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28 November 2019

Ms Shirley Chan
Clerk to Panel on Economic Development
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms Chan,

**Panel on Economic Development
Follow-up on the policy briefing on 28 October 2019**

Thank you for your letter of 30 October 2019 to the Secretary for Transport and Housing. Regarding the follow-up items on the development of cross-boundary helicopter services between Hong Kong and cities in the Guangdong Province, our consolidated reply is given below.

The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area promulgated by the Central People's Government pointed out the need to deepen the reform in the management of low-altitude airspace, expedite the development of general aviation and steadily develop cross-boundary helicopter services. To this end, the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) and the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) agreed to expand the scope of cross-boundary helicopter services to cover points in the whole Guangdong Province to provide travellers with a high-end and convenient means of air transport. Air connectivity in the Greater Bay Area will be enhanced, giving impetus to the diversified commercial and business activities in the Greater Bay Area.

In this connection, the THB and the CAAC signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand the Air Services Arrangement between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), under which both sides can designate helicopter operators to operate helicopter services between airports or take-off/landing points in the Guangdong Province that fulfil relevant customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) arrangements and airports or take-off/landing points in the HKSAR that fulfil relevant CIQ arrangements. This new arrangement allows potential operators to operate cross-boundary helicopter services at take-off/landing points that are equipped with temporary CIQ arrangements and fulfil relevant aviation safety standards. This significantly enhances the choice of potential take-off/landing points and the flexibility of services, providing a solid basis for expanding cross-boundary helicopter services between Hong Kong and cities in the Guangdong Province.

At present, helicopter take-off/landing points that have met the relevant conditions include Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport, Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport, Hong Kong International Airport and Sheung Wan Sky Shuttle Heliport. As for Hong Kong, cross-boundary helicopters mainly take-off and land at Sheung Wan Sky Shuttle Heliport.

The Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department (CAD) has maintained close liaison with the CAAC regarding the further development of cross-boundary helicopter services. As the CAD understands, the relevant authorities intend to develop other cross-boundary helicopter take-off/landing points in the Guangdong Province, among which Shekou is being considered.

Currently, there are one local and two Mainland commercial helicopter operators who have indicated to the CAD on their intention to provide cross-boundary helicopter services between Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area. In order to study further on the feasibility of actual operation and other technical arrangements, one of the Mainland commercial helicopter operators has conducted six trial flights between different destinations in Guangdong and Hong Kong since June 2019, including the connection of Shenzhen Bao'an International Airport and Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport with Sheung Wan Sky Shuttle Heliport. The CAD has also maintained close communication with the relevant Mainland authorities in the design of flight paths.

Based on the above, the specific development of cross-boundary helicopter services will be dependent on the market demand as well as the commercial considerations of respective helicopter operators.

Sheung Wan Sky Shuttle Heliport has yet to reach its maximum designed capacity of more than 50 000 movements per year while the annual movements in the past two years were about 12 000. In addition, the Government Flying Service (GFS) is currently establishing its Kai Tak Division at the site annotated as “Heliport” at the tip of the Ex-Kai Tak Runway, where an area has been reserved for the development of a commercial cross-boundary heliport. Cross-boundary helicopter operator(s) in future will coordinate with the GFS on the relevant arrangements on flight operations provided that the GFS’s emergency services will not be affected. This will support the steady development of cross-boundary helicopter services and enhance the air connectivity in the Greater Bay Area in the long run.

Similar to the development of other civil aviation policies, the CAD will continue to act as a “facilitator” in the development of cross-boundary helicopter services. Technical advices on aspects, such as the design of flight paths and aviation safety, will be provided to potential operators to proactively support the development of cross-boundary helicopter services.

The CAD will also continue to maintain close liaison with the CAAC in order to support and complement the Mainland’s active expansion of additional cross-boundary helicopter take-off/landing points and the design of relevant flight paths.

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Joyce Chan)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c. Director-General of Civil Aviation
(Attn: Assistant Director-General of Civil Aviation (Airport Standards))