

TAC discusses distribution of traffic at harbour crossings

At the meeting of the Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) today (April 19), members discussed the various options to enhance the distribution of traffic at the three road harbour crossings -- the Cross-Harbour Tunnel (CHT), the Eastern Harbour Crossing (EHC) and the Western Harbour Crossing (WHC).

"We appreciate the efforts made by the Administration in drawing up the various options and their respective considerations and constraints. We had a very detailed discussion on the pros and cons of each of these options. At this stage, it may be too early to come to any definite conclusion on what would be the best option as the whole issue is very complicated," said Ms Teresa Cheng, Chairman of TAC.

"Nevertheless, we support the major principles that any measures to be taken should bring about the overall interest of the public, be fair to taxpayers and be effective in alleviating congestion," she added.

"We also support that the Government should explore such options, and discuss with the franchisees in greater detail. However, in negotiating with the franchisees, it is important to ensure a fair valuation of CHT as well as a toll adjustment mechanism that is acceptable to all parties concerned."

At the meeting, Members also considered the proposed adjustment to the return toll charge for taxi passengers using EHC and WHC. Members noted the taxi trade's proposal to increase the return toll charge for taxi passengers using EHC and WHC from \$15 to \$25, in line with the increase in EHC's toll for taxis.

"We note that the proposed increase is in accordance with the current arrangement, that is, the return toll charge for taxi passengers not commencing

their journey from a cross-harbour taxi-stand and using WHC is pitched at the same level as EHC's tunnel toll for taxis," she said.

Earlier on, the Transport Department consulted the urban taxi trade on the return toll charge for taxi passengers using harbour crossings. Three taxi trade associations submitted the proposal to increase the return toll charge for taxi passengers using EHC and WHC from \$15 to \$25.

The proposal was unanimously supported by all other taxi associations. The target effective date of the increase in return toll charge for taxi passengers is July 1, 2005.

The TAC also considered the Administration's proposed amendments to a few pieces of subsidiary legislation under the Road Traffic Ordinance to update the standards of seat belts and helmets, repeal obsolete traffic signs, and allow parade floats to carry standing passengers and loads.

"The amendments proposed by the Administration are mainly technical in nature, and we support them in order to meet present-day requirements," said Ms Cheng.

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