

LegCo Panel on Transport

Summary of concerns / views expressed by various organizations at the meeting on 14 December 2004 on measures to enhance road safety and safety of public light bus operations

(A) Views of the transport trade

The transport trade generally considers that it is not necessary to increase the penalties against red light jumping at this stage, the Administration should first improve traffic facilities and road designs so as to enhance road safety. Their major views are summarized as follows:

I. The causes for traffic accidents / red light jumping

(a) Major causes

There are many causes for traffic accidents or red light jumping by drivers, it would not be fair to blame drivers alone. These causes include:

- blind spots created by road designs
- positioning of traffic lights and arrangements for the changes of traffic signals
- inadequate education and publicity on safe driving
- lack of road experience among some new drivers

(b) Factor affecting red minibuses (RMB) drivers

Other factors include:

- RMB drivers work under heavy pressure
- RMB drivers work long shifts

The suggested solutions to the above two problems include:

- a comprehensive review should be conducted to define the role of PLBs under the transport policies before formulating a policy which will cater for and facilitate the development of PLB trade and improve the environment for the operation of PLBs

- consideration should be given to lifting the no-stopping restrictions on some restricted zones during certain hours of the day; PLB drivers should be protected from the rising rental charges and oil prices so that their income could be increased

II. Measures adopted by the PLB trade to enhance road safety

The PLB trade has reached consensus on seven measures on how to enhance the safety of PLB operations:

- the installation of speed display devices on PLBs should be made compulsory
- attendance of safe driving courses by PLB drivers should be made compulsory
- the display of the hotline numbers of the Transport Complaints Unit on PLBs should be made compulsory and the Government should arrange staff to man the hotline 24 hours a day
- the display of PLB driver name plates on PLBs should be made compulsory so as to let passengers know the identity of the driver if necessary
- the trade supports the installation of red light cameras at all traffic black spots and road junctions
- the trade will promulgate a safety charter for PLB drivers to show its determination to improve safety
- short wheel base PLBs of Euro III & IV standards fitted with seat belts should be introduced as soon as possible so that the trade can use them to replace old PLBs

III. Views on the proposal to increase the driving offence points in respect of certain offences

- The transport trade considers that the Administration does not have sufficient grounds to raise the penalties against red light jumping
- It is not fair for all drivers to take the consequences of a few isolated traffic accidents

- Statistics have indicated that red light jumping by drivers is not the major cause of accidents involving PLBs
- The penalties against red light jumping under existing legislation are adequate. Drivers who jump red light and cause accidents would be prosecuted for careless or dangerous driving, which could perform adequate deterrent functions.

IV. Adverse impact of the proposal to raise penalties against red light jumping

- Raising the driving offence points in respect of certain offences will put drivers under more psychological pressure and stress. Indecisiveness will in turn affect road safety

V. Regarding the Administration's proposal to raise penalties against red light jumping, the PLB trade considers that the designs of both roads and traffic lights should be improved first

(a) Positioning of traffic lights

- Drivers' view of signals of traffic lights hung on straight poles can be easily obstructed by heavy vehicles, which will make drivers slow to react
- The installation of suspended overhead traffic lights is recommended
- The "arrow" signs of traffic lights at road junctions should be abandoned because such signs are easily mistaken by drivers and cause traffic accidents

(b) Arrangements for the changes of traffic light signals

- The duration of the amber light should be extended and the signal should flash so that drivers will have sufficient time to react.

(c) Vehicular countdown device

- Vehicular countdown device should be installed to remind drivers of the need to stop their vehicles

(d) Road designs

- The priority accorded to Light Rail trains over other vehicles in crossing junctions between roads and Light Rail tracks has made drivers commit red light jumping inadvertently

(e) Individual examples

- Minor works should be carried out to improve some road blind spots¹
- Road designs should be improved and a comprehensive review on the traffic lights at busy junctions should be conducted²

VI. Penalties against red light jumping

- For those offenders who were caught by red light cameras to have jumped red lights deliberately, heavy penalties should be imposed. The suggested penalties are:
 - (a) first-time offenders during a two-year period should incur 3 driving offence points and a deterrent fine imposed by the court having regard to the circumstances;
 - (b) repeated offenders should be required to attend safe driving course in addition to incurring driving offence points;
 - (c) third-time offenders should be required to attend safe driving courses and pass their tests in addition to

¹

Locations of blind spots

Chatham Road South to Gascoigne Road eastbound

Devon Road/right turn into Cornwall Street
The roundabout in front of Tsing Yi Police Station

Tung Lung Road/Tung Tau Tsuen Road

Recommended improvement measures

Removing the sign for slowing down and converting it into double white lines to allow vehicles to run parallel with the traffic at Gascoigne Road

The shrubs on the right obstruct views
The scrubs on the right obstruct views

The flower beds underneath the ending point of the flyover obstruct views

² Right turn into Wuhu Street from Gillies Road in Hung Hom; right turn into Mong Kok Road from Nathan Road; right turn into Tai Po Road from Nam Cheong Street.
The “bag-shaped” waiting area for vehicles about to turn right. For example, right turn into Mong Kok Road from Nathan Road, the junction between Nam Cheong Street and Tai Po Road (for details please refer to the Annex to LC Paper No. CB(1)401/04-05(03))

incurring driving offence points and fines imposed by the court; and

- (d) fourth-time offenders should face heavy penalties imposed by the court, including the suspension of driving licenses for a long time

VII. Law enforcement

- Law enforcement actions should be stepped up and red light cameras and camera housings should be installed at all main junctions
- Inadequate law enforcement efforts on the part of the Administration have resulted in a low prosecution rate against red light jumping and this has encouraged drivers to take chances from being prosecuted
- The offence of non-compliance with traffic signals should be clearly defined and a review should be conducted in order to avoid disputes between law enforcement officers and drivers arising from different points of view

VIII. Education and publicity

- Education and publicity on road safety and safe driving should be strengthened
- New drivers should be required to attend safe driving courses
- Compulsory courses should be introduced to improve the driving behaviour of drivers

IX. Other suggestions

- New consultative bodies should be formed or the existing consultation frameworks should be broadened to take in views from the trade

(B) Views of other organizations

To enhance road safety and improve the driving behaviour of drivers, some organizations support the implementation of various measures

proposed by the Administration as set out in LC Paper No. CB(1)298/04-05(06). They consider that raising penalties will achieve a better deterrent effect. Their views include:

- driving offence points incurred as a result of red light jumping should be increased from 3 to 8, and the fixed penalty should be raised to \$600 - \$1,000
- studies in Australia have shown that the installation of vehicular countdown devices will cause more accidents. Such devices should not be installed
- the Administration should not protect the interests of the trade at the expense of the safety of the public at large