

(Translation)

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Transport (the Panel) held on 23 June 2006, the Administration was requested to facilitate New Territories (NT) taxis' access to Choi Hung MTR Station at Ping Shek for operation through consulting the urban taxi trade on the proposal of the Sai Kung Taxi Operators Association. The Transport Department (TD) has followed up the relevant request. Details of the follow-up actions taken are as follows.

In fact, TD has completed a comprehensive review on the permitted operating areas for NT taxis in 2004 and has consulted the urban, NT and Lantau taxi trades on NT taxis' access to Hang Hau MTR Station, Hong Kong Disneyland and the departure area of the new air passenger terminal at the SkyPlaza of the Airport. During the consultation, TD already explained to the NT taxi trade the reasons for extending the permitted operating areas to cover Hang Hau MTR Station instead of Choi Hung MTR Station at Ping Shek. Revisions to the above operating areas took effect in 2005 and 2006 respectively to tie in with the commissioning of the relevant facilities.

In response to the request for permitting NT taxis operation at Choi Hung MTR Station at Ping Shek, TD further discussed with the urban taxi trade at the Urban Taxi Conference on 29 September 2006. The urban taxi trade unanimously expressed strong objection against the proposal and opined that urban taxi services were adequate to serve passengers travelling between Sai Kung and Ping Shek. They considered extension of the operating areas for NT taxis to cover Ping Shek unjustifiable because NT taxis were allowed to carry passengers from Sai Kung to Hang Hau MTR Station for interchange to urban areas.

TD also briefed the NT taxi trade, including representatives from the Sai Kung Taxi Operators Association, on the related issues at the NT Taxi Conference held on 3 October 2006. The NT taxi trade was reminded that NT taxis were already permitted to access Hang Hau MTR Station, the nearest MTR Station to Sai Kung, for operation since 2005 after the Tseung Kwan O Line was commissioned to facilitate passengers from Sai Kung to interchange with the MTR services.

We appreciate the concern of the NT taxi trade over their operating areas and will bring this matter under internal review from time to time in the light of the views expressed by the trades during the regular Taxi Conferences held with the TD or through other channels. We will also take into account public opinions, changes and developments in the NT areas such as opening of new roads and railway lines, major changes in land use, changes in the demand and supply for public transport services, and other factors including the function of NT taxis, prevailing conditions of public transport services and the level of taxi services for remote NT areas. Adjustments to operating areas will be proposed as and when appropriate to meet practical needs.

To improve the business environment of the taxi trades, the Government will allow both urban and NT taxis to operate at the public transport interchanges at the two new control points (Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line and Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor) to be commissioned shortly. Such arrangement will cater for the public traffic demands arising from different districts to the new control points and help enhance business opportunities for the taxi trades.