

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Measures to enhance the safety of franchised bus operation

PURPOSE

This paper gives an account of the measures taken and being planned to ensure and enhance the safety of franchised bus operation.

BACKGROUND

2. As at 30 September 2003, there were 6,221 franchised buses providing public bus services for the carriage of around 4 million passengers daily. Transport Department (“TD”) monitors the operation of franchised bus services in accordance with the Public Bus Services Ordinance (“PBSO”) (Cap. 230) and the Road Traffic Ordinance (“RTO”) (Cap. 374) and their Regulations. The franchised bus operators are required to carry out maintenance and repair as the Commissioner for Transport may specify, and TD’s examiners are empowered to inspect the buses and maintenance facilities at any reasonable time. While buses should observe the general speed limit designated on roads, the maximum speed of a bus is restricted under the RTO to 70 km/h on roads with a posted speed limit over 70km/h.

EXISTING MEASURES

3. The existing measures to ensure the safety of franchised bus operation were developed over the years and implemented stringently. They include:

Bus vehicles

- (a) Every new model of franchised buses has to undergo a type approval process by TD to ensure that its design and construction comply with the requirements stipulated in the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) before they can be registered and licensed for use on the road. The aforesaid Regulations require that every vehicle including all body work and

fitting shall be: (i) soundly and properly constructed of suitable materials; (ii) in good and serviceable condition; and (iii) of such design and method of construction as to be capable of withstanding the loads and stresses likely to be encountered in operation.

- (b) Moreover, all franchised buses must also undergo an additional tilt test to ensure stability. The stability of a double-deck bus is checked by loading weights in relative positions to represent the driver and a full complement of passengers on the upper deck. If the surface on which the vehicle stands is tilted to either side at an angle of 28 degrees (35 degrees for single-decker) and the bus does not overturn, then it will be considered as having passed the test.
- (c) The franchised bus operators implement monthly maintenance and inspection programmes. TD closely monitors such programmes and holds regular meetings with the operators to discuss bus examination results and, where appropriate, to formulate actions to enhance bus safety.
- (d) Every franchised bus has to undergo annual examinations to ensure its safety and roadworthiness, and a comprehensive examination would be conducted at specified intervals to check its structural integrity. TD also conducts random spot checks on franchised buses to monitor the proper maintenance of the buses. Such checks normally cover about 2-6% of the total franchised bus fleet each year.
- (e) The franchised bus operators are encouraged to introduce new safety technology on their buses including speed limiters which can limit the speed of vehicles to a pre-set maximum level under certain operating conditions. More than 50% of the franchised buses were installed with speed limiters in the Engine Management System or add-on type speed limiters.

Bus drivers

- (f) Franchised bus operators provide various training programmes for their drivers. Basic trainings with different duration ranging from a few days to about 3 weeks are provided to new drivers. Unless a driver trainee has already obtained a public bus driving licence,

he/she must pass the driving tests set by TD upon completion of the training.

- (g) Refresher and enhancement courses are provided to in-service drivers from time to time. Safe driving is one of the essential themes of these training courses.
- (h) The franchised bus operators have issued instructions to their drivers reminding them of proper driving manner. New instructions are issued from time to time to alert drivers of specific areas requiring attention.
- (i) TD has issued guidelines to the franchised bus operators on drivers' working hours to ensure that their drivers are provided with reasonable rest time -
 - (i) bus drivers should have a break of at least 30 minutes after 6 hours of duty and within that 6-hour duty, the drivers should have total service breaks of at least 20 minutes;
 - (ii) maximum duty (including all breaks) should not exceed 14 hours in a day;
 - (iii) driving duty (i.e. maximum duty minus all breaks of 30 minutes or more) should not exceed 11 hours in a day; and
 - (iv) break between successive working days should not be less than 8 hours.
- (j) The franchised bus operators require their drivers to undergo annual medical examination when they reach certain age, which varies from 50 to 60 depending on the operator's internal requirement.
- (k) TD organizes "Road Safety Forum for Franchised Bus" regularly with participation of all franchised bus operators and the Traffic Police. The forum focuses on, among other things, accident prevention measures for buses. TD, in collaboration with the Traffic Police, has organized 10 road safety seminars in the past two years

for franchised bus drivers to promote their road safety awareness and proper driving behaviour.

Passengers

- (l) Road safety campaigns and publicity arrangements are conducted from time to time. The production and launching of the Announcement of Public Interest on gripping of handrails jointly arranged by TD and the franchised bus operators was one of the examples.

Other road users

- (m) The Road Safety Council and its two sub-committees on research and publicity respectively continuously explore effective measures for enhancing road safety and promulgate among motorists and pedestrians the messages of road safety through the organization of publicity campaigns and dissemination of information via the media and publicity materials.
- (n) TD published the Road Users' Code for use by the public. The Code contains comprehensive guidelines for road users covering most road and traffic conditions.

4. Through the efforts of all parties concerned, franchised buses have relatively stable safety records. In the past four years, there is in general a downward trend of the number of accidents involving franchised buses per million km operated, and most of them are not serious accidents. Details are set out in

Annex

Annex.

FURTHER MEASURES

5. Nevertheless, a few serious accidents involving franchised buses occurred in the past few months. This has caused some concern about the safety of franchised bus operation. In view of the concern, TD has requested all franchised bus operators to conduct a thorough review and submit a detailed report to TD in January 2004 on their safety arrangements and areas where further enhancement to road and passenger safety could be made. The review covers the following areas:

- (a) vehicle examination;
- (b) means to prevent speeding and the possible use of other monitoring

- devices, and plans for installation of these devices;
- (c) bus driver training;
- (d) bus driver working schedule;
- (e) possible ways and incentives to promote bus safety; and
- (f) any other improvement measures of relevance to road and passenger safety.

6. The Administration would also take into account the recommendations to be announced by the Independent Expert Panel on the Tuen Mun Road Traffic Incident in examining the operators' review reports.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
November 2003

Annex

Accidents Per Million Km Operated

	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	Slight	Serious	Fatal	Slight	Serious	Fatal	Slight	Serious	Fatal	Slight	Serious	Fatal
KMB ¹	2.65	0.56	0.05	2.55	0.45	0.02	2.36	0.47	0.03	2.27	0.52	0.01
	3.25			3.03			2.85			2.8		
CTB(F1) ²	4.47	0.83	0.03	4.55	0.88	0.05	4.57	0.91	0.02	4.06	0.99	0
	5.33			5.48			5.5			5.05		
CTB(F2) ³	1.26	0.22	0	1.42	0.28	0	1.56	0.16	0.04	1.21	0.12	0.04
	1.49			1.7			1.76			1.37		
NWFB ⁴	4.6	1.11	0.06	5.0	0.9	0.07	3.99	0.89	0.03	3.53	0.62	0.06
	5.77			5.97			4.91			4.21		
LW ⁵	1.22	0.13	0	0.5	0.25	0	0.82	0.21	0	0.77	0.2	0.04
	1.35			0.75			1.03			1.01		
NLB ⁶	0.78	0	0	0.41	0.41	0.2	0.41	0	0	0.97	0.58	0
	0.78			1.02			0.41			1.55		

¹ KMB – Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited

² CTB(F1) – Citybus Limited (Hong Kong Island and cross harbour bus routes)

³ CTB(F2) – Citybus Limited (Airport and North Lantau bus routes)

⁴ NWFB – New World First Bus Services Limited

⁵ LW – Long Win Bus Company Limited

⁶ NLB – New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited