

LCQ20: Coach parking spaces

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Ting-kwong and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (October 20):

Question:

The number of inbound tourists has grown continuously in recent years. Some members of the tourism industry have relayed that insufficient coach parking spaces at downtown shopping areas has resulted in such coaches being parked on the road, blocking the traffic, causing inconvenience to tourists, drivers and the public alike, and may even cause accidents and adversely affect the tourism industry of Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the anticipated growth in the number of inbound tourists in the next three years;

(b) of the number of cases in the past three years of drivers being penalised for illegal parking of coaches at tourist attractions, with a breakdown by the penalty imposed on them;

(c) whether the authorities are concerned about the situation of traffic jam which resulted from coaches crowding major tourist attractions and shopping areas with heavy pedestrian flow, such as Tsim Sha Tsui, Hung Hom and Mong Kok; whether they had conducted studies on improvement measures in the past three years; if they had, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(d) whether additional parking spaces and passenger pick-up/set-down areas for coaches will be provided at major tourist attractions and shopping areas in the next three years; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the four parts of the question is as follows:

(a) Since the performance of the tourism market and the number of tourists are affected very easily by short-term changes in the macro environment, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) will only announce at the beginning of each year detailed projections of visitor arrivals for the coming year.

In 2009, the total arrivals were 29.59 million. Assuming no sudden changes in the macro environment, the HKTb expects an increasing desire for travel to Hong Kong in the next few years among Mainland residents and visitors from other short-haul markets in Asia. The arrivals from emerging markets such as India and Russia are also expected to increase substantially. However, owing to the relatively slow economic recovery in long-haul markets such as Europe and the United States, the HKTb anticipates that the total visitor arrivals to Hong Kong will maintain a single-digit annual growth in the next three years.

(b) Drivers committing parking offences will be prosecuted by the Police under the Fixed Penalty (Traffic Contraventions) Ordinance (Cap. 237). Offenders are fined a fixed penalty of HK\$320. In 2009, the number of prosecutions against illegal parking totalled over 718,000. The Police do not have a breakdown of the number of prosecutions against drivers for illegal parking of coaches at tourist attractions.

(c) and (d) The Transport Department (TD), the Police and the Tourism Commission (TC) have been keeping a close watch over coach movements and roadside loading/unloading activities at major tourist attractions and shopping areas such as Tsim Sha Tsui (TST), Hung Hom and Mong Kok. Additional parking spaces

for coaches will be provided as the circumstances may require. For example, the TD permitted coaches to use the temporary open car park near the Hung Hom Ferry Pier in the past few years and plans to provide in end 2010 additional parking spaces near the Kowloon City Ferry Pier in To Kwa Wan. Relevant parties including the TD and the TC are discussing with the tourism industry on the availability of coach parking spaces in the TST district, with a view to exploring feasible improvement options such as promoting better co-ordination among industry players and providing additional roadside parking spaces and loading/unloading bays without affecting the traffic flow. For the latter option, the TD has preliminarily selected some suitable sites in the district for the said purpose and is conducting further feasibility study. It is expected that new parking spaces or loading/ unloading bays for coaches will be available in the district in 2011. Separately, the TD will provide about 100 additional parking spaces for coaches near the Ocean Park to cater for its extension project. Moreover, the TD will provide or plan to provide an appropriate number of additional loading/unloading bays or parking spaces for coaches in Tai O and the vicinity of the Ap Lei Chau Wind Tower Park.

The TD and the relevant departments will continue to monitor the situation at major tourist attractions and, if necessary, identify as far as possible suitable sites to provide additional parking and loading/unloading facilities for coaches. The TD will also work closely with the Police in order to support their enforcement actions against illegal loading/unloading activities and formulate appropriate traffic improvement measures to maintain smooth traffic flow.

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