

LCQ18: Retrofitting contactless payment systems to public car parks

Following is a question by the Hon Jimmy Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (January 20):

Question:

Currently, most public car parks adopt contact payment systems, causing inconvenience to motorists. When entering the car parks, motorists have to stop their vehicles and validate an Octopus card by tapping it on an Octopus processor, or get a parking ticket by pressing a button on a ticket issuing machine. When leaving the car parks, they have to stop their vehicles to tap the same Octopus card, or insert into a ticket slot a parking ticket with parking fee settled earlier at a shroff counter, or insert an unpaid parking ticket into a ticket slot and then make payment with an Octopus card. If the motorists have stopped their vehicles at a distance too far from the ticket issuing machines, the ticket slots or the Octopus processors, they have to get out of their vehicles. If the entrance/exit of a car park is located on an incline, their vehicles may roll back when starting up, which may easily cause traffic accidents. Regarding the retrofitting of contactless payment systems to public car parks, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will include the retrofitting of contactless payment systems to public car parks operated by the public and private sectors as one of the Smart Mobility measures being implemented by the Government;

(2) given that the Government has earmarked \$1 billion in the Budget of this financial year to set up the Smart Traffic Fund to promote research and application of vehicle-related innovation and technology, whether the Government will allocate funding from the Fund to subsidise operators of private-sector public car parks to retrofit contactless payment systems to their car parks; and

(3) given that the Transport Department is preparing to retrofit to government tolled tunnels and Tsing Sha Control Area a free-flow tolling system, which uses radio frequency identification readers to detect the toll tags affixed on the windscreens of vehicles for automatic toll collection, whether the Government will incorporate public car parks into the said tolling system to bring convenience to motorists; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Transport Department (TD), my consolidated reply to

the various parts of the Hon Jimmy Ng's question is as follows:

The TD released the Smart Mobility Roadmap for Hong Kong (the Roadmap) in July 2019, proposing, among others, the implementation of the free-flow tolling system (FFTS) at government tolled tunnels by phases. Under the FFTS, motorists can pay tunnel tolls remotely without stopping at toll booths through the use of toll tags (previously known as "in-vehicle units") which adopt the Radio Frequency Identification technology. The Government plans to introduce a bill into the Legislative Council in March this year for providing legal backing for the implementation of the FFTS. Should the bill be passed within the current legislative session, the Government targets to issue toll tags to registered vehicle owners starting from the first half of 2022 so as to tie in with the phased implementation of the FFTS at government tolled tunnels and Tsing Sha Control Area from end 2022 onwards.

The Roadmap also raises the possibility of gradual extension of application of toll tags to other areas, such as payment of car park fees remotely without stopping of vehicles. The Government's plan is to make use of toll tags to implement the FFTS as a start. With the growing popularity of toll tags, the Government may then consider and explore in due course extending the application of toll tags to other areas related to road transport (such as payment of government car park fees).

In respect of public car parks operated by the private sector, the Government believes that individual operators will have their own commercial and operational considerations as to whether or not to install contactless payment systems.

With regard to the Smart Traffic Fund (the Fund), the Government plans to accept applications for the Fund starting from March this year. The Fund is set up to promote research and application of vehicle-related innovation and technology so as to enhance convenience of motorists, increase transport efficiency and improve driving safety. As such, projects involving research and application of contactless payment system stand a chance of getting funding support under the Fund, while those involving only procurement of relevant system do not fall within the scope of the Fund.