

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Transport

**Background brief on
concessionary public transport fares for persons with disabilities**

Government's policy and achievements so far

According to the Administration, it is Government policy to promote the integration of people with disabilities into society. Both the Government and public transport operators are committed to improving transport facilities to promote this integration. Considerable progress has been made over the past two years in making public transport more accessible for people with disabilities.

2. Information provided by the Administration also indicates that public transport operators also supported the "Transport for All" concept and have made much progress in the railway infrastructure to make their facilities fully accessible to persons with disabilities. The new railway networks, like the West Rail and Ma On Shan Rail, are equipped with facilities to cater for the special needs of those with disabilities. These include the provision of lifts for passenger transfer, wider ticket gates, Octopus reader with audible signals, tactile guide paths, Braille plates, high contrast signs, electronic message boards and induction loops, allowing people with disabilities to use the service with ease and convenience. The existing metro and rail networks are being retrofitted and renovated to improve their accessibility. The number of buses with low-floor wheelchair access continues to grow; and this has become an obligatory requirement for new buses. Taxis and public light buses are installed with Braille vehicle registration number plates. More green minibuses are installed with call bells.

3. The "5-Betters Strategy" adopted by the Transport Department in working with stakeholders to promote accessibility on public transport services is as follows:

- Better accessible transport services for all;
- Better public transport infrastructure and facilities for all;
- Better streets and pedestrian areas for all;

- Better planning standards, guidelines and procedures; and
- Better partnership for actions and results.

Members' concerns

4. Members of the Legislative Council have all along been concerned about the transport services for people with disabilities. The concern is more related to the fare concessions offered to people with disabilities and the adequacy of Rehabus service apart from the enhancement of facilities. To this end, the Council passed two motions on 30 October 2002 and 8 October 2003, urging the Administration to take appropriate measures to assist people with disabilities. The wordings of the motions are as follows:

Motion passed at the Council meeting on 30 October 2002

“That, as existing public transport services are unable to meet the needs of people with disabilities for integrating into society and for travelling to work and to seek medical treatment, etc., this Council demands that the Government:

- (a) urges various public transport operators to offer half-fare concessions to people with disabilities;
- (b) presses various public transport operators to improve their facilities so as to reduce barriers to people with disabilities; and
- (c) improves the Rehabus service.”

Motion passed at the Council meeting on 8 October 2003

“That this Council expresses strong dissatisfaction with the failure of the government departments concerned to face up to the transport needs of people with disabilities and give full effect to the relevant motion passed by this Council in the 2002-03 session, and demands the Administration to act immediately to press various public transport operators to offer half-fare concessions to people with disabilities and to improve their facilities so as to reduce the barriers to them, as well as to expeditiously improve the Rehabus service.”

5. In response to Members' views expressed during the two motion debates, the Administration provided two progress reports. On concessionary fares for people with disabilities, the Administration pointed out that individual operators indicated concerns about the financial implications of offering half-fare concession to people with disabilities and the practical difficulties in coming up with acceptable and practical arrangements to tackle potential abuse. The Administration however would maintain dialogue with the operators to encourage them to take a more proactive attitude in considering fare concessions for people with disabilities. The progress reports prepared by the Administration are in **Appendices I and II**.

6. At the Council meeting on 13 October 2004, during a debate on a motion concerning the integration of people with disabilities into the society, Members again reiterated their concerns on the matter, and expressed disappointment to the Government's failure to give full effect to the motions passed by the Council in 2002 and 2003 on the transport needs of people with disabilities. They called on the Administration to expeditiously adopt a series of measures to assist people with disabilities so as to satisfy their transport needs.

7. At the meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services on 8 November 2004, members once again called on the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food together with the Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works to press public transport operators to offer half-fare concessions to people with disabilities and improve their facilities to cater for the needs of such people.

