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East Wing, Central Government Offices,  
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23 December 2013

Secretary General  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn: Ms Sophie LAU)  
(Fax: 2978 7569)

Dear Ms LAU,

### **Operating Situation of the Taxi Trade**

Thank you for your letter of 20 November, enclosing with it the letter from Hon WONG Kwok-hing, Hon TANG Ka-piu and Hon KWOK Wai-keung to the Chairman of the Panel on Transport of the Legislative Council (“LegCo”). Further to our interim reply of 28 November, please find below a substantive reply.

Under the current public transport policy, railway is the backbone of the public transport system complemented by other public transport modes. With a daily patronage of about one million, taxis play a key role in the public transport network by providing personalised, point-to-point and more comfortable public transport services to the public. The Government has all along been taking various measures to help the taxi trade to improve their operating environment and facilitate the healthy development of the industry.

Our response to comments raised in the letter of the members is as follows -

#### **(a) Taxi fare increase and drivers’ income**

The taxi trade made an application to increase fare earlier this year on the account that their real income was lower than that after the last fare increase in 2011. The drop was a result of an increase in operating costs (such

as fuel expenses, vehicle maintenance and repair expenses, and insurance premium) and other factors like inflation. In considering the fare increase application, the Government had, in accordance with the established practice, taken into account relevant factors including changes in income and operating costs of taxi operators, public acceptability, fare differential between taxis and other modes of public transport, etc.. This arrangement can cater for and balance the needs of different stakeholders and the actual operating situation. LegCo has earlier completed the scrutiny of the subsidiary legislation to give effect to the new fares. We believe that the new fares, which took effect on 8 December, will help ease the pressure of increasing operating costs on taxi operators, in particular the frontline drivers.

**(b) Operating Situation of the taxi trade**

The Government has all along been taking various measures to help improve the operating environment of the taxi trade, including setting up taxi stands and designating pick-up/drop-off points at suitable locations. Currently, there are about 480 taxi stands and 280 taxi pick-up/drop-off points. Meanwhile, we would extend the operating area of taxis where circumstances permit. For instance, the operating area has been extended to public transport interchanges at Lok Ma Chau Control Point, Lok Ma Chau Spur Line and Shenzhen Bay Port over the past few years.

We understand that the trade had asked that the relaxation of peak-hour and 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. no-stopping restricted zones should continue to be implemented. According to the established practice and in consultation with relevant departments, the Transport Department (“TD”) has completed a new round of review on the relaxation. As the arrangement has not caused traffic obstruction on the whole and can facilitate the trade to provide point-to-point service to passengers, TD has decided to extend the relaxation for another 12 months (from 1 February 2014 to 31 January 2015). TD will liaise with the trade on the detailed arrangements. As to any further relaxation that the trade may propose, we would have to study each location on a case by case basis taking into account the actual road and traffic situation. The department would take a pragmatic attitude when considering any specific suggestions.

There are currently 12 dedicated liquefied petroleum gas (“LPG”) stations and 50 non-dedicated LPG stations in Hong Kong. They together provide a total of over 400 LPG nozzles and should be able to meet the refilling demand of all taxis and public light buses (“PLBs”). Notwithstanding, the Government is trying to identify additional sites for

LPG-cum-petrol stations so as to expand the network of non-dedicated LPG stations. Prima facie, the Environmental Protection Department (“EPD”) considers that there is a suitable site in Tin Wan, Southern District for such a purpose. The site is currently used as a temporary works area for the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme. Subject to the completion of the works in 2014/15, EPD will consult the district council for its support to set up a non-dedicated LPG station thereat. Meanwhile, we will continue to encourage the taxi and PLB trades to refill at LPG stations at different time intervals to alleviate the queuing situation at individual stations during peak hours.

**(c) Combating discounted fare**

Since the implementation of the taxi fare structure that increases short-haul fares and lowers long-haul fares from late 2008, the situation whereby a taxi driver would offer fare discounts on his/her own initiative has become less prevalent. However, the Police will continue to closely monitor the situation and take vigorous enforcement action to combat illegal activities, including stepping up its patrolling effort and through undercover operations. Meanwhile, TD will continue to maintain communication with the trade and remind them to abide by the law. Also, TD will remind passengers through various channels that they should pay taxi fares according to the meter as legally required.

**(d) Other matters**

There are about 18,000 taxis in Hong Kong and the number of valid taxi driving licence holders comes to about 216,000. The supply of manpower should thus be sufficient to meet the demand for taxi drivers. Nevertheless, in order to assist those who are interested in joining the taxi trade, the Employees Retraining Board has a placement-tied course which offers a Quality Taxi Driver (Taxi Written Test) Certificate to help participants acquire the relevant knowledge and operating skills of the taxi industry. Arrangements would also be made for the participants to attend TD’s taxi written test. Besides, TD and the Correctional Services Department are arranging to have taxi written tests conducted at the latter’s facilities to facilitate those rehabilitated offenders interested in working as taxi drivers.

As regards taxi driving safety, TD has all along been reminding taxi drivers to drive safely through various channels. The number of traffic accidents involving taxis per million vehicle-kilometre has dropped from 1.98

cases in 2003 to 1.81 cases in 2012. This is broadly in line with the average for motor vehicles as a whole. Separately, the insurance on a taxi is taken out by its owner. Other charges/deposits are discussed and agreed between the owner and driver as part of their hiring arrangement. If a rentee-driver is involved in an accident, he/she, as a self-employed person, would be covered by the protection of the third party insurance depending on the circumstances and may apply for assistance under the Traffic Accident Victims Assistance Scheme of the Social Welfare Department. TD will continue to collaborate with the taxi trade to promulgate the safe operation of taxis.

Taxis play a key role in our public transport system. The Government will closely monitor the operating situation of the trade. If there is any situation which hinders the healthy development of the industry, the Government will respond with appropriate measures.

Yours sincerely,

(Carrie CHANG)  
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

*c.c.* Commissioner for Transport (Attn: Mr Albert SU)

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香港中區  
立法會道1號  
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立法會秘書處秘書長  
(經辦人：劉素儀女士)  
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劉女士：

### 的士業界的經營情況

感謝貴處十一月二十日的來信，夾附黃國興、鄧家彪及郭偉強三位議員在十一月十八日致立法會交通事務委員會主席的信件。我們正跟進信中提及關於的士業界經營情況的意見，會盡快作具體回覆。

運輸及房屋局局長

(陳銘焜



代行)

二零一三年十一月二十八日

副本送：

運輸署署長 (經辦人：蘇祐安先生)