

香港特別行政區政府
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

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運輸及房屋局
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Legislative Council Complex,
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong
Ms Macy Ng

Dear Macy,

Panel on Transport –Installation of Traffic Detectors

Supplementary Information

As requested by the Panel, we provide the following further information on the actions taken in respect of the discussions with private companies and the discussion outcome for jointly setting up a system to collect real-time traffic data.

The Government endeavours to provide a safe, efficient, reliable and environmentally friendly transport system which meets the economic, social and recreational needs of the community. One of our policy initiatives is to make good use of technology to enhance transport efficiency.

Apart from the installation of traffic detectors, the Transport Department (“TD”) has been exploring feasible ways to collect real-time traffic data through co-operation with the private sector. TD has explored the opportunity to collaborate with mobile network service providers who collect data on positions of mobile phones using their mobile network. Five mobile network service providers in Hong Kong were approached in 2011 on whether they were willing to collaborate with the TD to utilise their mobile phone positioning data to calculate real-time traffic speed. None of these service providers expressed their willingness to collaborate.

In 2012, TD approached a large international internet service company which collects real-time traffic speed data through gathering the position of smartphones with its application software installed to explore the feasibility of opening up their traffic speed data for use by TD in various applications (such as estimation of journey time and identification of traffic incidents, etc). During the discussion, the company advised that it could only offer map service showing the real-time traffic information in graphical form, but would not provide the raw traffic speed data to TD for analysis or other uses.

While TD will continue to explore and work with the private sector for collecting and disseminating real-time traffic information, we would like to point out that information on real-time traffic information collected from traffic detectors installed on strategic routes is more accurate and reliable than that collected from other means, such as using mobile phone positioning data or probe vehicles. The accuracy and reliability of mobile phone positioning data depend on whether there are sufficient vehicle occupants carrying the mobile phones to supply the positioning data. Whilst large internet service companies could have their applications pre-installed on mobile phones to enable collection of sufficient amount of positioning data, there might be privacy concern if the Government collects the data through the same way. Unless the public's acceptance is secured, this means of collecting real-time traffic information has to be assessed with caution. On the other hand, the use of probe vehicles will incur costs to drivers to install and maintain additional devices on vehicles to collect the positioning data. Due to privacy concern, it is only feasible to use public vehicles as probe vehicles, thus limiting the number and types of vehicles for such usage, hence limiting the amount of data available.

In addition, data collected from mobile phones or probe vehicles are not adequate nor reliable to provide traffic speed and traffic volume information for satisfactory detection of traffic incidents. Therefore, it is common that transport authorities in overseas cities use traffic detectors as the primary means to collect comprehensive real-time traffic information. In view of the importance of the strategic routes especially in detection of traffic incidents, use of traffic detectors to collect traffic data should continue to be adopted.

Yours sincerely,

(Alex LAU)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.
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