

## No cash? Pay taxi fares by flashing the plastic

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The days of rooting around in your pockets for cash to pay for taxis could soon be coming to an end.

After a six-month trial, passengers will be able to pay their fares by credit card in at least 600 of Hong Kong's 18,000 cabs by the end of the year.

And the method is expected to become universal - even though drivers still prefer to be paid in cash.

Autotoll, Dah Sing (SEHK: [0440](#)) Bank and Visa announced yesterday the launch of a new phase in implementing what they call the autoTAXI system.

Users of Visa payWave cards will be able to swipe their cards against a reader, much as an Octopus card is used on other forms of transport.

No signature will be required for fares of less than HK\$500.

Normal Visa cards can also be used by inserting the card into a reader or swiping against the terminal.

Daniel Lai Man-keung, a driver who took part in the six-month trial, said he was pleased with the new system and said it had led to an increase in passengers. But not all drivers are as optimistic. The Urban Taxi Driver Association Joint Committee interviewed more than 1,000 drivers last year and almost all were opposed to a credit card system.

They said it would cause unnecessary hassle and lead to increased expenses. Also, they could lose cash because it would affect their practice of rounding up fares by up to 50 cents and pocketing the extra change.

A report in 2008 showed the practice could be worth, in total, more than HK\$2 million a year to drivers.

Driver Lau Chung-ki said: "We want our money now and don't like it wired to us on the next business day."

And passenger Gary Bradshaw, 43 said: "I take a taxi when I need it. The payment method carries no weight in my decision-making."

But Tong Yeuk-fung, chairman of the Hong Kong Taxi and Public Light Bus Association, said he expected the payment system to become universal once passengers started choosing credit card-enabled taxis.

The taxi committee said it had ceased talks on a deal with Octopus.