

LCQ1: On-street parking spaces

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Hoey Simon Lee and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 11):

Question:

Many members of the public have relayed that under the circumstances of a lack of parking spaces, some businesses are occupying on-street parking spaces in various districts on a long-term basis or blocking them with objects in order to use such parking spaces for commercial activities. There are views that such practices defeat the original purpose of installing parking meters to prevent prolonged parking and occupation of road space by vehicles, violate the principle of fair use of public resources, and adversely affect motorists' convenience when going out. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the measures taken by the Government in the past three years to combat the illegal long-term occupation of on-street parking spaces, and the relevant enforcement situation;

(2) as there are views pointing out that the long-term occupation of on-street parking spaces or their blockage with objects by businesses has existed in various districts for many years, what specific measures the Government has in place to step up efforts in combatting such practices; and

(3) as it is learnt that at present, some Mainland cities have implemented number plate recognition systems by installing sensors to identify vehicles in parking spaces to assist with enforcement, whether the authorities will consider introducing similar systems or other innovative technological devices at on-street parking spaces to assist law enforcement agencies in combatting the illegal occupation of on-street parking spaces, including long-term occupation, blockage with objects and holding of commercial activities?

Reply:

President,

It is the Government's policy to centre on public transport, and the Government encourages the public to make good use of the public transport services as far as possible, so as to avoid aggravating the burden on road traffic resulting from excessive private cars (PCs). In response to the parking demand for both PCs and commercial vehicles, over the past years, the Government has been actively pursuing a host of short-term and medium-to-long-term measures, to increase the supply of parking spaces where circumstances permit. Over the past three years, the number of metered parking spaces (metered spaces) has increased by more than 2 300. Having consulted the Transport Department (TD) and the Hong Kong Police Force

(HKPF), a consolidated reply in response to the questions raised by Dr the Hon Hoey Simon Lee is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Government has all along been combatting the illegal occupation of metered spaces, deterring fare evasion and other forms of illegal use, to enhance turnover and ensure these spaces meet short-term parking needs. The HKPF conducts inspections and takes enforcement actions against unpaid parking, and maintains close co-ordination with relevant departments, such as the TD, at the district level for ongoing monitoring. Since 2021, the new-generation parking meter system, equipped with sensors, can detect real-time occupancy and enable the TD to identify unpaid metered spaces through its backend computer system. The TD shares this information with the HKPF via a dedicated application to facilitate enforcement. In terms of actual operation, the meter operator engaged by the TD provides information of unpaid but occupied metered spaces detected by the meters' sensors to the HKPF for follow-up, and dispatches personnel to regularly patrol parking meters in various districts. If any unlawful occupation of metered spaces is observed, the contractor will report the situation to relevant departments (for example, the HKPF, the Lands Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department) for enforcement. Currently, the contractor conducts daily inspections, and refers an average of about 120 000 cases per year to the HKPF for non-payment of parking fees, and the number of referrals concerning parking spaces occupied by non-vehicle items to the HKPF and other relevant departments has risen over the past three years to over 200 cases. The TD also refers public complaints to the appropriate authorities for action. Additionally, the HKPF continues its public awareness and education efforts. Between 2021 and 2024, the number of metered spaces increased by over 10 per cent, while revenue from metered parking fees rose by more than 40 per cent, suggesting improved compliance with paid parking regulations.

Regarding enforcement against other forms of illegal occupation, section 4A of the Summary Offences Ordinance stipulates that anyone who leaves objects in a public place – such as pallets/shop goods to reserve spaces – without reasonable excuse, causing obstruction, inconvenience, or danger to others or vehicles, is liable to a Level 4 fine (\$25,000) or three months' imprisonment.

(3) As mentioned above, the new generation parking meter system is equipped with sensors to detect the usage status of parking spaces in real time. The purpose of collecting information is to provide motorists with locations of vacant on-street parking spaces in real time, and does not have the function of identifying number plate numbers.

Having said that, this information could assist the HKPF and the TD in identifying cases where metered spaces are occupied without payment, enabling targeted enforcement actions by the HKPF. The departments will continue to draw on experiences from other places and advancements in relevant technologies, actively exploring the adoption of new technologies to enhance the management and operational efficiency of metered spaces. The TD plans to conduct a two-month pilot scheme in the fourth quarter of 2025, adopting artificial intelligence sensors in targeted areas with greater demand for

metered spaces and higher rates of illegal occupation of parking spaces. Depending on the success of the trial, we will expand the coverage of the scheme. Regarding number plate recognition systems, the TD remains open-minded and will assess their reliability alongside the cost-effectiveness of upgrading the meter system's hardware and software holistically to determine their suitability for application in Hong Kong.

Thank you, President.