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香港特別行政區政府
政務司司長辦公室



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CHIEF SECRETARY
FOR ADMINISTRATION'S OFFICE
Government of the Hong Kong
Special Administrative Region
of the People's Republic of China

(Translation)

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29 May 2008

The Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Chairman of the Subcommittee to
Study the Transport Needs of and
Provision of Concessionary Public
Transport Fares for Persons with
Disabilities
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Mr Lee,

**Introduction of New Modes of Accessible Public Transport Service
For Persons with Disabilities**

Thank you for your letter of 15 May, expressing the views of the Subcommittee on the introduction of new modes of accessible public transport service for persons with disabilities (PwDs).

It has always been the Government's policy to promote the provision of barrier-free transport services for PwDs. On the one hand, the Government has been improving traffic facilities and public transport infrastructures, including the enhancement of public transport interchanges, footbridges, and pedestrian links for PwDs. Over the

years, the Government has spent over \$2.6 billion to carry out such enhancement projects.

On the other hand, the Government encourages public transport operators to improve their transport facilities for the convenience of PwDs. For example, all franchised bus companies¹ have already undertaken that all the new buses to be purchased would be wheelchair accessible. Regarding railway service, all the MTR stations are now equipped with facilities for PwDs.

As for taxi services, the Government has all along been supporting the introduction of wheelchair accessible taxis (WATs). To this end, the Transport Department (TD) has been proactively liaising with both the taxi trade and vehicle suppliers so as to facilitate the trade to identify suitable vehicle types and to help suppliers to understand the required standards in developing LPG-driven WATs for Hong Kong. We note that there has been progress in this respect, including that some vehicle suppliers have expressed interest in developing LPG-driven taxis to operate in Hong Kong. Moreover, in order to expedite the process of approval for WAT models, TD, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and Environmental Protection Department (EPD) would meet with vehicle suppliers through inter-departmental meetings, thereby assisting suppliers to understand clearly the approval procedures.

On the Subcommittee's suggestion for relaxing the restriction on fuel type for taxis stipulated under the Air Pollution Control (Vehicle Design Standards) (Emission) Regulations (Cap. 311J) for WATs, the Transport and Housing Bureau has already been liaising with the Environment Bureau/EPD to look into the feasibility of such relaxation to facilitate the introduction of WATs. The Government would engage the taxi trade and PwD groups once progress has been made.

¹ New Lantau Bus Company ("NLB") is not included in view of the constraints of the terrain. Nevertheless, NLB has planned to purchase wheelchair accessible buses for deployment on routes where the terrain permits so as to cater for the transport needs of PwDs as far as possible.

We would also like to point out that the exact model, timing and quantity of WATs to be introduced are business decisions of the taxi trade and vehicle suppliers. The Government would offer assistance in various ways with a view to facilitating the trade and vehicle suppliers in the introduction of WATs and address the problems encountered, so as to cater for the transport needs of PwDs.

In respect of the introduction of accessible hire cars, we note that the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation (“HKSR”), after taking into account the views from the Subcommittee, the taxi trade and PwD groups, has decided to set the fare level to be around 20% above the taxi fares to balance taxi trade’s concern and PwDs’ affordability. TD will issue 20 hire car permits to HKSR and will state in the permit conditions that the accessible hire car service must be booked in advance and only wheelchair-bound passengers and their companions can use the service. TD will critically assess the need for these accessible hire cars when renewing their permits, taking into account, among others, the availability of similar services in the market, including the development of introducing WATs to Hong Kong. TD will continue to liaise with PwD groups to identify areas for further enhancement in transport services to facilitate the use of these services by PwDs.

Yours sincerely,

(Henry Tang)
Chief Secretary for Administration

c.c. STH