

# Jobless vie for work as “motorbike taxi drivers” 「機車宅急便」 失業族搶入行



67-year-old Huang Teh-ming, who has worked as a motorcycle taxi driver for 40 years, sits astride his motorbike in Taipei City's Beitou District on April 15.

PHOTO: LIN HSIU-TZU, LIBERTY TIMES

四月十五日，在台北市北投區擔任機車宅急便騎士已四十年的黃德明（現年六十七歲）跨坐在機車上。

照片：自由時報記者林秀姿攝

The door-to-door motorcycle taxi services that run from Gongguan and Guangming roads in Taipei City's Beitou District are a special feature of the area's scenery, having been part of the lives of Beitou residents for **decades**. Until recently, the motorbikes were all driven by elderly men in their 60s. In the poor economic climate of the past few years, many middle-aged people in their 40s have had the idea of joining the business, making older drivers worried about losing their livelihoods.

Close by the Beitou MRT station there are seven firms providing door-to-door motorcycle taxi services that include shopping, paying bills and delivering goods as well as carrying passengers. They are only a phone call away. The drivers make NT\$800 a day on average, which adds up to more than NT\$27,000 a month — not a bad **income** for elderly people.

The names of the door-to-door motorcycle firms are all the last four digits of their telephone numbers. Mr. Lin, who has worked for over 20 years at the “0077” taxi firm, is 71 years old this year. Lin says Beitou is a hilly district with narrow, winding roads. In the past, few people owned cars and there were no shuttle busses. 20 years or more ago, Beitou was known as “the land of hot springs and gentle caresses,” an allusion to the sexual services that were flourishing in those days. In the daytime, motorbike taxis ferried customers and housewives to and fro. In the evening, they busied themselves carrying female escorts to drink with their clients. In those days, motorcycle taxi drivers' daily income was at least three times what they make today.

67-year-old Huang Teh-ming has been in the business for more than four decades and is now the boss of the “0077” taxi firm. He says that plenty of people still call in for taxi services despite the poor economic climate. Morning business is mostly carrying high school and el-

ementary school students to school. At midday the drivers get busy delivering lunch boxes, buying vegetables and carrying people from the MRT station up into the hills. A lot of celebrities live in Beitou, and many of them can't be bothered to come down out of the hills. They rely on motorcycle taxi drivers to go shopping for vegetables and other items. The drivers revealed that legislator Yu Tian and his wife often call and asks them to do shopping **errands**.

Huang Teh-ming says that recently, with unemployment on the rise, many middle-aged men in their 40s and 50s have got the idea of joining the motorcycle taxi trade and vying for jobs. They think that, for middle-aged people, losing one's job means becoming a caretaker in a big building. Unfortunately, caretakers are only paid about NT\$22,000 a month and are tied to their workplaces for 12 hours a day. It would be better to work as a motorcycle taxi driver, they think, because work hours are more flexible and you can make NT\$4,000 to 5,000 more each month.

In reality, being a motorcycle taxi driver is sometimes tough work. In summer the asphalt roads are like sizzling hot pans, and if you get stuck following behind a bus you get a face full of **noxious** fumes. The worst thing in winter is when it rains, so you get wet as well as cold. If you are pressed for time, it can be quite dangerous.

Huang says supply and demand are now just about balanced in the door-to-door motorcycle taxi business. It should not be made too easy for new people to join the trade, he says. Otherwise, as more and more people take up the job, they will overcrowd the market and everyone's wages will fall. It would be better to wait until the older drivers get too old to ride before letting new people join the profession, says Huang.

(LIBERTY TIMES, TRANSLATED BY JULIAN CLEGG)



台北市北投區公館路、光明路上的「機車宅急便」是北投特殊的風景，長年來陪伴北投人的生活，原本都由當地六十歲以上的阿伯擔任騎士，近一年來因為景氣不佳，許多四十多歲的壯年人也想入行，阿伯騎士們很擔心飯碗被搶。

捷運北投站附近有七間機車行，專做「機車宅急便」服務，代客購物、繳費、送貨與載客，一通電話隨叫隨到，平均一天可賺八百元，一個月也有兩萬七千多元，對老人家而言是不錯的收入。

「機車宅急便」的店名都取自電話號碼末四碼，在「0077」機車行工作二十多年的林老先生今年已經七十一歲；他說，北投都是山區小路，以前私家車少，又沒有接駁巴士，二十多年前北投是有名的「溫柔鄉」，風化業盛行時，白天接送客人與家庭主婦，晚上則接送「小姐」去陪酒，非常忙碌，一天賺的是現在三倍以上。

入行四十年的黃德明今年六十七歲，是「0077」機車行的老闆。他說，景氣雖差，機車叫客的人依舊很多，尤其早上接送國中小學生上課、中午幫忙買便當、買菜，以及到捷運站載客上山，北投區名人多，不少名人懶得下山，都依賴阿伯騎士們買菜、購物，據透露，立委余天夫妻就常打電話請他們採買。

黃德明說，最近失業率攀高，許多四、五十歲的中壯年人都想入行搶飯碗，他們認為中年失業就是去大樓當管理員，但管理員月薪兩萬二左右，十二小時工時被綁得死死的，不如做機車宅急便，工時彈性自由，月薪也高出四、五千元。

不過，機車宅急便有時也很辛苦。夏天柏油路像滾燙的油鍋，跟在公車後頭跑，滿臉都是臭煙；冬天則怕下雨，又濕又冷，還要趕時間，非常危險。

黃德明說，目前機車宅急便的供需市場已經平衡，不能輕易讓新人入行，越多人入行，會瓜分掉市場，使每人薪資變薄，得等這些老人家騎不動了，才可能讓新人入行。

(自由時報記者林秀姿)

## TODAY'S WORDS 今日單字



1. **decade** /ˈdekeɪd/ n.  
十年 (shí2 nián2)

**例:** Marcia has lived in this area for decades and can tell you anything about the place.  
(瑪希亞住在這一區已經幾十年了，她可以告訴你關於這裡的大小事。)

2. **income** /ˈɪn,kəm/ n.  
收入 (shōu1 rù4)

**例:** Ernie's monthly income has increased since he completed his graduate degree.  
(恩尼拿到碩士學位後，他的月薪就調漲了。)

3. **errand** /ˈɛrənd/ n.  
差事 (chāi1 shì4)

**例:** Rory used to spend the summer doing errands for his grandfather's company.  
(羅瑞往年暑假都會在他祖父的公司幫忙做點差事。)

4. **noxious** /ˈnɒksjəs/ adj.  
有害的 (yǒu3 hài4 de5)

**例:** The school had to be shut down after someone reported noxious fumes coming from the boiler room.  
(有人檢舉校內鍋爐室釋放有害濃煙後，學校被迫停課。)