. These recommendations apply to both Type One and Type Two taxis.

If the two design levels are applied progressively to mainstream taxi fleets the travel opportunities for disabled people will be greatly improved. They will also make the use of taxis easier for many other people.