



COVID-19 epidemic's impacts on transport sector

Figure 1 – Average daily passengers of public transport

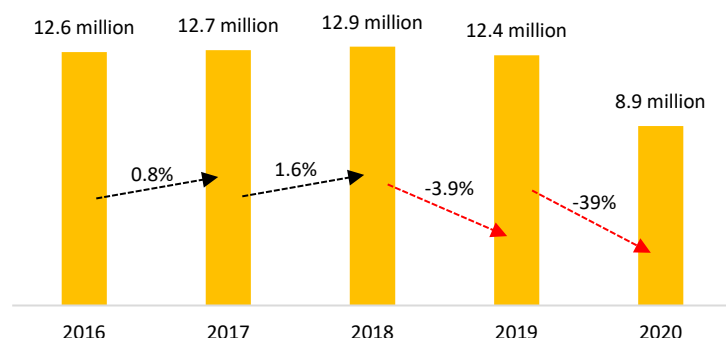


Figure 2 – Passenger number by public transport operators (year on year % change)

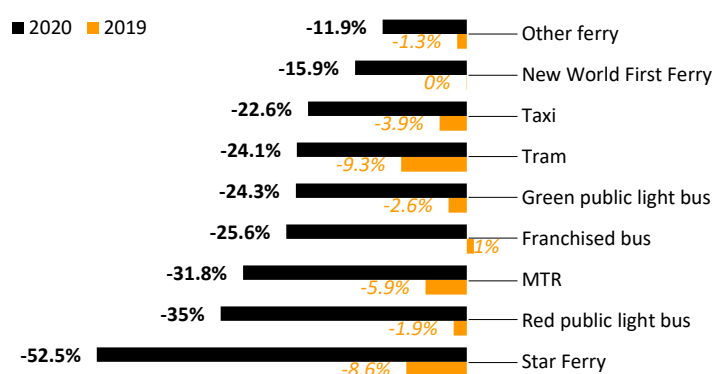


Figure 3 – Impacts on cross-harbour traffic in 2020

Year on year change (%) in vehicular trips	Cross Harbour Tunnel	Eastern Harbour Crossing	Western Harbour Crossing
Private car	6.5%	-2.5%	-23.1%
Taxi	-15.7%	-21.7%	-52.1%
Motorcycle	13.8%	1.4%	2.6%
Light bus	-34.6%	-31.4%	-40.1%
Bus (double decker)	-2.1%	-9.4%	-16.1%
Small goods vehicle	2.1%	-13.3%	-16.5%
Medium goods vehicle	-6.4%	-15.6%	-14.6%
Heavy goods vehicle	2.9%	-9.4%	5.7%
Total flow change	-1.5%	-8.5%	-29.0%

Highlights

- The COVID-19 epidemic in Hong Kong has seriously disrupted economic and social activities. As the Government imposed stringent social distancing, business closure and travel restrictions, and encouraged work from home to minimize crowds in public places, there has been a sharp patronage reduction of public transport. In 2020, the overall daily average number of passengers shrank significantly by 39% to below the 9 million mark (Figure 1).
- Not all public transport operators suffered from the same degree of patronage fall. The Star Ferry, which used to rely on inbound tourists, was the worst hit transport with its passenger number plunging by 53% below the 2019 level. The red public light bus which provides flexible routes and schedules was also seriously affected, with 35% fall in patronage. Mass transport like MTR and franchised bus had their patronage shrunk by around 32% and 26% respectively. In contrast, taxis' patronage drop was less acute, at around 23%. Other ferry services were the least affected, with patronage falling by under 20% (Figure 2).
- The disruption to economic and social activities meant that there was less traffic on road, including the busiest routes such as the three vehicular harbour crossings. Among the three harbour crossings, the traffic flow of the Cross Harbour Tunnel only dropped slightly by 1.5%, whereas that of the Western Harbour Crossing slid by 29% in 2020. Analyzed by transport mode, the harbour crossing trips by taxi and light bus fell by up to about 52% and 40% respectively. The only transport mode with a positive growth of trips was motorcycle, which registered an increase of between 1.4% and 14% at all three harbour crossings (Figure 3).

