

**For discussion  
24 July 2007**

**Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs  
and Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for  
Persons with Disabilities**

**Introduction of Wheelchair-Accessible Taxis and  
Taxi Voucher Scheme in Hong Kong**

**Purpose**

This paper outlines the Administration's measures on the introduction of wheelchair-accessible taxis and the taxi voucher scheme for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

**Introduction of Wheelchair-Accessible Taxis**

2. The objective of the rehabilitation policy in respect of transport services is to develop a public transport system with appropriate facilities to meet the needs of PWDs so as to enhance their ability to move around and facilitate their full participation and integration into the community. Apart from ordinary public transport services, PWDs may use point-to-point rebus service provided by the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation under Government subvention. The Transport Department (TD) also encourages the taxi trade to explore the feasibility of introducing wheelchair-accessible taxis for PWDs in Hong Kong.

3. All taxis have to comply with vehicle safety, construction and maintenance requirements under the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) and its subsidiary legislation as well as the fuel supply safety standards stipulated in the Gas Safety Ordinance (Cap. 51) and its subsidiary legislation. To control the exhaust emissions of taxis, regulation 10(3) of the Air Pollution Control (Vehicle Design Standard) (Emission) Regulations (Cap. 311J) requires taxis to use either liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) or petrol as fuel. Operation of diesel-driven taxis in Hong Kong is prohibited under Cap. 311J.

4. It is noted that the existing multi-purpose taxis (MPTs) in the world market are mostly petrol-driven or diesel-driven. To facilitate the sourcing of suitable vehicle models by the taxi trade, TD and the Electrical and Mechanical

Services Department (EMSD) conducted briefing sessions for major vehicle suppliers in April and August 2006. The purpose was to explain the standards and specifications in relation to the safety requirements and fuel supply systems for taxis, such that the vehicle suppliers could consider introducing suitable vehicles in Hong Kong.

5. Some of the vehicle suppliers and taxi trade members are concerned about the investment risk and possibly higher capital cost, operating and maintenance cost arising from the development of new LPG-driven MPTs or the conversion of existing MPTs using diesel or petrol to LPG-driven vehicles for use in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, several vehicle suppliers have indicated interest to further explore the feasibility and viability of introducing LPG-driven MPTs in Hong Kong. TD, EMSD and the Environmental Protection Department will continue to work proactively with vehicle suppliers in this regard.

6. While petrol-driven taxis are readily available in the market, they are not an attractive option to the taxi trade due to the substantially higher fuel costs when compared with LPG-driven taxis. However, a taxi operator recently licensed a petrol-electric hybrid MPT targeting to provide pre-booked service for PWDs for trial. TD will continue to facilitate the introduction of hybrid MPTs and other types of vehicles suitable for use as wheelchair-accessible taxi for PWDs in Hong Kong.

### **Taxi Voucher Scheme for PWDs**

7. As endorsed by the then Rehabilitation Development Co-ordinating Committee, a pilot Taxi Voucher Scheme was launched in April 1987 to subsidise wheelchair-bound taxi passengers for promotion of their integration into society. The one-year trial scheme was sponsored by the Hong Kong Jockey Club. According to the review conducted on completion of the trial period, the scheme was not well-received by PWDs and the taxi trade. The PWDs found the application procedures for such scheme too cumbersome. The taxi drivers did not welcome the scheme particularly because some of them considered it not convenient to encash the vouchers at a limited number of designated venues. The then Rehabilitation Development Co-ordinating Committee decided to shelve the scheme after thorough consideration.

8. The Government remains committed to taking care of the basic transport needs of PWDs. Financial assistance is being provided under the

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance scheme and Disability Allowance payments. We will continue to take appropriate measures to cater for the basic transport needs of PWDs, including enhancing the rehasub service, improving public transport facilities for PWDs and considering the provision of concessionary public transport fare under the welfare programme. In view of other measures already in place, the relative priorities of such scheme against other rehabilitation services and limited welfare resources, the Labour and Welfare Bureau will not, for the time being, re-consider the introduction of the Taxi Voucher Scheme.

9. Members are requested to note this paper.

**Transport and Housing Bureau**  
**Labour and Welfare Bureau**  
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