

For discussion on
22 July 2005

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Review on the Composition, Role and Functions
of the Transport Advisory Committee

Introduction

This paper reviews the composition, role and functions of the Transport Advisory Committee (TAC).

Background

2. TAC was established in December 1965. Over the past forty years, it has been the key advisory body to the Administration on transport matters. Its terms of reference are at the **Annex**.

Role and Functions

3. TAC's primary role is to advise the Administration on broad issues of transport policy and major transport-related proposals with a view to improving the movement of people and freight in Hong Kong. It has neither statutory authorities nor executive functions. However, it has since 1980 set up a Transport Complaints Unit to receive complaints and suggestions on traffic- and transport-related matters, and refer these cases to the relevant departments or transport operators for follow-up actions.

4. A great variety of issues are discussed at TAC. Examples of the issues discussed in the past two years include:

- (a) *Transport Planning and Major Infrastructure Projects* such as the Northwest New Territories Traffic and Infrastructure

Review, Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macao Bridge, Kowloon Southern Link, Reconstruction and Improvement of Tuen Mun Road, Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy, as well as the West Island Line, Route 4 and South Island Line;

- (b) *Public Transport Services and Facilities* such as the Review of Regulation of Non-Franchised Bus Operation, Transport Arrangements at Lok Ma Chau, Reorganisation of Light Rail Transit Services and Public Transport Network upon the Commissioning of West Rail, Promoting the Conversion of Red Minibuses to Green Minibus Operation, Measures to Curb Taxi Touting Activities and Permitted Operating Areas of New Territories Taxis;
- (c) *Toll and Fare Adjustment Applications* such as the New Hong Kong Tunnel Company Limited’s Application for Toll Increase, New Territories Taxi Fare Concession Application, Return Toll Charge for Taxi Passengers Using Harbour Crossings and Ma On Shan Rail Fares;
- (d) *Traffic Management and Road Safety Issues* such as Enhancement of Highway Safety, Measures to Enhance Road Safety, Speed Limit Review, New Autotoll Signage and Road Marking Arrangements and Probationary Driving Licence Scheme for Private Cars and Light Goods Vehicles; and
- (e) *Complaints and Suggestions on Transport Matters* such as the quarterly reports of its Transport Complaints Unit.

5. There are three sub-committees under TAC. They are:

- (a) Public Transport Services Sub-Committee, which covers matters related to public transport services;

- (b) Road Safety and Traffic Management Sub-Committee, which handles issues related to traffic management and road safety; and
- (c) Transport Complaint Unit Sub-Committee, which monitors the work of the Transport Complaints Unit.

6. Apart from the Sub-committees, TAC also forms ad hoc working groups for giving advice on specific areas. Examples include the Working Group on Selection Criteria and Marking Scheme for Green Minibus Operators Selection Exercises, and the TAC Working Group on Review of Regulation of Non-Franchised Bus Operations.

7. We consider that TAC has been effective in discharging its role as an advisory body. The Committee offers sound advice to the Administration on different areas of work in the transport field.

Composition

8. Currently, TAC comprises a non-official Chairman, 14 non-official members and 3 ex-officios (the Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works or her representative, the Commissioner for Transport and the Commissioner of Police or his representative). All non-official members are not remunerated.

9. The 15 non-official members of TAC, including the Chairman, are all appointed ad personam, with different backgrounds and areas of expertise. They comprise two lawyers, five educators/academics, two businessmen, an accountant, an economist, a town planner, a social worker, a human resources professional and an information technology professional.

10. Members are normally appointed on a two-year term. We would regularly review the membership of TAC vis-à-vis its work and

changing community aspirations, and appoint additional members as and when necessary for the purpose of widening its spectrum of expertise.

11. We consider that on the whole, the current composition of TAC is a balanced one, and its members are able to offer advice on traffic and transport matters from different perspectives, and in a candid, impartial and objective manner.

Area For Improvement – Communication with Transport Trades

12. There are suggestions that TAC should draft in members of the transport trades such that their views can reach TAC direct and their concerns are taken into account before TAC tenders advice to the Administration.

13. Currently, the Transport Department (TD) maintains close liaison with the transport trades through regular conferences with the trade associations and labour unions. TD has quarterly conferences with non-franchised bus operators, goods vehicle associations and the trucking industry. TD also has regular conferences with the taxi and public light bus associations and unions three times a year. All issues related to the operations of the trades would be discussed thoroughly in these conferences. Following the aforesaid conferences, TD would reflect the trades' views and comments to TAC before the latter formulates its advice on specific issues.

14. Apart from TD's regular conferences with the transport trades, TAC also meets with the transport trades direct when such is considered necessary. A recent example is the review of the regulation of non-franchised bus operations in 2004. The TAC Working Group met with various transport trades on several occasions to listen to their views before it made its recommendations.

15. In considering the suggestions in paragraph 12 above, the following have to be taken into account: -

- (a) There are currently over 100 associations or unions for different transport trades e.g. franchised buses, non-franchised buses, taxis, public light buses, goods vehicles, etc. They are of different sizes and scales, and their major areas of concern and interests vary significantly. It is understandable that on some issues, different associations may have different or contradicting views because of their diverging, or even conflicting, interests.
- (b) At present, all non-official TAC members do not represent the interest of any particular sector or organisation. This is the key element in upholding the independent and impartial role that TAC has been playing. In considering how to develop closer liaison between TAC and the transport trades, we will need to strike a fine balance among the interests of transport trades, the travelling public and the community at large.

16. Taking into account the above considerations, we are of the view that there may be scope to enhance the communication between TAC and the transport trades by co-opting into the Road Safety & Traffic Management Sub-Committee two representatives of the transport trades, given that road safety is a common concern of all the trades. We will examine this idea in detail to see how the various transport trades could nominate representatives for this purpose.

Advice Sought

17. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
July 2005

Terms of Reference of TAC

To advise the Chief Executive-in-Council on transport matters in accordance with the following principles -

1. The TAC's function is to advise the Chief Executive-in-Council on broad issues of transport policy with a view to improving the movement of both people and freight.
2. On any matter within its terms of reference, the TAC is free to communicate with members of the public and with any organisation.
3. The TAC may consider financial matters where they directly relate to transport, but the responsibility for proposing public expenditure and taxation lies solely with the Administration.
4. Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works will provide a secretariat for the TAC and will be responsible for administration in connection with it.
5. The TAC will be free to form sub-committees, to participate in joint-committees with other bodies, and to co-opt members for specific purposes. It may organise its work in whatever manner it considers most suitable.
6. The Chief Secretary for Administration may, after consultation with the TAC and the Chief Executive-in-Council, amend the terms of reference from time to time.