

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

LC Paper No. CB(1)2272/02-03

(These minutes have been seen  
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

### **Panel on Transport**

**Minutes of special meeting held on  
Thursday, 29 May 2003, at 1:00 pm  
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members present** : Hon Miriam LAU Kin-yee, JP (Chairman)  
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP  
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, JP  
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP  
Hon LAU Kong-wah  
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo  
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP  
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP  
Hon WONG Sing-chi

**Members absent** : Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan  
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, GBS, JP  
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung  
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP  
Dr Hon TANG Siu-tong, JP  
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip  
Hon LAU Ping-cheung

**Public Officers  
attending** : Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Mr Arthur HO

Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works

Action

Mr LAW Kin-wai  
Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport and  
Works

Transport Department

Mr Stephen IP  
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Management &  
Paratransit

Mr Albert SU  
Chief Transport Officer/Planning (Paratransit)

**Clerk in attendance :** Mr Andy LAU  
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2

**Staff in attendance :** Ms Alice AU  
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)5

Miss Winnie CHENG  
Legislative Assistant 5

---

Action

**I New Territories Taxi Fare Concession Application**  
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1789/02-03(01) - Information paper provided by the  
Administration)

The Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (DS for ETW) introduced the Administration's paper on the subject matter (LC Paper No. CB(1)1789/02-03(01)). He said that in view of the declining business of NT taxis, the 10 NT taxi associations (the 10 NT Taxi Associations) which were registered members of the Conference on New Territories Taxi Operations of Transport Department (TD) had jointly submitted an application for offering taxi fare concession for a temporary period of six months with a view to improving the competitiveness of NT taxi services. As the proposed fare concession was supported by all major NT taxi associations, the Administration intended to seek approval from the Chief Executive-in-Council for the implementation of the proposed temporary fare concession. This would require legislative amendment, which was subject to negative vetting by the Legislative Council.

2. DS for ETW added that taking into account the request of the trade and expectation of the public for early implementation, the Administration was taking every step to expedite actions to implement the proposed fare concession hopefully by mid June. Subject to members' comments, the Administration's plan was to effect the temporary reduction immediately after gazettal without waiting for completion of the negative vetting period.

Action

3. The Chairman drew members' attention to the submissions from the New Territories Taxi Drivers Association (NTTD) and the New Territories Taxi Operation Concern Group tabled at the meeting.

*(Post-meeting note: The submissions were subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper Nos. CB(1)1837/02-03(01) and (02) respectively).*

4. Mr LAU Kong-wah noted with grave concern that according to the results of a questionnaire survey conducted by NTTD, an overwhelming majority of the respondents were opposed to the proposed temporary fare concession because it would adversely affect the income of frontline drivers. They also requested that frontline drivers should first be consulted and that the fare concession should be shelved or deferred. While calling on the Administration to take heed to the strong request from these frontline drivers, he said that TD should conduct a survey, similar to the one being conducted for the urban taxi trade, to gauge the views of all NT taxi operators before implementation.

5. Echoing Mr LAU Kong-wah's call for the Administration to conduct a survey on all NT taxi operators, Mr LEUNG Fu-wah criticized the Administration for failing to give due regard to the views of frontline NT taxi drivers when taking the matter forward. While the Conference on New Territories Taxi Operations was an established consultation channel, TD should broadly listen to the views of other NT taxi associations before a final decision was made. While any fare concession of public transport services would be welcomed by the public at large, the Administration should not sacrifice the interest of frontline NT taxi drivers whose income would be directly impacted by the fare concession. Mr TAM Yiu-ching also considered that it would be useful if a quick survey could be conducted to ascertain the view of NT taxi operators.

6. Taking note of the strong opposition expressed by some NT taxi associations, Mr WONG sing-chi concurred with the need for the Administration to conduct a survey to gauge the view of the NT taxi trade before the temporary fare concession was implemented. The Chairman and Mr Tommy CHEUNG opined that the Administration would need to secure an agreement from the NT taxi trade on the design of the questionnaire as well as the assessment criteria if such a survey was to be conducted.

