

TAC briefed on review of standing capacity and service level of franchised buses and use of electric mobility devices

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

The Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) was briefed today (June 30) on the proposal of revising the reference occupancy rate for franchised bus service frequency adjustment and the review of the use of electric mobility devices (EMDs) in Hong Kong.

With a view to enhancing franchised bus service quality and providing more comfortable bus journeys for passengers, the Transport Department will adopt "four passengers standing per square metre" as the benchmark for service level through amending the reference occupancy rate for adjusting vehicle deployment/service frequency in the Guidelines on Service Improvement and Reduction in Bus Route Planning Programmes. Subject to the progress of bus procurement and bus captain recruitment by the franchised bus companies, the proposal will be implemented progressively from mid-2021.

The TAC Chairman, Professor Stephen Cheung, said, "Members note that the riding habits of passengers have been changing and passengers generally look for more comfortable bus journeys nowadays. Members also welcome the proposed revision to the Guidelines which can provide more space for the standing passengers and improve the service level of franchised buses."

In recent years, the use of EMDs has become more prevalent in Hong Kong and there have been calls from the community for proper regulation. After taking into account the practices and regulatory requirements for EMDs in 12 jurisdictions/cities, a host of local factors and the benefits that EMDs may bring to their users, the Government proposes that, if properly regulated, motorised Personal Mobility Devices and Power Assisted Pedal Cycles may be used for short-distance commuting where the cycle track networks are more comprehensive. On the other hand, as motorised Personal Mobility Aids are for essential mobility of persons with disabilities and the elderly, their use on footpaths subject to speed control should be allowed. The Government has set up an inter-departmental task group to develop the regulatory framework and plans to conduct site trials in the Science Park and Tseung Kwan O in the second half of 2020.

Professor Cheung said, "Members welcome the Government's proposal of bringing the law up to date in order to provide a proper regulatory framework for EMDs on the one hand, and enable the regulatory authority to embrace new technologies and innovations for personal mobility on the other."