

Rise in number of private cars affects overall traffic conditions

A spokesman for the Transport and Housing Bureau today (April 9) said that the Financial Secretary had proposed to increase motor vehicles first registration tax for private cars in the 2011/12 Budget with an aim to curbing the growth of private cars so as to relieve traffic congestion.

The spokesman said, "From the perspective of efficiency of road space usage, private cars are a less efficient mode of transport. Statistics show that of the total trips made by Hong Kong people, about 30 percent of the people use rails while about 60 percent use other land public transport mode including buses, public light buses and taxis. About 10 percent of the people use private cars. However, the public transport vehicles only take up about 30 percent of the road space while private cars account for as high as a 40 percent of the road space usage."

"That proves private cars have reduced the efficiency of our road space usage and affected other road users as well, in particular the public transport passengers. We must take decisive measures to curb the growth of private cars before traffic congestion deteriorates to the point which could hardly be relieved even if more stringent measures are put in place."

The spokesman said that currently private cars accounted for about 70 percent of the total vehicle fleet size. The continual rise in the number of private cars had obviously slowed down the traffic flow of our roads and affected the efficiency of all vehicles using the roads. Although the Government had all along been implementing various road improvement measures to alleviate traffic congestion, a drop in average car journey speed at the major travel corridors, including non-harbour crossings access roads and roads in the New Territories, was recorded last year (2010).

The spokesman said, "When mapping out the transport policies, the Government has to approach the issues from a macro-point of view instead of merely focusing on the regional traffic conditions. While we are proactively dealing with the undesirable traffic distribution among the road harbour crossings, this issue cannot be confused with the deterioration of the overall traffic condition in Hong Kong. In fact, the current reduction in car journey speed is a territory-wide traffic problem."

Apart from the proposal to increase the first registration tax to contain private

car growth, the Government had considered other measures to ease traffic condition according to the situations. The Administration had adopted a multi-pronged approach to improve traffic condition including integrating transport and land use planning to reduce the public's reliance on road-based transport; actively pursuing the policy of having the public transport system, with railway as the backbone, as the main transport mode; and implementing appropriate traffic management schemes.

The spokesman said, "We must stress that if the rapid rise in the number of private cars are unchecked, it will be futile even if more traffic improvement measures are to be introduced, not to mention that this will also be unfair to other land public transport users."

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