8. The House Committee agreed on 12 November 2004 to set up a subcommittee to study the subject of combating poverty. One of the proposed study areas is assistance to people with disabilities with regard to employment opportunities, facilities for the disabled, transport subsidies, etc.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
19 July 2005

Progress Report
Motion Debate on “Transport Needs of People with Disabilities”
Legislative Council Meeting on 30 October 2002

Background

At the Legislative Council meeting on 30 October 2002, the following motion on “Transport Needs of People with Disabilities” moved by the Hon. LEUNG Yiu-chung was carried –

“That, as existing public transport services are unable to meet the needs of people with disabilities for integrating into society and for travelling to work and to seek medical treatment, etc., this Council demands the Government to –

- (a) urge various public transport operators to offer half fare concessions to people with disabilities;
- (b) press various public transport operators to improve their facilities so as to reduce barriers to people with disabilities; and
- (c) improve the Rehabus service.”

2. This report informs Members of the follow-up actions that have been taken by the Administration and the response of public transport operators.

Latest Development

3. The Administration has conveyed the views of the Legislative Council to public transport operators and encouraged them to offer fare concessions to people with disabilities and to further enhance their facilities for people with disabilities. The operators responded that they would continue to endeavour to take further steps to facilitate people with disabilities in using public transport services. The Transport Department (“TD”) will continue to work closely with the operators in this direction, with a view to helping achieve the rehabilitation policy objective of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (“HWFB”) on the full participation of people with disabilities in social life.

Fare concessions

4. As at end December 2002, people with disabilities are offered fare concessions on 12 passenger ferry services serving the inner harbour and outlying islands. Most public transport operators also offer free rides to people with disabilities on special occasions such as the International Day of Disabled Persons.

5. In response to the Administration's appeal, the "Star" Ferry Company, Limited has confirmed that it intends to offer fare concession on its ferry services to holders of the Registration Card for People with Disabilities issued by the HWFB. After discussion between TD and the company on the detailed arrangements, the company implemented the fare concessionary scheme on 30 January 2003 which offers fare discounts of about 30% - 50% on all of its 4 ferry services.

Transport facilities

6. Public transport operators have assured us that they would continue their efforts to take further measures to enhance the accessibility of public transport services to people with disabilities. In this regard, a number of programmes including the following will be introduced –

- (a) Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation ("KCRC") will provide special ticket vending machines in the East Rail System for visually impaired passengers by end 2003;
- (b) KCRC will relocate Octopus processors in the Light Rail System to flat levels by 2004;
- (c) Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd. aims at installing bus stop announcement system on its entire bus fleet by 2005; and
- (d) franchised bus operators will continue their programmes to replace older buses with low-floor buses equipped with fixed ramps.

7. We have reinforced the message to public transport operators that their front-line staff should be better trained to provide proper services to people with disabilities. The responses from the operators are positive. They undertake that they would keep on regularly reviewing and strengthening their relevant training programmes as appropriate, with particular reference to people with disabilities.

Rehabus service

8. The Administration continues to closely monitor the operation of Rehabus service and would implement service adjustment and improvements, including route rationalization and procurement of additional vehicles as necessary. To better meet demand, two additional vehicles are planned to be commissioned for service in the first quarter of 2003. The Administration is also looking into ways and means to enhance the efficiency of the Rehabus service, such as computerization of fleet management for better deployment of vehicles and drivers.

Progress Report

Motion Debate on “ Transport Needs of People with Disabilities”

Legislative Council Meeting on 8 October 2003

Background

At the Legislative Council meeting on 8 October 2003, the following motion on “Transport Needs of People with Disabilities” moved by the Hon. Leung Yiu-chung was carried –

“That the Legislative Council expresses strong dissatisfaction with the failure of the Government departments concerned to face up to the transport needs of people with disabilities and give full effect to the relevant motion passed by this Council in the 2002-2003 session, and demands the Administration to act immediately to press various public transport operators to offer half-fare concessions to people with disabilities and to improve their facilities so as to reduce the barriers to them, as well as to expeditiously improve the Rehabus service.”

2. This report informs Members of the follow-up actions that have been taken by the Administration and the response of the public transport operators.

