

LCQ13: Electric mobility devices

Following is a question by the Hon Charles Peter Mok and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

In recent years, the authorities of quite a number of cities (such as Singapore) have permitted, through a registration or licensing system, newly emerged electric personal mobility devices (e.g. mini-motor cycles, pedelecs, electric scooters and electric unicycles) to be used on roads legally, and regulated matters such as the sizes, horsepower, maximum speeds and safety equipment of such mobility devices. However, under the laws of Hong Kong, all such devices are prohibited from being used on roads. On the other hand, one of the study items of the "Consultancy Study on Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong", commenced by the Transport Department in 2017, is to explore whether such mobility devices are suitable for use in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the scope of the aforesaid study includes an assessment of (i) the demand of members of the public for electric personal mobility devices, and (ii) the roles that can be played by such devices in Hong Kong's transport infrastructure (e.g. serving as short-haul feeder transport means in districts where public transport services are inadequate); if so, of the progress of the assessment and the timetable for putting forward preliminary recommendations; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will, by making reference to the practices in other cities, establish a registration and licensing system for electric personal mobility devices to the effect that such devices may be used on designated roads legally; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will explore launching a trial scheme under which electric personal mobility devices are permitted to be used at designated places (e.g. roads with relatively low vehicular flow as well as designated public spaces, cycle tracks and footpaths), so as to assess the feasibility of legalising the use of such devices; if not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the various parts of the Hon Charles Peter Mok's question is as follows:

The Government endeavours to take forward "Walk in HK" and encourages citizens to "walk more, ride less". Various measures have been launched to enhance the overall walkability of Hong Kong so as to foster a pedestrian-friendly environment. In this connection, the Transport Department (TD) has commissioned the Consultancy Study on Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong,

which covers several key issues on encouraging walking, including the feasibility of the use of electric mobility devices in Hong Kong.

Currently, according to the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap 374), "motor vehicle" means any mechanically propelled vehicle. Electric mobility devices such as mini-motor cycles, pedelecs, electric scooters and electric unicycles are all mechanically propelled and thus belong to "motor vehicles", which must be licensed for use on roads.

In view of the rapid technological advancement of electric mobility devices, the Consultancy Study on Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong will look into the latest development of relevant technology, the usage of electric mobility devices in Hong Kong, the suitability of their use in Hong Kong for short-distance commuting, etc. The TD will also review the regulation of electric mobility devices in overseas regions and evaluate the implications of the use of these devices in Hong Kong on road safety, accessibility and road users, as well as the relevant legal requirements, management and implementation issues, etc.

The Consultancy Study on Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong is expected to be completed in mid-2020. The Government will make reference to the findings of the study to consider the need to introduce a regulatory system and a trial scheme for electric mobility devices.