

## **HKUST Institute for Public Policy Expert Forum : Experts Share Insights on Equitable Regulation**

Two major ride-hailing industry leaders unite in Hong Kong for the first time, joining transport experts to discuss regulatory details for Hong Kong's evolving landscape

**14 November 2025 (Hong Kong) :** The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) Institute for Public Policy today concluded an expert forum on ride-hailing service regulations, providing critical, data-backed policy recommendations ahead of the government announcements in 2026.

The event, themed "Global Best Practices and Local Realities: Shaping Hong Kong's Ride-Hailing Landscape," hosted over 100 guests and featured a panel of leading experts, including Ms. Jamie Ko (Grab), Ms. Nicole Lee (Uber Hong Kong), Prof. Sylvia He (CUHK), Mr. Terry Chan (AECOM), and moderator Prof. Donald Low (HKUST).

### **Academic experts recognize benefits of ride-hailing**

The forum highlighted the proven benefits of ride-hailing that the regulation should aim to preserve. Academic experts noted that ride-hailing platforms use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and data analytics to optimize traffic flow, reduce empty mileage, and improve vehicle utilization. Furthermore, it acts as a vital complement to existing transport, serving traditionally underserved areas.

Prof. Sylvia He, Director of Urban Studies Programme, CUHK, emphasized the technological advantages: "Ride-hailing platforms utilize Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and data analytics for more efficient dispatch, meeting real-time travel demand while reducing empty mileage, providing more mobility options, and offering convenience to both residents and tourists."

Mr. Terry Chan, Executive Director of the Traffic & Transport Planning Team, noted that as part of current urban transport planning, ride-hailing has proven to be a vital complement to existing transport, including taxis, responding to evolving travel preferences and demographic changes. With emerging mobility technologies, such as autonomous vehicles, Hong Kong has to prepare itself with forward looking regulations.

### **Experts aligns on flexibility being the key to a viable quota system**

Industry experts shared that the use of vehicle quota is an unusual and counterproductive regulatory approach globally.

Ms. Nicole Lee, Head of Public Policy and Government Affairs of Uber Hong Kong, advocated that any quota system must be data-driven and consider demand fluctuations: "Strict quotas erode the flexibility and push out part-time participants who are crucial for meeting peak hour demand. In order to ensure stable supply, we strongly advocate for a dynamic, data-driven quota system."

Lee highlighted the tangible impact of fixed caps: "The true measure of a regulatory system should be on its impact on the public. We strongly believe that a dynamic review mechanism tied directly to service quality indicators like wait times and trip completion rates will be the best way to go. This ensures that the quota automatically adjusts to meet real-time public demand, preventing the service degradation—like

the 300% wait time increases compared to non-capped markets as seen in Glasgow — from ever compromising Hong Kong's ride-hailing experiences."

Ms. Jamie Ko, Regional Public Affairs and Policy Director of Grab, advocated for no-quota frameworks as the global best practice, citing Singapore's effective system for balancing supply and demand even with dense population.

"Quotas are uncommon around the globe because supply caps fundamentally are at odds with the flexible nature of ride-hailing, which relies on part-time drivers for peak demand. We saw in markets like the Philippines that insufficient driver supply severely restricts mobility and negates efficiency benefits. This tends to drive prices up - as we understand in economics when demand exceeds supply, prices go up." Ko added.

Both experts stressed that strict quotas erode the flexibility crucial for meeting peak hour demand, noting that over 60% of drivers in Hong Kong drive fewer than 20 hours per week and are essential part-time participants in the supply network. A dynamic system is necessary to ensure stable supply and reliable transport options.

### **Comprehensive Regulatory Roadmap Emerges**

"This forum provided government policymakers with concrete regulatory recommendations backed by international evidence," said Prof. Donald Low, forum moderator. "Our analysis shows Hong Kong can learn from both the successes and challenges globally to create a framework balancing innovation with consumer experiences."

### **Key recommendations emerging from the dialogue include:**

- **Dynamic Quotas:** Implement data-driven quota systems with regular objective adjustments based on service quality indicators (e.g., wait times).
- **Sufficient Supply at Initial Implementation:** Initial supply should be comparable with current level to minimize disruption to the public and drivers.
- **Equitable Levy:** Set up a temporary fund to provide transition support for the taxi industry through flat fees collected through all point-to-point transportation trips, mirroring Australia's New South Wales model to ensure frontline taxi drivers being the core beneficiaries.
- **Differentiated Licensing:** Establish a fair and accessible driver qualification system that recognizes the distinct skill requirements for ride-hailing versus traditional taxi services.

### **About HKUST Institute for Public Policy**

The HKUST Institute for Public Policy (IPP) focuses on policy research that has significant potential impact on social, economic and environmental wellbeing. Leveraging on the university's strengths in science, business, engineering and social science, IPP aims to promote interdisciplinary policy research as a means to tackle key policy challenges confronting Hong Kong, the mainland, and the region, such as ageing, environmental degradation, and social inequalities. We will pay particular attention to the impact of scientific developments and technological innovations on policy development, as well as opportunities to advance policy discourse through evidenced-based approaches to policy-making.