7. In response, DS for ETW stressed that the temporary fare NT taxi fare reduction was initiated by the 10 NT Taxis Associations. According to TD's survey, the average fare per NT taxi trip including waiting time charge was \$23.3. Under the proposal, this average fare per NT taxi trip would be reduced by about 2.6% to \$22.7. On this basis, even if there was no additional business generated after the offer of fare concession, the financial position of NT taxi operators was not expected to be significantly affected. On the other hand, the proposed concession could offer incentives to passengers to make more frequent use of NT taxi services, in particular, long haul taxi trips because they might enjoy a fare discount of over 20%. As a result, the net income of NT taxi operators might be increased.

Action

8. On consultation with the NT taxi trade, the Assistant Commissioner for Transport/Management & Paratransit (AC for T/M&P) said that on taxi fare and operation matters, TD had established a regular communication and consultation framework through its Conference on New Territories Taxi Operations. This framework had been proved to be effective and was an important entity for the Government to consult the trade. Since there were many associations within the trade, in the consultation process, TD's principles were that the associations should be representative of the taxi operators so that majority views could be reflected as far as possible. According to TD's record, members of the 10 NT Taxi Associations consisted of about 4 800 operators, representing about 80% of the NT taxi trade. They included all three types of operators in the trade, namely drivers (about 2 500), owners (about 1 100) and owner-drivers (about 1 200).

9. Regarding TD's survey on urban taxi owners and drivers on the issue of taxi fare concession, AC for T/M&P said that this was a request specifically made by the Conference on Urban Taxi Operations. However, no such request was made by the Conference on New Territories Taxi Operations. Moreover, TD had received no objection from major NT taxi trade associations or workers' unions on the fare concession scheme. Whilst the Administration understood the concerns of those who opposed to the proposed fare concession, it was also important to take into account the views of the majority of the trade and the interest of the public.

10. DS for ETW further said that the taxi trade leaders were fully aware of the possible negative impacts on the monthly net income of NT taxi operators (including drivers) as a result of the fare concession. They were prepared to accept these negative impacts for a maximum period of six months in order to see if the fare concession would help attract more passengers to use NT taxis.

11. Mr CHENG Kar-foo however pointed out that due to their conflicting interests, NT taxi owners and drivers might have different views on the possible impact of the proposed fare concession on the trade. In order to rally the support of frontline drivers, it would be most important to ensure that some kind of financial assistance would be provided to them if their net income was adversely impacted. The Administration should also consider conducting a review after three months before deciding whether the temporary fare concession should continue. Sharing Mr CHENG Kar-foo's concern about the livelihood of frontline drivers, Mr LAU Kong-wah enquired about the extent of assistance the taxi trade leaders were prepared to render to frontline drivers.

12. AC for T/M&P replied that when submitting their joint applications, the 10 NT Taxi Associations had made it clear that they would continue to offer the fare concession for a full six-month period. One Taxi Association representing both owners and drivers had also indicated that its members might consider lowering taxi rental in case the net income of frontline drivers was adversely impacted. However, he stressed that the level of NT taxis rental was largely a commercial decision affected by market forces. In fact, NT taxis rental had been adjusted downwards substantially since the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in Hong Kong.

Action

13. Taking note of members' grave concern about the possible adverse impact of the temporary fare concession on the income of frontline NT taxi drivers, DS for ETW said that the Administration would hold further discussions with the 10 NT Taxi Associations and relevant taxi associations on how best the proposed temporary fare concession could be taken forward, including the possible need for a survey to gauge the views of NT taxi operators and the desirability of offering the temporary fare concession for a shorter period.

**II Any other business**

14. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 2:10 pm.

Council Business Division 1  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
28 July 2003