

# Transport Department responds to Office of The Ombudsman's direct investigation report on driving test arrangements

In response to a report released by the Office of The Ombudsman today (September 5) on its direct investigation into "Transport Department (TD)'s Arrangements for Driving Tests", the TD responded as follows:

The TD expresses appreciation for the work of the Office of The Ombudsman in the direct investigation and recommendations made on driving test arrangements. With the public's persistent demand for driving test services, coupled with their intermittent suspension between 2020 and 2022 as affected by the COVID-19 epidemic, the waiting time of driving tests remained at a high level in 2022 and 2023.

The TD understands the public's concern over the waiting time of driving tests. To cope with the large number of applications from candidates, the TD has increased the number of driving tests by arranging driving examiners for additional duties on Saturdays where practicable. At present, the waiting time has improved significantly, compared to the peak periods, and returned to the pre-pandemic level. The waiting time of combined driving tests for private car, combined driving tests for light goods vehicle and driving tests for motor cycles (Part C) has significantly decreased from an average of 338, 344 and 245 days respectively in 2022 to 199, 207 and 125 days by end-August 2024.

The TD will continue to fill vacancies and replenish its manpower through the recruitment of driving examiners or extension of service of retired driving examiners. The TD appreciates the Office of The Ombudsman's recognition of its efforts in clearing the backlog of driving test cases, and will continue to closely monitor the queuing situation and increase the number of driving tests as far as practicable to meet the community's demand.

A spokesman for the TD said, "We agree with and will adopt the recommendations of the Office of The Ombudsman. We will continue to review and enhance the work arrangements and staff guidelines, and take appropriate measures to ensure that the Driving Test Centres operate in an orderly manner. In addition, we will review and consider formulating a performance pledge for road tests for non-commercial vehicles."

As for application of technology, the TD will explore the feasibility of introducing new technology in driving tests to assist with the assessment. Nonetheless, in view of the unique nature of driving tests in Hong Kong, where most of the road tests are conducted on public roads and the test vehicles are privately owned, the TD needs to carefully consider the

implementation details and stakeholders' views before the introduction of new technology, maintaining a balance among legal requirements, privacy of candidates, cost-effectiveness and other factors.