

LCQ4: Cross-boundary vehicles

Following is a question by the Hon Leung Yiu-chung and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (May 23):

Question:

Over the past decade, there has been a persistent growth in the number of cross-boundary vehicles entering Hong Kong, with that of private cars increasing by nearly 50 per cent. The number of cross-boundary vehicles entering Hong Kong is expected to increase further in tandem with the commissioning of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) within this year. Some members of the public are therefore concerned that the problem of local traffic congestion will become increasingly serious. They are also worried that the persistent increase in the quotas for cross-boundary vehicles will overload the local traffic network further, make the shortage of parking spaces more acute, and result in more traffic accidents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of cross-boundary vehicles holding the International Circulation Permits issued by the Transport Department and the vehicle trips they made in Hong Kong, in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by vehicle class and original place of registration; whether it has estimated respectively the quotas for cross-boundary vehicles to be permitted to enter Hong Kong using HZMB and the vehicle trips to be made by such vehicles in Hong Kong in the coming five years, with a breakdown by vehicle class and original place of registration (i.e. Macao and Guangdong Province);

(2) as the problem of local traffic congestion has become increasingly serious, coupled with the commissioning of HZMB within this year, and an implementation date has not been fixed for the Ad Hoc Quota Trial Scheme for Cross-boundary Private Cars (Second Phase), whether the authorities have assessed the changes in vehicle trips to be made by cross-boundary vehicles in Hong Kong in the coming five to 10 years; if not, whether the authorities will conduct an assessment expeditiously; whether they will consider lowering the quotas for cross-boundary vehicles; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and the measures to prevent the problem of local traffic congestion from being aggravated further by an excessive number of cross-boundary vehicles; and

(3) of the respective numbers of drivers of cross-boundary vehicles prosecuted for various kinds of traffic offences in each of the past five years; whether it will introduce measures to enhance the road safety awareness among Mainland drivers when they drive cross-boundary vehicles in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB), which is the first cross-boundary land-based connection linking Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macao, will facilitate Hong Kong citizens to travel to the Mainland and Macao and bring strategic significance for the development of both Hong Kong and the Bay Area.

Cross-boundary vehicles using the HZMB to travel to the three places, except Hong Kong goods vehicles travelling to the Mainland, Hong Kong private cars joining the Macao Port Park-and-Ride Scheme and cross-boundary shuttle buses, are subject to the regulation of quota system. Cross-boundary vehicles with quota are required to apply for the Close Road Permits for Cross-boundary Vehicles (CRP) from the Transport Department (TD). According to the statistics kept by the TD, as of December 31, 2017, a total of some 36 150 cross-boundary vehicles (including cross-boundary private cars, Mainland cross-boundary goods vehicles, cross-boundary hire cars and cross-boundary coaches) have obtained quota and the CRP, whilst most of them (about 32 000, i.e. 88 per cent of the total number) being local vehicles registered in Hong Kong. Non-local cross-boundary vehicles merely amounted to around 4 200, accounting for about 12 per cent of the total number.

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Leung Yiu-chung's question is as follows:

(1) Quota holder of non-commercial Mainland vehicles are required to apply for International Circulation Permits (ICPs), in addition to the CRP, from TD whose validity period does not exceed 12 months. In the past five years, the number of Mainland non-commercial cross-boundary vehicles holding valid ICPs has maintained at around 3 000 per year (detailed figures in Annex). The TD does not keep information on the number of vehicle trips of such vehicles in Hong Kong.

According to the transport arrangements as concluded by the three governments, the additional quota for non-local cross-boundary vehicles travelling to Hong Kong via the HZMB comprises a quota of 1 000 for Mainland cross-boundary private cars, 600 for Macao cross-boundary private cars, and 16 for Macao cross-boundary coaches. A new additional quota of 150 was permitted for cross-boundary coaches and hire cars travelling between Guangdong and Hong Kong respectively which are operated by joint venture companies of the two places and use local vehicles registered in Hong Kong. The number of quota for Mainland cross-boundary goods vehicles will not be increased upon the commissioning of the HZMB and will remain unchanged at 800. The governments of Hong Kong and Macao are discussing the quota distribution and detailed arrangements regarding cross-boundary hire cars and goods vehicles for both places.

Upon the commissioning of the HZMB, the three governments will review in a timely manner the arrangements and number of quota for the cross-boundary vehicles in the light of actual circumstances, thereby leading to changes to the number of vehicle trips. Currently, we do not have any estimation on the number of vehicle trips for cross-boundary vehicles entering Hong Kong via the HZMB in the coming five years.

(2) As regards the impact of non-local cross-boundary vehicles on the road traffic of Hong Kong, as of December 31, 2017, the total number of non-local cross-boundary vehicles is less than 1 per cent as compared with the local vehicles registered in Hong Kong, and hence the impact is not significant.

The Government will closely monitor the operation and traffic conditions of the Hong Kong Port and roads in its vicinity upon the commissioning of the HZMB. The Highways Department is striving for early completion of the southern and northern sections of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link (TM-CLKL) which provides the most direct route between the Northwest New Territories and the HZMB, the Airport, as well as the North Lantau. To strengthen the preparedness for the increased traffic flow during the initial period upon the commissioning of HZMB and to take precautionary measures to minimise the impact of traffic incidents on the relevant roads, the Government will consider traffic arrangements for that initial period in a prudent and practical manner so as to ensure normal operation of the road networks around the Hong Kong Port, the Airport and Tung Chung. The TD will adopt temporary traffic arrangements, where necessary, to allow some of the cross-boundary and local vehicles to use individual link roads in an orderly manner, and will announce any such arrangements as soon as possible.

Moreover, we have been striving to tackle the problem of traffic congestion in Hong Kong. The Government is taking forward the 12 short-, medium- and long-term measures recommended by the Transport Advisory Committee in its Report on Study of Road Traffic Congestion in Hong Kong in an orderly manner, including the study of measures to contain private car growth.

(3) According to the traffic accidents statistics of the past five years, the accident rate of Mainland cross-boundary private cars has been far lower than that of local private cars. Taking the figure in 2017 as an example, the average accident rate of the Mainland cross-boundary private cars is 2.2 vehicles (per 1 000 vehicles) which is lower than the corresponding figure of 15.8 (per 1 000 vehicles) of local private cars. The Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) does not keep the breakdown of drivers involved in various traffic offences, as well as the number of related traffic offence and prosecution figures.

We have been conducting promotion and education work to further raise the road safety awareness of non-local cross-boundary vehicle drivers. Non-local cross-boundary vehicle drivers must obtain valid driving licenses when they drive in Hong Kong. The TD will distribute the Road User Code (the Code) to the applicants for driving licences when issuing the licences. The Code contains in detail the rules, instructions and information that should be known by road users in Hong Kong. Besides, the TD and the HKPF, in collaboration with the Road Safety Council, have been carrying out promotion and education activities to promote road safety and good driving manner among drivers.