Latest Development

3. The Administration has conveyed the views of the Legislative Council

to public transport operators and encouraged them to offer fare concession to people with disabilities and to further enhance their facilities for people with disabilities. The operators responded that they would continue to endeavour to take further steps to facilitate people with disabilities in using public transport services. Transport Department ("TD") will also continue to take measures to improve the relevant traffic facilities. Details are set out in the following paragraphs.

Fare concessions

4. As at end December 2003, people with disabilities are offered special fare concession on 17 passenger ferry routes providing inner harbour, outlying island and recreational services. This represents an increase of 5 routes when compared with the position in end December 2002.

5. Most public transport operators also continue to offer free rides to people with disabilities on special occasions. The latest one was the International Day of Disabled Persons on 30 November 2003.

6. Individual operators indicated concerns about the financial implications of offering half fare concession to people with disabilities and the practical difficulties in coming up with acceptable and practical arrangements to tackle potential abuse. We will maintain dialogue with the operators to encourage them to take a more proactive attitude in considering fare concessions for people with disabilities.

Transport facilities

7. A number of enhancement programmes recently introduced and those Annex A to be introduced by public transport operators are set out at Annex A. The operators indicated that they would continue with their efforts to take further measures to enhance the accessibility of public transport services to people with disabilities.

8. Public transport operators confirmed that the journey time allowed in their existing schedule of service should allow sufficient time for the staff to help people with disabilities. They would review the relevant arrangements from time to time and strengthen their training programme for frontline staff to better address the needs of people with disabilities.

Traffic facilities

9. The Administration has also taken various measures to provide a barrier-free street environment to people with disabilities. Programmes to improve access for people with disabilities introduced by TD are set out at Annex B Annex B.

Rehabus service

10. The Administration continues to monitor the operation of Rehabus service and would implement service adjustment and improvements, if necessary, including route rationalisation and vehicle replacement. In this

connection, apart from the original plan to add and replace existing Rehabus, a new scheduled route was recently put on trial in January 2004.

11. In response to concerns expressed by some people with disabilities on the long time in getting scheduled Rehabus services, measures have been introduced since July 2003 to reprioritise the order of precedence for Rehabus service. Users with employment arrangements are accorded higher priority and their waiting time has been shortened by four months or by 33%. In order to further improve the booking arrangement of the Dial-A-Ride Service, the Rehabus operator has introduced a computer booking system since April 2003, and the booking service is further enhanced by relaxing the 6-month advance booking period. A new arrangement was put to a six-month trial on 1 March 2004 to facilitate people with disabilities to make advance bookings without any time limitation. The User Liaison Group of Rehabus has been consulted and expressed no objection to the new arrangement.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

March 2004

Enhancement Programme on Transport Facilities by
Public Transport Operators

Railways

1. Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation ("KCRC") has installed lifts at each East Rail station to link the entrance level and/or the station concourse with the platforms. KCRC has also installed lifts at all Light Rail interchanges with West Rail.

2. All East Rail and Light Rail stations of KCRC are provided with ramps to facilitate wheelchair users' access.

3. All East Rail stations of KCRC are provided with tactile guided paths. The existing tactile guide paths can lead the visually impaired passengers and wheelchair users to the train compartment where wheelchair parking space is available on board. KCRC will extend all tactile guide paths during July 2004 to July 2005 so that they will lead to a total of four compartments of trains. Boarding points of the compartments for people with disabilities will be located at the central part of the platform where the gaps between the platform edge and trains are narrower and assistance can be provided by the duty platform supervisor if necessary. According to KCRC, as the platform gaps at the two ends of the platforms are usually wider, extending the tactile guide paths to 12-compartment length will expose people with disabilities to higher safety risks.

