

TAC discusses franchised bus fare increase applications and proposals to combat drug driving

The Transport Advisory Committee ("TAC") today (January 3) discussed applications for fare increases from The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited and Long Win Bus Company Limited.

The TAC Chairman Mr Rimsky Yuen said that the TAC, in deliberating on the applications, had considered and balanced various factors under the fare adjustment arrangement for franchised buses as approved by the Executive Council in 2006, including the outcome of the formula; the change in median monthly household income reflecting public acceptability and affordability; the quality of the bus companies' services, as well as the past and forecast financial performance of the companies.

"Taking into account all relevant factors, we shall make recommendations based on the two bus operators' own conditions, to enable them to sustain the provision of quality bus services and encourage them to further improve services," he said.

"Similar to other fare increase applications, the TAC will submit its recommendations to the Government for consideration by the Chief Executive-in-Council."

TAC Members were also briefed on the feedback from the public consultation on the proposals to combat drug driving, and the Government's plan to introduce the relevant Bill into the Legislative Council by the second quarter of 2011.

The TAC noted that there was overwhelming public support for the proposals, particularly the "zero-tolerance offence" for persons who drive with a presence of any amount of the six specified illicit drugs.

"The TAC agrees that, to combat drug driving effectively, both 'zero-tolerance offence' and 'general drug driving offence' are required. Otherwise, there will be a loophole in law as the Police may not be able to curb those who drive under the influence of drugs other than the six commonly abused illicit drugs resulting in road safety hazards," Mr Yuen said.

"The guidelines for all preliminary drug tests (the impairment test and rapid oral fluid test) should be set out properly for compliance by police officers, and safeguards should be in place to ensure the proper conduct of the tests and that enforcement powers are not abused," he said.

The TAC also noted that the impairment test is a scientifically based and structured assessment for identification of drivers who are grossly impaired by drugs. "We hope that the Government will continue to work with local and overseas experts to ensure that the overall implementation of all drug driving initiatives are objective and effective," Mr Yuen said.

"We also hope that the Government will continue to actively search for a rapid oral fluid testing device that can detect the six specified illicit drugs. This is to ensure effective enforcement against the zero-tolerance offence," he said.

TAC Members also offered their further views on the findings and recommendations of the consultancy study on rationalising the utilisation of the three road harbour crossings, namely the Cross Harbour Tunnel, the Eastern Harbour Crossing and the Western Harbour Crossing.

"We note that the Government will continue to engage the relevant stakeholders including the transport trade and the concerned District Councils before the consultation ends on February 9, 2011. The TAC notes that the Government will listen to and carefully consider the views received before deciding on the way forward," said Mr Yuen.

Ends/Monday, January 3, 2011

Issued at HKT 19:05