

Transport Department issues pilot licence for autonomous vehicle

The Transport Department (TD) announced today (November 29) that the first pilot licence for autonomous vehicle (AV) has been issued in accordance with section 4(1) of the Road Traffic (Autonomous Vehicles) Regulation (Cap. 374AA).

The applicant of this pilot licence is approved to conduct trial for 10 AVs in North Lantau. In its first phrase, only one autonomous private car will operate in each road test at a specified time on specified road sections between Hong Kong International Airport Car Park 4 and Chek Lap Kok South Road, via Cheong Tat Road, Airport North Interchange, Sky City Road, Third Sky Street, First Sky Street, Sky City Road East, Sky City Interchange, East Coast Road and Scenic Road. During the trial, the backup operator stationed on board shall take over control of the vehicle if necessary. Details of the pilot licence have been uploaded to the TD's website on AV trials (www.td.gov.hk/en/public_services/taoav/index.html).

A spokesman for the TD said that upon receipt of an application for the pilot licence, the TD will consider various factors including the design operating range and functions of the autonomous system submitted by the applicant, relevant international or national standards/guidelines, and the road test situations, based on the Code of Practice for Trial and Pilot Use of Autonomous Vehicles before approval. The TD will exercise stringent control with a view to promoting AV trials in Hong Kong in a safe and orderly manner.

To facilitate wider trials and application of AVs by the industry in Hong Kong, the new legislation and regulatory regime for AVs came into operation on March 1, 2024, providing a flexible regulatory framework for AVs. The TD welcomes interested organisations or enterprises to submit applications and act in concert to promote the further development of autonomous driving in Hong Kong.

In addition, the Government launched the \$1 billion Smart Traffic Fund in 2021 to provide funding support to local organisations or enterprises for conducting research and application on vehicle-related innovation and technology. To date, 12 approved projects have been related to AVs. The road sections under these trials cover public roads and various application scenarios, such as the West Kowloon Cultural District, the Hong Kong Science Park and individual private residential estates.