4. All Light Rail stations of KCRC are provided with tactile guided paths.
5. KCRC has taken precautionary measures such as installation of flashing neon lights at East Rail stations with wider platform gaps. Rubber platform gap fillers are also installed at platform edge where feasible. Six portable gangplanks are provided at Mong Kok, Kowloon Tong and University platforms to facilitate the boarding and alighting of wheelchair users if necessary.
6. KCRC has also taken measures to narrow the platform gaps at Tuen Mun Hospital, Leung King and Tin King Light Rail Stops in 2003. KCRC has put on a trial to install platform gap fillers at Light Rail Stops of Tin Hang and Tin Yat for a period of 6 months since December 2003. KCRC will make improvements at other stops as appropriate.
7. KCRC has installed ticket vending machines for visually impaired at all East Rail stations.
8. KCRC has installed passenger information display systems at the platforms of all Light Rail stations.
9. KCRC will add audible message at bi-directional gates in the East Rail Stations in 2004 to advise the fare deducted and remaining value.
10. KCRC will install low-height Octopus Entry/Exit processors at platforms instead of on ramps of the existing Light Rail Stops in 2004 and 2005 to

facilitate the use by wheelchair users.

11. MTR Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) has introduced Wheelchair Aids to MTR stations to provide barrier free access for wheelchair passengers. So far, passengers lifts and stair lifts are provided at 32 out of the 50 MTR stations. MTRCL has plan to provide these facilities at 11 other stations in the next five years, followed by installation at the remaining 7 stations.
12. MTRCL has provided all MTR stations with full-length tactile guide paths at platform that lead to every compartment of the trains.
13. MTRCL has taken measures to remind passengers of the existence of platform gaps, including the installation of under-platform lighting and broadcasting of a warning message. Installation of platform gap fillers at curved platforms is now in progress and is expected to be completed before end of 2004.

Franchised buses

1. Franchised bus operators will continue their programmes to replace older buses with low-floor buses:
 - All major franchised bus operators have committed that all new bus purchased will be super low floor buses.
 - The number of wheelchair accessible bus has increased from 2,108 in 2002 to 2,329 in 2003.
 - New World First Bus Services Ltd. (“NWFB”) has arranged

wheelchair accessible buses to specific routes which operate entirely on these buses so as to avoid confusion or inconvenience to people with disabilities.

2. The franchised bus operators will continue to develop/explore the feasibility of the installation of the bus stop announcement system:

- The number of bus installed with bus stop announcement system has been increased from 2,216 in 2002 to 2,825 in 2003.
- The bus stop announcement system is a standard equipment for all new Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd. ("KMB") buses.
- KMB will continue to install the bus stop announcement system on its air-conditioned buses so that before end of 2004, all 3,500 air-conditioned buses in its bus fleet will be equipped with the system. Long Win Bus Co. Ltd. has a similar plan to equip all its double-decked buses with the bus stop announcement system before end of 2004.
- NWFB has plan to introduce a trial scheme of a bus stop announcement system before the end of 2004. The scheme will test out the announcement of major stops which will be made on both decks of double-decked buses.
- New Lantao Bus Co. (1973) Ltd. has put on trial a bus stop announcement system which was not very successful. The company launched a second series of trial in late 2003 and the trial is being monitored closely.

Ferries

1. Star Ferry has installed "call bell" at ferry piers for wheelchair users since October 2003

Improvement to Access for People with Disabilities

1. A trial scheme of parking certificate for drivers who drive people with disabilities was introduced by TD in 2002. After reviewing the trial results, the parking certificate scheme became permanent in January 2004.
2. A braille map plate was provided at Peking Road subway in Tsim Sha Tsui for trial purposes.
3. TD would update "A Guide to Public Transport by People with Disabilities" on a need basis. The Guide provides information to people with disabilities on the facilities of various public transport modes to help them in planning their journeys.
4. TD has constructed 5 tactile guide paths on streets. Additional tactile guide paths are planned to be constructed to connect public transport termini with regional hospitals, eye clinics, and centres/ offices frequently visited by the visually impaired.
5. TD introduced braille registration plates on public light buses in 2003. So far 250 newly registered public light buses are provided with braille plates by the vehicle suppliers.
6. TD will designate on-street parking spaces to meet the needs of disabled drivers, taking into account the local traffic condition, parking demand and supply situation for general motorists in the area.
7. TD will reduce traffic sign poles through grouping of signs by accommodating multiple sign faces on a single post for general use in order to reduce obstruction to pedestrians, especially wheelchair users.