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# \$5 flagfall for taxis under study

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The Executive Council has agreed in principle to higher taxi fares which could see the flagfall charge increase in urban areas to \$5 for the first two or three miles.

The \$5 flag with 50 cents for each subsequent one-fifth mile is the latest of three specific fare increase plans now under consideration by the Transport Advisory Committee.

Exco recently agreed in principle to increase fares but referred the matter back to the TAC for a final formula. The committee is expected to put together one schedule of increases for Exco's consideration next month.

In addition, stiffer sanctions against taxi malpractices are expected to be introduced during the next

Legislative Council session.

The proposal for a \$5 flagfall, up from the current \$2, was featured prominently at a recent TAC meeting.

The \$5 plan is the latest surprise sprung by the TAC in advising on attempts to achieve a punishingly high flagfall charge to reduce demand for short trips and to cut taxi demand generally.

For New Territories passengers, the proposed new rate is \$1.50 for the first mile and 30 cents for every one-fifth mile, compared with the current rate of \$1 and 20 cents.

The proposed new rate for waiting time is 50 cents for every 2½ minutes, or \$12 per hour for urban taxis and 30 cents or \$7.20 for New Territories taxis. The current waiting time charge is \$4.80 per hour for both.

Additional fares have also been proposed.

For every additional passenger to the hirer, irrespective of distance, the proposed additional fare is 50 cents.

This per capita surcharge is designed to discourage drivers

from their current practice of charging each passenger individually for certain journeys.

For every article or baggage, or every animal the proposed rate is 50 cents.

Also, for every journey involving a toll charge or vehicular ferry crossing, passengers will have to pay twice the appropriate toll or ferry charge.

This package of fare increases was a major topic at a recent TAC meeting.

In addition, stiffer penalties against malpractices were proposed for the trade along with other licence fees as yet determined by the Secretary to ensure increases will not result in higher profits.

For comparison, the TAC has recommended two additional urban fare structures - \$3 for flagfall and 50 cents for every one-fifth mile and \$4 for the first two miles and 50 cents for each additional one-fifth mile.

These, which had been indicated in earlier reports, have now become the other two proposals under consideration by the TAC.

Taxi fare increases had been first sought by associations in the trade some 18 months ago to which the Transport Department responded with some research.

Proposals based on such research were submitted to the TAC about a year ago but they were rejected because members thought the information was insufficient.

Up-dated information was passed to the TAC again and after an increasing number of malpractice complaints in the trade came to a head last month, TAC members thought fare increases should be granted.

But these must be coupled with stiffer sanctions against malpractices.

## ... and its \$290,000 for a licence

A bid in excess of \$290,000 topped the list of tenders for taxi licences last week.

The bid was \$291,500.

The average tender for the 300 licences granted by the Transport Department was about \$244,000, representing an increase of about 16 per cent since April, according to a department spokesman.

Tenders for the 300 licences offered at that time averaged about \$210,000, in itself a 15 per cent increase over those of last year.

The Transport Department announced on Friday that 297 of the licences had been granted.

A public ballot was held yesterday to determine which of nine identical bids of \$242,828 would receive the three remaining licences.

The nine bids were submitted by two individuals - one with five bids and the other four.

In the ballot, the individual with five bids obtained two of the remaining three licences. The other licence went to the man who had offered four bids.