

Subsidy to kaito operators under Anti-epidemic Fund

The Transport Department (TD) said today (June 24) that an additional one-off subsidy of \$20,000 will be provided to kaito operators for each vessel deployed in kaito services, involving an amount of about \$1.8 million.

To assist the transport sector in coping with the operational pressure under the current economic environment amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has announced earlier the introduction of a series of relief measures. Kaito operators, who are owners of local commercial mechanised vessels, may directly be granted a one-off non-accountable subsidy of \$10,000, a vessel licence fee waiver for one year and a one-off survey fee subsidy.

"The Government understands that the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the necessary anti-pandemic measures including strict boundary control and social distancing, has reduced the overall patronage of kaito services and that the operating circumstances of certain services may not be improved in the near future. In this regard, under the Anti-epidemic Fund, we will provide an additional one-off non-accountable subsidy of \$20,000 to kaito operators for each vessel deployed in kaito services. The TD will issue letters to kaito operators to inform them of the application arrangements in July," the TD spokesman said.

There are currently a total of 72 kaito routes in Hong Kong. Most kaitos do not provide daily public transport services for the general public. Many of them are mainly intended for tourism or recreational purposes.

For details on the subsidies for transport trades under the Fund, please visit the TD's website (www.td.gov.hk).

LCQ22: Transport issues in New Territories East

Following is a question by the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 24):

Question:

Some residents of New Territories East (NTE) have relayed that the local

and external traffic congestion problems have become increasingly serious. For example, there are heavy traffic congestions at the Lion Rock Tunnel, the Tate's Cairn Tunnel and Tai Po Road (Sha Tin Section) during the morning peak hours every day, causing the residents to spend a lot of time travelling to work or to school, and affecting the livelihood of professional drivers. They have also pointed out problems such as the serious shortage of car parking spaces in the district. Regarding the transport issues in NTE, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the improvement measures implemented in the past four years by the Government in the Sha Tin District to alleviate the traffic congestions and the relevant details;

(2) whether it will (i) construct a new trunk road linking Ma Liu Shui and the Eagle's Nest Tunnel, so as to divert the traffic of the North District and Tai Po District to and from Kowloon, thereby relieving the traffic load of roads in Sha Tin and Ma On Shan, and (ii) take forward the construction of Trunk Road T4 as soon as possible; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) whether it will (i) construct at the Sha Tin town centre an underground network of roads to replace the existing trunk roads, so as to free up above ground spaces for provision of pedestrian areas, and (ii) expeditiously construct multi-storey smart public car parks underneath the Sha Tin town centre and Ma On Shan Sports Ground, so as to address the serious shortage of car parking spaces in the district; if so, of the details and timetables; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) given that the same sections of the various cross-harbour bus routes running in NTE have different fares, whether the Government will urge the franchised bus companies concerned to make improvement; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) whether it knows the details (including completion dates) of the works carried out by the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) in respect of the stations along the East Rail Line (EAL) for (i) installing platform gates for all stations and (ii) narrowing the gap between the platform and the train; and

(6) as MTRCL is currently upgrading the signalling system of EAL in tandem with the Shatin to Central Link project, whether the Government has stepped up its monitoring of the upgrading work to ensure that the testing will not affect the train safety and services of EAL?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been closely monitoring the road network and traffic conditions in the New Territories East, and will review changes in the medium to long term traffic demand for the major roads in the region in a timely manner, with a view to considering taking forward new road infrastructure projects or implementing road improvement works.

After consulting the Transport Department (TD), Highways Department (HyD) and Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), our reply to the various parts of the Hon Elizabeth Quat's question is as follows:

(1) To improve the traffic between the New Territories East and the urban areas, the Government commenced the works for a section of Tai Po Road (Sha Tin Section) of approximately 1.1 kilometre-long between Sha Tin Plaza near Sha Tin Rural Committee Road and Man Wo House of Wo Che Estate near Fo Tan Road to widen it from a dual two-lane carriageway to a dual three-lane carriageway. Commenced in July 2018, the relevant works are expected to be completed in 2023. Upon completion of the project, it will help divert traffic from the Lion Rock Tunnel and the Tate's Cairn Tunnel to the Eagle's Nest Tunnel and the Sha Tin Heights Tunnel.

