

For information

**Legislative Council
Panels on Environmental Affairs and Transport**

LIGHT BUSES USING CLEANER FUEL

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides the information requested by Members concerning the proposed incentive scheme to encourage diesel light bus owners to replace their vehicles early with LPG or electric ones.

BACKGROUND

2. At the joint meeting of the Panels on Environmental Affairs and Transport on 13 June 2002, Members requested the Administration to provide the following information –

- (a) specifications for both Euro III diesel and LPG light buses promulgated by the Government;
- (b) different LPG models available worldwide that can meet the specifications laid down by the Administration;
- (c) measures which have been and will be taken by the Administration to enable the supply of a wider choice of LPG models in order to prevent possible monopolization by any vehicle manufacturer; and
- (d) criteria and scoring system for tendering of new public light bus routes.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR BOTH EURO III AND LPG LIGHT BUS

3. The legal specifications of light buses have been as follow :

overall length:	not exceeding 7m
overall width:	not exceeding 2.3m
overall height:	not exceeding 3m
gross vehicle weight:	not exceeding 4 tonnes
no. of seats:	16 seats or below
emission standard:	Euro II or equivalent

4. The light bus trade has requested that the weight specification should be relaxed so that more vehicle models could be introduced to Hong Kong. In this connection, the Administration has decided to introduce legislative amendments to increase the maximum gross vehicle weight to not exceeding 5.5 tonnes and informed the light bus trade and vehicle suppliers of the decision. As all new light buses imported to Hong Kong are already of Euro III emission standard, we have also informed the Council previously that we intend to formalize the situation by upgrading the emission standard for newly registered light buses to Euro III or equivalent. These two changes to the specifications will apply to both diesel and LPG light buses.

5. The light bus trade's concern on vehicle construction has so far been on the weight specification, which we have agreed to relax as mentioned above. As regards the current vehicle length specification, the trade has not raised any concern. The fact is that the more popular light bus models, including both diesel and LPG models, currently in operation are only about 6.3 metres long, which is still below the current length limit of 7 metres. No difficulty is foreseen for new light bus models in meeting the current vehicle length specification. If there are light bus models exceeding the weight and dimension specifications, Transport Department will consider if they could be registered for use in Hong Kong on a case-by-case basis.

LPG MODEL AVAILABLE WORLDWIDE

6. The vehicle models, both LPG and diesel, known to be currently available and should meet the requirements under the relaxed specifications for light buses are shown in the Annex. These include the 16-seaters and 12-seaters, the latter are mainly used as private light buses.

7. The Administration has already informed the light bus trade and vehicle suppliers of its decision to make administrative arrangement to allow light bus models, both diesel and LPG ones, exceeding the weight limit of 4 tonnes to be introduced into Hong Kong before the completion of the legal amendment for increasing the maximum gross vehicle weight to 5.5 tonnes.

MEASURES TAKEN

8. While the question of whether to supply vehicles to the Hong Kong market is a decision to be made by vehicle suppliers, the Administration has taken the following actions to encourage them to do so -

- (a) we have been liaising closely with Motor Traders Association of Hong Kong (MTA), which comprises all the vehicle suppliers and their agents in Hong Kong, on the light bus specifications. We have already written to MTA to urge its members to make available more light bus models, including LPG light buses, for the Hong Kong market;
- (b) we have written separately to suppliers of light buses including those listed at the Annex to encourage them to supply their light buses to Hong Kong. We have told them about the relaxation of the weight specification and that, before the relevant legislation is amended, we will make administrative arrangements to allow light buses meeting the 5.5 tonnes specification to be registered here; and
- (c) the vehicle market is a free market, and we have set no barrier on parallel import. Any light buses that meet the legal technical requirements could be registered in Hong Kong.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR OPERATORS OF NEW GMB ROUTES

9. Among the public light buses, red public light buses (RMBs) operate on non-fixed routes. New green public light bus (GMB) routes are planned by Transport Department. Applications for the operating right of the new GMB routes are invited through a Gazette Notice. A board comprising representatives from Transport Advisory Committee, Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, Home Affairs Department, ICAC and Transport Department is responsible for the selection of operators for new GMB routes. The applications are assessed against a set of selection criteria which are grouped under six categories as follows -

- (a) management capability of applicant;
- (b) quality of vehicles applicant proposes to use;
- (c) financial resources of applicant;
- (d) passenger facilities applicant proposes to provide;
- (e) new entrant to GMB trade; and
- (f) past performance of GMB operation if applicant is already a GMB operator.

The relative weights given to each category are restricted information under the current selection system.

**Vehicle Models Available
Meeting the Revised Specifications of Light Buses**

LPG Models¹

Brand Name	Model	Type	Remarks
Toyota	Coaster BZB40R Short wheelbase model	16-seater	already available in Hong Kong
Toyota	Coaster BB50R Long wheelbase model	16-seater	already available in Hong Kong
Mercedes Benz	Sprinter 414	16-seater	already available in Hong Kong
Nissan	Urvan	12-seater	available in Japan. A trial unit is already in Hong Kong
Leyland Daf Vehicle (LDV)	Convoy two models available	13-seater (which can be used as a 12-seater)	Now mainly used in the U.K.
		17-seater (which can be used as a 16-seater)	
Ford	Transit ²	15-seater (which can be used as a 12-seater)	Now mainly used in Europe
Volkswagen	LT35 ²	14-seater (which can be used as a 12-seater)	Now mainly used in Europe

Diesel Models

Brand Name	Model	Type	Remarks
Mercedes-Benz	Sprinter 413	16-seater	already available in Hong Kong
Mercedes-Benz	Sprinter 416	16-seater	already available in Hong Kong
Mitsubishi	Rosa BE 639ERMDA	16-seater	already available in Hong Kong
Mitsubishi	Rosa BE 639GRMDA ³	16-25-seater	already available in Hong Kong
Toyota	Coaster BB50R-ZEMQZ ³	16-24-seater	already available in Hong Kong

Brand Name	Model	Type	Remarks
Volkswagen	LT35 2.5 TDI	16-seater	already available in Hong Kong
Volkswagen	LT46 2.8 TDI ⁴	16-seater	already available in Hong Kong
Ford	Transit Jumbo	16-seater	Now mainly used in Europe
IVECO	50C13B	16-18-seater	Now mainly used in Europe
Renault	Mascott	16-seater	Now mainly used in Europe

Notes

1. LPG light buses produced by Ford (Transit) and Nissan (Civilian) participated in the Alternative Fuel Light Bus Trial held in 2001.
2. These are bi-fuel models and can use either LPG or petrol. Presently used as medium goods vehicles but its goods compartment can be converted into a passenger compartment.
3. Currently used as buses.
4. The current model complies with Euro II emission requirement. According to Volkswagen, the Euro III model will be available in August this year.