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By Fax & Post 2121 0420
17 May 2001

Mr Andy Lau
Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council Secretariat
3/F, Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Mr Lau,

Driver Improvement Scheme

At the meeting held on 23 February 2001, the LegCo Panel on Transport discussed the “Driver Improvement Scheme” (DIS) and a Member asked for supplementary information on the effectiveness of overseas driver improvement schemes. This letter reports on our findings.

In many overseas countries which have been implementing DIS, the scheme usually forms part of their overall national/provincial road safety programme. Surveys therefore generally focus on the effectiveness of the overall package rather than on individual elements.

A number of studies were nonetheless carried out overseas to evaluate the effectiveness of DIS. The general conclusion is that DIS courses effectively raise participants’ awareness of the seriousness of common traffic violations such as tailgating, dangerous overtaking and speeding. Attitudinal changes resulted in significant reductions in both the severity and frequency of traffic accidents. In a recent study commissioned in 1996 in the United Kingdom to evaluate the effectiveness of its National Driver Improvement Scheme (NDIS), for example, the study followed a total of over 1,800 drivers who participated in the DIS over the course of a year. Their driving behaviour before, immediately after, and three months after attending the NDIS was carefully evaluated through detailed questionnaires. The study concluded that –

- (a) the frequency of commission of lapses, errors and violations of traffic offences was significantly reduced after attending the DIS course;
- (b) there was an improvement in general driving attitude, and in particular, the seriousness of speeding offences as perceived by the participant showed a marked change after attending the DIS course; and
- (c) there was a need for retraining of long-time drivers, particularly those in the older age group, and the DIS course serves the purpose.

In Canada, a number of studies were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the DIS or similar schemes operating in the country. These studies revealed that there was a dramatic reduction in the number of preventable collisions, and drivers who had completed DIS were considerably less likely to violate traffic laws than those who did not participate in the scheme. In addition, DIS was also widely used by commercial entities in Canada as driving training for their staff. The results were generally encouraging. One company found that the severity and frequency of accidents encountered by its vehicle fleet reduced by 50% since it started sending staff to attend DIS courses. Another company found that drivers who had attended DIS courses were 70% less likely to get involved in chargeable traffic accidents than their colleagues who had not attended the course.

The Administration will continue to closely monitor the experience in implementing DIS in other countries which would provide useful references for the implementation of DIS in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

(Benjamin Mok)
for Secretary for Transport