For improvement to local roads, the TD and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) have been implementing progressively in Sha Tin since 2017 a series of road improvement works on roads connecting to or associated with the Tate's Cairn Tunnel and the Lion Rock Tunnel, so as to rationalise and ease the traffic conditions in the vicinity of the two tunnels. Completed road works and improvement measures include the road markings enhancement and lane adjustment works at the junctions of Tai Chung Kiu Road/Lion Rock Tunnel Road, Tai Chung Kiu Road/Shan Tin Wai Road, Fo Tan Road/Yuen Wo Road and Tai Chung Kiu Road/Siu Lek Yuen Road as well as the adjustment of time allocation for traffic signals at the junction of Sha Tin Rural Committee Road/Yuen Wo Road. Road improvement works underway include extension of the right-turn traffic lane at the junction of Tai Chung Kiu Road/Fo Tan Road and junction widening works at Tai Chung Kiu Road/On Sum Street/On King Street. The CEDD expects that the two above-mentioned works items will be completed in the third quarter of 2020 and the second quarter of 2021 respectively.

Besides, to alleviate the traffic congestion at the Tate's Cairn Tunnel, the TD implemented traffic management measures in the tunnel control area during peak hours, which include placing temporary traffic cones between the first and the second left lanes near the Kowloon-bound toll booths to prevent other vehicles from obstructing the entrance of the Bus-Bus Interchange (BBI) for buses, and arranging staff of the tunnel management company to direct traffic at the BBI exit. On the other hand, in order to smooth further the operation of the BBI, the TD is liaising with the HyD to widen the entrance of the BBI, so as to alleviate traffic congestion at the tunnel caused by buses queueing into the BBI. The works are expected to be completed in end 2020.

(2) (i) and (ii) The CEDD is conducting an investigation study on the construction of Trunk Road T4. Trunk Road T4 will be a dual two-lane carriageway connecting Sha Tin Road and Shing Mun Tunnel Road/ Tsing Sha Highway. It will provide a direct road link between Ma On Shan and Tsuen Wan/West Kowloon bypassing local roads within Sha Tin District, thereby further improving the traffic conditions in the area. The investigation study is expected to be completed in early 2021. The CEDD will then proceed with the relevant statutory procedures and design work after which funding approval from the Legislative Council will be sought.

In the long term, the Transport and Housing Bureau plans to take forward the "Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030" on the basis of the conceptual spatial requirements to be firmed up under the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" (Hong Kong 2030+) planning study, which is being conducted by the Development Bureau and the Planning Department. Based on the latest planning information, the TD and HyD will examine the demand for and supply of the transport infrastructure, including railways and major roads, in Hong Kong from 2031 to 2041 or later. Based on the final development strategy of the Hong Kong 2030+ planning study, the TD and HyD will conduct strategic studies, which include examining the layout of the proposed railway and major road infrastructure (including the strategic routes between North District/Tai Po and Kowloon), in order to meet the needs for the overall long-term land use developments of Hong Kong. The TD and HyD will also examine the impact of the proposed transport infrastructure on the existing transport network in order to formulate the corresponding strategies.

(3) (i) As the construction of underground transportation networks would have impacts on various aspects including transportation, environment, drainage, sewerage, land use and planning, provision of relevant facilities should in general be studied in the planning of new development areas. In planning the development of Sha Tin New Town, the Government already provided elevated pedestrian walkways and footbridges at suitable locations to separate the pedestrians from vehicular traffic as far as possible. Sha Tin town centre is currently a highly developed area. The construction of an underground transportation network in the town centre will require significant planning changes and will seriously affect private lands, properties and traffic conditions in the area. The TD therefore considers the proposal not feasible. In addition, complete separation of pedestrians from vehicular traffic is often not the most appropriate arrangement. For example, in order to facilitate loading and unloading of goods for shops on the ground floor, the footpaths outside such shops should be connected directly to the carriageways. There are also needs for emergency exits at suitable locations in the area to facilitate the operation of rescue vehicles.

(3) (ii) The Government will continue to provide public car parking spaces in suitable "Government, Institution or Community" facilities and public open space projects in line with the "single site, multiple uses" principle. Insofar as Sha Tin is concerned, the Government plans to incorporate a public car park in the "Amenity Complex in Area 103, Ma On Shan" project, involving about 400 parking spaces. As for the existing Ma On Shan Sports Ground site, subject to technical feasibility, the Government will also actively consider providing an appropriate number of public car parking spaces thereat when the site is redeveloped in future.

(4) The fares of franchised bus services are determined according to the scales of fares made under section 13 (1) of the Public Bus Services Ordinance (Cap 230). The scales of fares specified the maximum fare chargeable based on the journey distance and route group of a bus route. Since different bus companies have different operating history, mode of operation and district network, their respective scales of fares are not the

same. In determining the fares for individual routes, franchised bus companies will, apart from making reference to the scales of fares, take into account actual circumstances including the operating environment of each route, and the fares of other similar public transport services, etc.

