

Government to move motion on implementing toll adjustment proposals for traffic rationalisation among the three road harbour crossings

The Government announced today (January 3) that it will move a motion (see Annex) at the meeting of the Legislative Council (LegCo) on January 23, 2019 relating to the proposal to adjust the tolls of private cars, taxis and motorcycles for using the three road harbour crossings with effect from January 1, 2020 (Toll Adjustment Proposal).

Since the Chief Executive's announcement of the Toll Adjustment Proposal in the 2018 Policy Address, the Government has introduced it to the community through various channels. In addition to attending meetings of LegCo's Panel on Transport and a number of district councils, the government officials concerned have also met with various stakeholder groups. In parallel, the Government has provided the general public with information relating to the Toll Adjustment Proposal, including the study report and the projected effects of traffic re-distribution for various tolling scenarios, through blog posts, social media and the Transport Department's dedicated website (www.td.gov.hk/en/benefit_traffic_dist_3hc/index.html).

"There is general consensus on the direction to rationalise traffic among the three road harbour crossings, and that the Proposal received support from many stakeholders including academics, professional institutions, and the taxi and transport trades," a Government spokesperson said.

The implementation of the Toll Adjustment Proposal is expected to bring about the following four benefits:

- (1) The Proposal can effectively alleviate cross-harbour congestion, shorten the aggregated peak-hour traffic queues at the Cross-Harbour Tunnel (CHT) and the Eastern Harbour Crossing (EHC) from 10 per cent to over 40 per cent, and reduce travelling time for crossing the tunnels by as much as 13 minutes;
- (2) The Proposal can release 10 traffic junctions which are currently obstructed by traffic queues on the connecting roads of the CHT and EHC, reducing the impact on passengers of non-harbour-crossing public transport vehicles and other vehicles;
- (3) The Western Harbour Crossing (WHC) Toll Compensation Scheme can freeze the WHC tolls. From 2020 until the expiry of the WHC franchise, drivers of private cars and motorcycles as well as taxi passengers would be relieved from the pressure of WHC toll increases;

(4) The Proposal will bring benefits to society as a whole. Apart from bringing convenience to drivers, the Proposal can save 19,400 hours of daily commuting time of citizens using public transport, generate about \$800 million of social cost savings per year, and reduce carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles by about 3,800 tonnes per year, which is equivalent to the effect of air quality improvement by planting 160,000 trees.

"Since the implementation of the Toll Adjustment Proposal involves a legislative exercise and a funding application, as well as finalising a formal agreement with the WHC franchisee, we need to affirm the support of LegCo before taking forward these follow-up tasks. By moving this motion, we aim to facilitate a thorough discussion of the Proposal by LegCo, and hope that Members will support the motion for the overall interest of Hong Kong," the spokesperson added.

After obtaining LegCo's support for the motion, the Government will shortly introduce subsidiary legislation into LegCo to amend the toll levels of the CHT and EHC, and submit a funding application to the LegCo Finance Committee for the WHC Toll Compensation Scheme. At the same time, the Government will work with the WHC franchisee on the detailed agreement.