COVID-19 epidemic's impacts on transport sector (cont'd)

Figure 4 – Year on year change (%) of licensed vehicle numbers

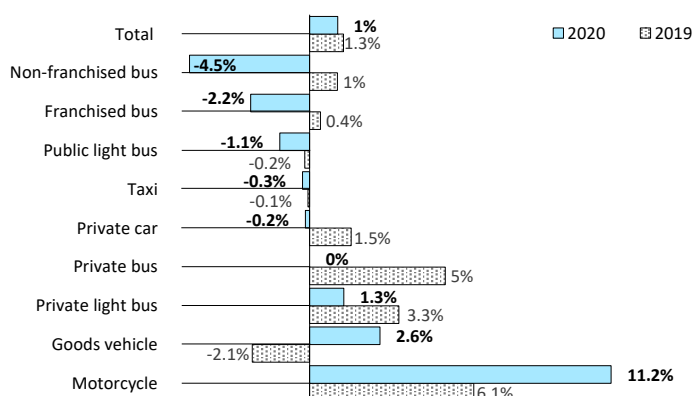


Figure 5 – Unemployment of transport sector (Jan-Mar of 2020 to Feb-Apr of 2021)

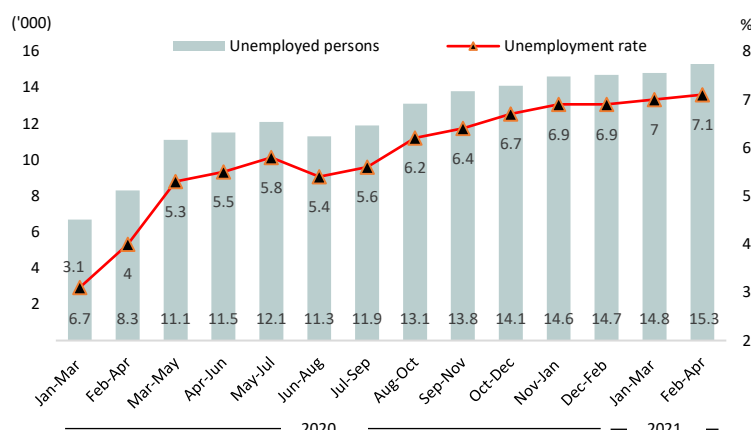
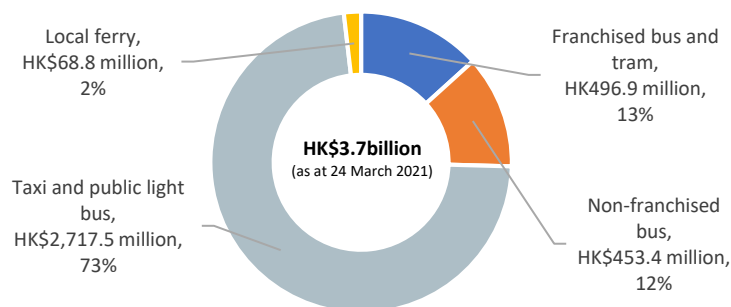


Figure 6 – Government financial measures to assist the transport sector (HK\$ million) under AEF



Highlights

- Reduction in transport demand during 2020 is also reflected in the drop in licensed vehicles. Although the Government has provided licensing fee exemption as part of the anti-epidemic reliefs, licensed franchised and non-franchised buses still decreased by up to 4.5%. The number of taxis also fell slightly even though their numbers are capped by law. Amid a growing demand for food and goods delivery during the epidemic, the number of motorcycles and goods vehicles have increased by 11.2% and 2.6% respectively (Figure 4).
- Prolonged epidemic has also dealt a huge blow to employment. In the transport sector, unemployed persons have increased by 120% from 6 700 in the first quarter of 2020 to 15 300 in the February-April quarter of 2021 (Figure 5). In terms of unemployment rate, it has risen to 7.1%, compared to the overall average of 6.4%.
- In response to the dire conditions of the transport sector, the Government has introduced targeted financial measures to assist the sector under the Anti-epidemic Fund ("AEF"). These measures, ranging from licensing fee waivers to one-off subsidy and fuel and specific wage subsidy (excluding subsidy under the Employment Support Scheme), amounted to at least HK\$3.7 billion (as at 24 March 2021). About 73% of the financial assistance went to the taxi and public light bus operators, which received a total of about HK\$2.7 billion assistance (Figure 6).

Data sources: Latest figures from the Transport Department, the Transport and Housing Bureau, and Census and Statistics Department

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