The TD has been urging franchised bus companies to charge similar fare levels for cross-harbour bus routes serving similar catchment areas as far as possible. In fact, for the 39 cross-harbour bus routes now serving four districts in New Territories East (North District, Tai Po, Sha Tin and Tseung Kwan O), similar fare levels are charged for routes with similar catchment areas. However, the actual fare levels of individual routes may slightly differ from others having similar catchment areas due to differences in actual journey distance and the frequency and magnitude of fare adjustment of different franchised bus companies.

(5) (i) and (ii) The construction works of automatic platform gates (APG) along the East Rail Line (EAL) stations is under way. The strengthening works for the EAL platforms, construction of associated system equipment rooms and facilities have been substantially completed. Currently, part of the advance works for APG installation is being implemented. To suit the door locations of new trains, installation of APG will commence after the 9-car train replacement on EAL is completed. According to the work plan of the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), installation will be carried out in stages and the first stage will be completed by the end of 2022.

On the other hand, as the 9-car trains are wider than the existing trains on EAL, the platform gaps will be slightly narrowed. Therefore, issues on the platform gaps will be resolved after the installation of the APG.

(6) The signalling system of the EAL is being replaced under the Shatin to Central Link project. As with other major railway systems and equipment, the MTRCL is conducting rigorous multi-stage tests for the new signalling system. The new signalling system of the EAL shall only be allowed to put into service after the EMSD has verified that it is in safe and sound condition to do so.

[US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender result](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

US Dollar Liquidity Facility tender result:

Tender date : June 24, 2020 (Wednesday)

Settlement date	:	June 26, 2020 (Friday)
Repayment date	:	July 2, 2020 (Thursday)
Tenor	:	6 Days
Amount applied	:	Nil
Amount allotted	:	Nil
Lowest interest rate accepted	:	Nil
Highest interest rate accepted	:	Nil

LCQ 10: Pre-construction preparatory work of public works projects for public housing development

Following is a question by Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 24):

Question:

The Government is taking forward public housing development projects on two sites at Pik Wan Road of Yau Tong, namely Site A at the junction of Ko Chiu Road and Ko Chiu Path as well as Site B at the junction of Ko Chiu Road and Pik Wan Road. The findings of a study released earlier by a think tank show that Site A and Site B were rezoned to residential use in 2011 or earlier and in 2014 respectively, and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) commenced the feasibility studies in 2015 as well as the site investigation and design in 2017 for the supporting infrastructure of the public housing development projects concerned. The think tank has pointed out that the two sites do not adjoin one another and the aforesaid arrangement has caused unnecessary delay to the public housing development project on Site A. Regarding the pre-construction preparatory work of public works projects, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the year in which the rezoning of Site A to residential use was completed, and the reasons why CEDD did not forthwith commence the feasibility study as well as the site investigation and design for the site;
- (2) of the completion dates of the site investigation and design for the two sites;
- (3) of the principles or criteria based on which CEDD determines (i) when the feasibility study as well as the site investigation and design for a site

should commence, and (ii) the priorities for commencing such work for various sites; and

(4) of the following information on the public housing development projects, in each year since 2013, the pre-construction preparatory work for which CEDD was responsible: (i) the name and location of the project, (ii) the time (estimated/actual) required for the feasibility study, (iii) the time (estimated/actual) required for the site investigation and design, (iv) the number of housing units involved, and (v) the latest progress (set out in a table)?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Development Bureau and the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), my reply to the question raised by the Hon Wilson OR is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) is undertaking a public housing development at the area adjoining Ko Chiu Road and Pik Wan Road in Yau Tong. The project, including two parts which are Site A in the North and Site B in the South, is targeted for completion in 2027-28 by phases. It will provide a total of about 3 100 units.

The Government earmarked Site A which had been zoned "Residential (Group A)" (R(A)) in 1985, for public housing development in 2013-14. As for Site B, the Government conducted a review on "Government, Institution or Community" (GIC) sites earlier with an intention of expanding land resources, and subsequently suggested using this site, which had been originally reserved for development of a Government clinic, for public housing development. With reference to the recommendation of the review, the Government rezoned Site B from "GIC" to "R(A)" under Cha Kwo Ling, Yau Tong, Lei Yue Mun Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) in 2013. The OZP was approved by the Chief Executive-in-Council in 2014.

After completion of the above-mentioned rezoning exercise, the Government decided to integrate the Government clinic (which was originally planned to be provided in Site B) in Site A for public housing development. HA conducted technical assessments for the development project in 2014 to 2016. Scope of the assessments included site characteristics, flat production, time required for development, and views of local communities, etc. As the location of the clinic had significant effect on the site layout, site formation and road works design, etc., the Government decided in late-2016 that a Community Health Centre including a Government clinic would be provided at Site A. CEDD conducted site investigation and design works for the project in early-2017 to late-2019; and is going to carry out site formation works in late-2020. The two sites are targeted to be handed over to HA in 2023 for public housing construction.

