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The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

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16 May 2013

Ms Mary So, Clerk
Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Fax : 2840 0716)

Dear Ms So,

Consideration of Chapter 2 of the Director of Audit's Report No.60

Administration of road safety measures

Thank you for your letter of 7 May 2013. Attached please a paper on the policy objectives of the Government on road safety and the measures implemented in this regard.

Yours sincerely,


(Kwong Ka-yin)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

**Public Accounts Committee on
Director of Audit's Report No. 60
Chapter 2: "Administration of Road Safety Measures"**

Purpose

This paper serves to brief Members of the Public Accounts Committee ("PAC") on the policy objectives of the Government on road safety and the measures implemented in this regard.

Policy Objectives

2. All along, the Government has spared no effort in promoting and enhancing road safety with its three-pronged strategy under which the safety of road users is protected via legislative amendment and enhanced enforcement, improvement to road facilities, as well as launching of publicity and educational activities.

3. Initiatives on road safety are undertaken by the Transport and Housing Bureau ("THB") together with other relevant departments. THB is tasked with formulating and reviewing policies and legislations relating to road safety, and advising the Chief Executive in Council on related policies. The Transport Department ("TD") assists THB to deal with work on law-making, promotion and education on road safety. TD will analyse traffic accident data and devise appropriate traffic improvement measures. TD also undertakes vehicle examination and licensing as well to ensure the safety of vehicles running on roads. The Hong Kong Police Force ("Police") is responsible for road traffic enforcement. The Police also participate in education and promotion efforts, launch road safety campaigns, and collect information on traffic accidents. Road safety talks and seminars targeting school children, drivers and the general public are frequently held by the Police.

4. Established in 1983, the Road Safety Council ("RSC") coordinates road safety activities in Hong Kong. RSC is a consultative body comprising Government officials and representatives of non-government organisations and academic institutions appointed by the Secretary for Transport and Housing. It disseminates road safety messages to different road user groups through promotional and educational activities.

Road Safety Measures Implemented in Recent Years

5. In response to the trend of traffic accidents and issues of public concern, the Government has put in place many new measures. These measures aim at combating improper driving behaviour and enhancing operational safety of public transport modes.

6. On tackling drink driving, the legislation on the random breath test (“RBT”) was enacted in 2008. Starting from February 2009, the Police have been mounting roadblocks and spot checks to conduct RBT. From February 2009 to December 2012, over 410,000 RBTs were conducted on drivers, accounting for 22% of the total number of driving licence holders (1,900,000 plus holders). As indicated by the Police’s figures, since the introduction of RBT, the number of traffic accidents involving drink driving has reduced by 70%. The Police are planning to adopt mobile evidential breath testing technologies to improve the effectiveness of drink driving enforcement actions. The Police have commissioned the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to conduct comprehensive testing of mobile evidential breath test device. Subject to satisfactory testing and trial results, the device will be used for enforcement actions as soon as possible.

7. To combat drug driving, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Ordinance 2011 has empowered the Police to require a driver to undergo preliminary drug tests if he or she is suspected of driving under the influence of specified illicit drugs or drugs, or is involved in a traffic accident, or has committed a traffic offence. The legislation came into effect in mid-March 2012 and has achieved initial results. During the first 12 months upon the commencement of the new legislation, the Police carried out 121 Drug Influence Recognition Observations and 34 Impairment Tests. As a result, 27 drivers were prosecuted. The Police will keep watch for the latest technologies and good overseas practices, to strengthen enforcement actions against such crime.

8. In order to effectively combat the illegal activities of red light jumping and speeding, TD has completed Phase 3 of the red light camera system expansion programme and Phase 2 of the speed enforcement camera system expansion programme in 2010 and 2011 respectively. To further facilitate effective enforcement by the Police, TD has just commenced Phase 4 of the red light camera system expansion programme, which is expected to be completed in 2015. TD will seek funding approval from the Finance Committee in mid-2013 to conduct a trial scheme of the average speed camera

system at Shenzhen Bay Bridge in 2014. TD will continue to draw on overseas experience and explore new technologies to improve the existing systems.

9. In April 2012, we amended the Road Traffic Ordinance with a view to deterring speeding by drivers of public light buses (“PLBs”) and enhancing their safe operation. The measures that took effect on 13 April 2012 include imposing a maximum speed limit for PLBs at 80km/h, mandating all PLBs to install speed limiters (and pre-set their maximum speed limit to 80km/h) and mandating display of PLB driver identity plates on PLBs by PLB drivers. Since the commencement of the new legislation, the Police have conducted a number of territory-wide enforcement operations targetting PLBs to check, inter alia, if PLB drivers have committed speeding and whether PLBs are equipped with speed limiters as required. For the requirements to make electronic data recording device (commonly known as black box) a basic equipment on newly registered vehicles, and to require applicants of PLB driving licences to attend a mandatory pre-service training course under the same legislative amendment, we expect to submit the relevant commencement notice to the Legislative Council within this year to bring them into operation. We will continue to work with the PLB trade and review from time to time the current measures to enhance the safe operation of PLBs.

10. Regarding the Audit Commission’s recommendation of taking into account the health check requirements on taxi and bus drivers adopted by other places, TD is actively coordinating a review being carried out by franchised bus operators on the health check arrangements for bus drivers to further enhance the operational safety of franchised buses. We are also reviewing the age requirement for applicants to produce a medical examination certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner when applying for issuance or renewal of driving licence. Without compromising the personal data privacy, we are exploring measures that can address the problem arising from the need to obtain prior consent of drivers suspected to be suffering from impaired health for accessing their medical records.

11. All relevant government departments will continue to work closely in striving to ensure road safety.

Publicity and Education

12. As mentioned above, RSC has been proactively supporting the Government in promoting messages on road safety and organising related activities. The Road Safety Campaign Committee under RSC seeks to improve the safety awareness among road users and their behaviour on roads through various publicity means such as TV announcements in the public interests, exhibitions and community involvement projects. RSC will continue to work with TD and the Police to promote road safety messages on issues of public concern.

Way Forward

13. The Government will strive to enhance road safety through legislation, enforcement, improvement on road facilities as well as publicity and education with a view to achieving the road safety vision of “Zero Accidents on the Road, Hong Kong's Goal”.

Transport and Housing Bureau
May 2013