

TAC briefed on progress of Universal Accessibility Programme and Smart Traffic Fund

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

The Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) was briefed today (February 22) on the progress of the Universal Accessibility (UA) Programme and the Smart Traffic Fund.

The Government has been striving to create a barrier-free and accessible environment and launched the UA Programme in August 2012 to proactively retrofit barrier-free access facilities at walkways. The scope of the UA Programme has subsequently been expanded with a view to covering more walkways. In response to public demand, the Government announced in 2019 the launch of a Special Scheme to retrofit lifts at the walkways of three types of housing estates under the Hong Kong Housing Authority, namely estates under the Tenants Purchase Scheme, the Buy or Rent Option Scheme and public rental housing estates with properties divested.

As at the end of January 2022, 179 items were completed under the UA Programme, while 93 were under construction and 130 were under investigation and design.

The TAC Chairman, Professor Stephen Cheung, said, "Members are delighted to note the satisfactory progress of the UA Programme, and support the Government to continue its efforts in retrofitting barrier-free access facilities at walkways, with a view to creating a universally accessible environment in the community and benefitting more people in need."

The \$1 billion Smart Traffic Fund has been open for application since March 2021 to provide funding support to local organisations and enterprises for conducting research and applying innovation and technology, with the objectives of enhancing commuting convenience, increasing the efficiency of the road network or road space, and improving driving safety.

All applications are considered and assessed by the Management Committee (MC) of the Fund, which is chaired by the Deputy Commissioner for Transport (Planning and Technical Services) and comprises representatives from the Government, experts in related industries and relevant stakeholders. As of January this year, 10 applications have been approved by the MC, involving a total grant of around \$38 million.

Professor Cheung said, "Members are pleased that the Smart Traffic Fund has been operating smoothly, and projects covering a wide range of topics have been approved, including research on analysing driver (taxi drivers included) behaviours, which will contribute towards the positive development

of the taxi industry; as well as those relating to the experimenting of driving simulations to conduct road/driving safety assessments, which seek to improve driving and road safety. Members hope that the Government will continue to promote the Fund with a view to attracting more applications and further fostering a positive research environment for the industry, thereby driving Hong Kong to continue developing smart transport.

"Members are also pleased to note that the Government, together with the taxi and non-franchised bus/public light bus trades, have set up designated fleets to provide people who have tested positive for COVID-19 with free transport services to the designated clinics of the Hospital Authority and community isolation facilities respectively. Members have shown appreciation towards the trades for organising the designated fleet services to provide safe and reliable transport services at this difficult time, fighting the virus together with the community," Professor Cheung added.