

TAC briefed on review of Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme and proposed regulatory framework for autonomous vehicles

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

The Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) was briefed today (May 25) on the progress of implementation of the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme (PTFSS) and the outcome of the review on its specific operational arrangements, as well as the proposed regulatory framework for autonomous vehicles (AVs) in Hong Kong.

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The Government launched the non-means tested PTFSS on January 1, 2019, to relieve the fare burden of the commuters who travel on local public transport services for daily commuting and whose public transport expenses are relatively high. The Government commenced a review of the PTFSS in early 2020 to examine its specific operational arrangements, with a view to providing greater convenience to the general public. The review included questionnaire surveys to collect views from members of the public and the public transport operators on the PTFSS.

The TAC Chairman, Professor Stephen Cheung, said, "Members were pleased to note that the PTFSS has been operating smoothly since its launch and received positive feedback from the public with regard to different aspects of the PTFSS, such as the overall operation, subsidy level, subsidy collection arrangement and enquiry channels. Members also noted that the public generally agreed that the PTFSS could help reduce their public transport expenses, while the public transport operators were also generally satisfied with the overall operational arrangement."

Since 2017, the Transport Department regulated the trials of AVs through the issuance of movement permits in accordance with the Road Traffic (Registration and Licensing of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374E). In the light of the limitations of the existing regulatory framework, and the foreseeable continued increase in the demand for wider trial and use of AVs, the Government proposes a new regulatory framework which is flexible enough to embrace changes in AV technologies and allow the adoption of the AVs as a new mode of transportation, at the same time ensuring public safety. The new framework would encompass a new licensing regime for AVs and their operation, to be supplemented by a Code of Practice specifying the detailed requirements. The Government aims at introducing the relevant Bill into the Legislative Council in 2022.

Professor Cheung said, "Members support the Government's proposed regulatory framework for AVs. The adoption of AVs comes with the promising advantages of enhancing road safety and contributing to the more efficient

use of road space, and various trials of AVs have been conducted worldwide, including in Hong Kong. The Government's proposal would be beneficial to the long-term development of AV technologies in Hong Kong. Members noted that the Government is working on the legislative details and will consult the TAC in due course."