(3) The Government has been adopting a multi-pronged approach, including rezoning, to increase land supply for public housing in the short, medium and

long-term. For sites required rezoning, the Government will normally conduct site feasibility studies, preliminary planning and design as well as technical assessments prior to the rezoning exercise. As for the sequence of carrying out the above works, it is subject to a host of factors, including the actual conditions of individual site, availability of resources required for various works items, etc.

(4) From 2013 to present, information of the relevant feasibility studies, site investigations and/ or design consultancy agreements on public housing developments carried out by CEDD is set out at Annex. The feasibility studies and site investigation/ design works usually take about two to four years respectively, and the actual time required depends on the scale and constrain of individual site.

LCQ21: Supporting vehicle maintenance industry

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (June 24):

Question:

Some owners of vehicle repair workshops (workshops) have relayed that the vehicle maintenance industry has been hard hit by the coronavirus disease 2019 epidemic in recent months, with business turnover having dropped significantly. It is estimated that so far, over 100 workshops have closed down, with nearly 800 vehicle mechanics becoming unemployed or underemployed, and that some workshops are on the brink of closing down. However, workshops are unable to benefit from the two rounds of relief measures previously launched by the Government. Such owners have also pointed out that with the redevelopment of buildings in old districts one after the other, the number of street-level shops suitable for accommodating workshops has been dwindling, and the rental of existing workshops has been increasing incessantly. As a result, the vehicle maintenance industry has been shrinking continuously, making it difficult for the industry to meet the repair and maintenance needs of the nearly 800 000 vehicles across the territory. This situation may ultimately affect road safety and roadside air quality. Regarding the support provided by the Government for the vehicle maintenance industry, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Chief Executive announced on the 6th of this month that the Government would launch relief measures for workshops, of the details of such measures, and whether the measures will include the provision of wage subsidies for workshop owners in respect of each employee who is aged 65 or

above and has not participated in any Mandatory Provident Fund scheme; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(2) given that the industry has all along proposed for years that the Government construct an automobile maintenance complex equipped with central disposal facilities for waste oil, exhaust gas and waste water, so that workshops may move in for clustered operation and that the owners be charged rents of a level affordable to them, of the progress and preliminary conclusion of the Government's study on this suggestion?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Frankie Yick's question is as follows:

(1) To assist the vehicle maintenance industry in coping with the operating pressure brought by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Government announced on June 22, 2020, that each eligible vehicle maintenance workshop (VMW) would be granted a one-off non-accountable subsidy of \$50,000.

Eligible VMWs can submit applications regardless of their registration status under the Voluntary Registration Scheme for Vehicle Maintenance Workshops of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD). VMWs applying for the subsidy must fulfill the following major criteria including having operated a vehicle maintenance business in a fixed place (with vehicle working bay(s)) on or before February 1, 2020, and maintaining a business operation on the day of application. Applicants will have to provide records of operation during the period from February 1 to May 31, 2020, e.g. information about the employed vehicle mechanics, vehicle maintenance service records, electricity bills or water bills of VMWs. VMWs that have received subsidy from the Retail Sector Subsidy Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund will not be subsidised under the current subsidy scheme.

Application for the subsidy is expected to open from mid-July 2020. EMSD is undertaking the relevant preparatory work and will announce the detailed arrangements in due course, including the application period, supporting documents required from the applicants in relation to the eligible VMWs and application procedures.

Separately, in order to maintain employment during the pandemic, the Government has launched the Employment Support Scheme (ESS) to provide time-limited financial support to employers to retain their employees who will otherwise be made redundant. All employers, including those in the vehicle maintenance trade, who have been making Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) contributions for their employees or have set up Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance Schemes are eligible to apply for ESS. ESS has covered some 60 000 employees aged 65 or above with MPF accounts. Coupled with the aforesaid subsidy specifically provided for the vehicle maintenance trade, we believe that it would further help the trade tide over and benefit relevant VMWs and their employees.

(2) EMSD is conducting, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Productivity Council, the first stage benchmarking consultancy study on the designs of multi-storey buildings for VMWs, as well as related experiences in the provision of such workshops in different jurisdictions outside Hong Kong. The study is expected to be completed within the third quarter of 2020. The second stage of the consultancy study will commence after the first to examine whether the designs and options identified in the first stage could be applied to Hong Kong. The Transport and Housing Bureau and EMSD will consult the relevant stakeholders on the findings of the consultancy study when appropriate, with a view to collecting their views on the specific design requirements, technical details, mode of operation, etc. of multi-storey buildings for VMWs.