

TAC briefed on findings of MTRCL's comprehensive review of asset management and maintenance regime, latest progress of proposed measures for enhancing personalised point-to-point transport services and proposed regulatory framework for electric mobility devices

The following is issued on behalf of the Transport Advisory Committee:

The Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) was briefed today (July 25) on the findings of the comprehensive review of railway assets and maintenance regime conducted by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), the latest progress of the series of proposed measures for enhancing personalised point-to-point transport services and the proposed regulatory framework for the use of electric mobility devices (EMDs) in Hong Kong.

To ensure that railway assets are managed to a high standard, the MTRCL appointed an Expert Panel to conduct a comprehensive review of its railway asset management and maintenance regime, while the Government established an Independent Monitoring Panel (IMP) to closely monitor the review. The review by the MTRCL was completed on June 21. Following the recommendations of the Expert Panel and the Government's IMP, the MTRCL has formulated various follow-up measures to enhance its railway asset management and maintenance regime, and ensure that it would continue to provide safe and reliable railway services to the public.

The TAC Chairman, Professor Stephen Cheung, said, "Members support the five action areas formulated by the MTRCL following the comprehensive review, especially on the use of innovation and technology to overcome resource constraints and enhance services as well as railway asset maintenance. Further improvement in risk identification and mitigation is of paramount importance as the MTRCL is duty-bound to provide safe and reliable railway services to the public. Members look forward to the timely implementation of the follow-up measures so as to further enhance the railway asset management and maintenance regime, and meet the public's expectations."

At the meeting, members were briefed by the Government on the latest progress of the series of proposed measures to enhance personalised point-to-point transport services. These measures include introducing a taxi fleet regime, increasing the maximum passenger seating capacity of taxis from five

to six, introducing a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System and a two-tier penalty system for certain taxi-driver-related offences, as well as increasing the penalties for illegal carriage of passengers for hire or reward by motor vehicles.

Professor Cheung said, "Members noted that the Government had submitted the relevant bills into the Legislative Council for scrutiny on July 12. Members welcomed the Government's proposals which should help address the public demand for taxi services of higher quality and promote the healthy development of taxi trade in the long run, while enhancing the protection of passengers and other road users."

Members were also briefed by the Government at the meeting on the proposed formulation of a regulatory framework and associated legislative amendments on EMDs, with a view to allowing the use of EMDs in a gradual and prudent manner. Currently, as EMDs are mechanically propelled, they fall within the definition of "motor vehicles" under the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374). Therefore, the use of unregistered or unlicensed EMDs on roads or private roads (including footpaths) may contravene relevant laws. Nevertheless, with the advancement of technology, the design and production technology of EMDs have been enhanced and their production costs reduced, giving rise to their prevalence. The use of EMDs has also been increasingly accepted and regulated in various jurisdictions.

In order to gain actual operating experience in the regulation of EMDs, the Transport Department conducted a series of site trials on sections of cycle tracks and questionnaire surveys. The Government proposed that consideration may be given to allow the use of certain EMDs on designated cycle tracks, where technical and safety requirements are met, to promote green and low-carbon modes of commuting. Given the dense population and high vehicular traffic flow in Hong Kong, EMDs should not be used on footpaths or carriageways.

Professor Cheung said, "Members acknowledged the Government's proposed formulation of an EMD certification scheme to label compliant devices, phased implementation for allowing the use of EMDs with labels on designated cycle tracks and introduction of a fixed penalty regime to enhance the effectiveness of enforcement actions, as well as imposition of requirements on the minimum age of EMD users and mandatory helmet wearing to enhance safety. Members welcomed the Government's proposal on the regulatory framework for the use of EMDs and the associated legislative amendment exercise. They also gave their views on the details of the proposed regulatory framework."