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11 October 2021

Ms Sophie LAU
Clerk to Panel on Transport
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms LAU,

Panel on Transport

Letter from Hon Elizabeth QUAT on enhancing the safety of taxis

Thank you for your letter dated 1 September 2021 to the Secretary for Transport and Housing on the captioned subject. With regard to Hon Elizabeth QUAT's letter on enhancing the safety of taxis, our reply is set out as follows.

Regulate the use or placement of mobile phones and other devices while driving

The Government has all along been very concerned about road safety, and has been ensuring the safety of road users through regulation by law and promoting attentive driving through education and publicity. The Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) has stipulated stringent provisions on "dangerous driving" and "careless driving". If a motorist uses a mobile phone or other smart device while driving in such a way as to affect his driving, he may have committed the offence of "dangerous driving" or "careless driving", irrespective of whether his driving has caused a traffic accident. In addition, pursuant to the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap. 374G), if a motor vehicle being driven by a motorist is in motion, it is an offence for the motorist to use a mobile phone by holding it in his hand or between his head and shoulder, or use other telecommunications

equipment by holding it in his hand. The current version of the Road Users' Code has also issued clear guidelines to motorists that they should avoid using mobile phones or other smart devices as far as possible while driving, and should drive attentively.

The Government has attached great importance to road safety, and understands the public's concern about motorists, particularly taxi drivers, placing several mobile phones on the dashboard while driving. The Government also notes that motorists may have practical needs to use mobile phones or other devices for, for instance, obtaining information about navigation, real-time traffic conditions and parking space, etc. The Transport Department ("TD") is conducting a study and will consider the direction of regulating the number and location of mobile phone devices placed by motorists, as well as the mode of use and purpose of using the devices, etc., having regard to the technological development and changes in the usage habits of mobile phones and vehicle devices. To this end, TD is making reference to the regulations and practices in other jurisdictions, observing the situation on usage of mobile phones and other devices on vehicles by motorists, and considering various factors such as whether motorists would switch between multiple mobile applications if restriction is imposed on the number of mobile phones placed on the dashboard while driving. Upon the formulation of concrete proposals, the Government will consult stakeholders in due course.

Meanwhile, the Government and the Road Safety Council ("RSC") will continue to adopt a multi-pronged approach in raising the road safety awareness of motorists (including drivers of taxis and other commercial vehicles). TD has been maintaining close communication with the taxi trade and from time to time reminds the trade to comply with traffic regulations and observe road safety. In addition, TD has been collaborating with the RSC and the Police in launching various publicity and educational activities, such as producing television and radio announcements on the theme of "driving attentively", and disseminating relevant video clips and messages through social media platforms. TD also publishes and distributes publicity leaflets as well as Road Safety Bulletins to remind motorists to be attentive and avoid using mobile phones and/or smart devices while driving.

Install safety devices on taxis

The Government is open-minded about innovation and technologies that can effectively improve road and driving safety, and welcomes the

introduction of advanced driver assistance systems by vehicle manufacturers for various classes of vehicles. According to TD's understanding, the taxi trade is actively participating in the testing of various devices on Anti-collision Warning, Lane Keeping Warning and others that could monitor drivers' condition/driving behavior. TD will continue to follow up closely with the trade on the testing progress and effectiveness with a view to identifying suitable safety devices to be installed on taxis. If car owners are interested in installing such systems, TD will examine and approve the vehicles in accordance with the legislation to ensure road safety.

Yours sincerely,



(Angus WAT)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c

Transport Department

(Attn: Mr Jim Ho)