

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Safety of Franchised Bus Service Operations

Purpose

In view of recent concerns about some franchised bus companies' duty arrangement, this paper sets out the duty arrangements for bus drivers adopted by franchised bus companies and their relationship with safety of bus operation.

Scheduling arrangements for bus drivers

2. The scheduling arrangements of franchised bus companies have evolved through continuous adjustments and improvements over the years to meet the operational needs of the companies and staff requests. Basically, there are two main types of driving duties, viz. regular duties with continuous duty hours, and split duties with several hours' break embedded in the duty hours. Split duties are common practices for bus operation in other countries to meet peak travel demands efficiently and are adopted by some of the local franchised bus companies. Most companies have a rotation system in allocating driving duties to individual drivers within a certain period. A summary of the main features of the existing duty arrangements for bus drivers of the franchised bus companies is at Annex A.

Annex A

3. In scheduling their drivers' duties, the franchised bus companies generally take account of the need to:

- (a) provide adequate bus services to meet passenger demand at different times of a day and days of a week;
- (b) provide sufficient journey time, rest time and meal breaks for drivers to prevent fatigue and to ensure that bus safety will not be compromised;

- (c) cater for different traffic condition of individual bus routes;
- (d) optimize use of bus and driver resources to maintain operational efficiency to help keep fares at a reasonable level; and
- (e) consider the needs and requests of individual drivers.

Annex B

4. Transport Department (“TD”) has issued a set of voluntary guidelines on working schedule for bus drivers (copy at Annex B) to franchised bus operators. The guidelines specify the maximum duty length, the maximum driving duty duration as well as the breaks to be provided to drivers during their duty shift and between working days.

Bus driver interworking arrangements

5. To enhance efficiency and better utilise resources, it is not unusual that overseas bus companies will arrange their drivers to operate more than one bus or one bus route in a duty shift. In local franchised bus operation, most of the drivers are scheduled to operate one to two buses (varying between bus companies from 65% to 100%) and one to two bus routes (varying between bus companies from 63% to 99%) in a duty shift.

New World First Bus’s response to drivers’ concerns about driver interworking arrangement

6. In view of the concern expressed by its bus driver union on the number of bus routes in a duty, New World First Bus (“NWFB”) has voluntarily agreed to improve its duty arrangement as follows:

- (a) to review from time to time the driver duties taking account of the traffic situation to ensure that drivers will have sufficient time to operate the designated bus journeys, to rest and to have meal breaks;

- (b) to carefully consider the wishes of individual drivers in assigning driving duties to them;
- (c) to consult and consider the views of the affected drivers who are required to change driving duties, and give sufficient notice to them before implementing the changes; and
- (d) to provide sufficient training to drivers if they have to operate unfamiliar routes in the revised driving duties.

7. TD has encouraged the management of NWFB and the unions to maintain close liaison to discuss matters affecting staff and union members. The company and the staff union have held meetings to discuss the scheduling arrangement. The two parties will continue the discussion.

Duty arrangements and safety of franchised bus operation

8. All franchised bus companies in Hong Kong have been providing safe and reliable services to passengers. In the past five years, there was in general a downward trend in the number of bus accidents per million kilometres operated and most of the accidents were slight ones. Details are at Annex C.

Annex C

9. In early 2004, TD reviewed the Guidelines on Working Schedule for Bus Drivers during the Bus Safety Review. To improve the arrangement concerned, TD has revised the relevant guidelines to increase the minimum break for drivers between successive working days from 8 hours to 9 hours. The new Guidelines have been adopted since 1 May 2004.

Annex D

10. TD has recently asked all franchised bus companies to analyse their accident records in the past year to see if the duty arrangements have any implication on bus safety. The analysis does not identify any direct correlation between bus accident rates and the number of bus routes that a driver is required to operate in a duty shift. Details are at Annex D.

11. To ensure bus operation safety, TD will continue to work with the franchised bus companies to:

- (a) ensure proper repairs and maintenance of buses by regular vehicle examination and random spot checks on franchised buses;
- (b) closely monitor the compliance of the guidelines on bus driver working hours by the franchised bus operators and review the guidelines from time to time;
- (c) conduct careful route planning, analyze the causes and trend of bus accidents and map out improvement measures;
- (d) keep track of best practices of bus safety arrangements in overseas countries and consider adopting of appropriate arrangements in Hong Kong; and
- (e) foster a responsible and caring driving culture through publicity and driving training, and promote the safety awareness of bus passengers through various publicity means.

Major Features of Driver Scheduling Systems of the Franchised Bus Companies

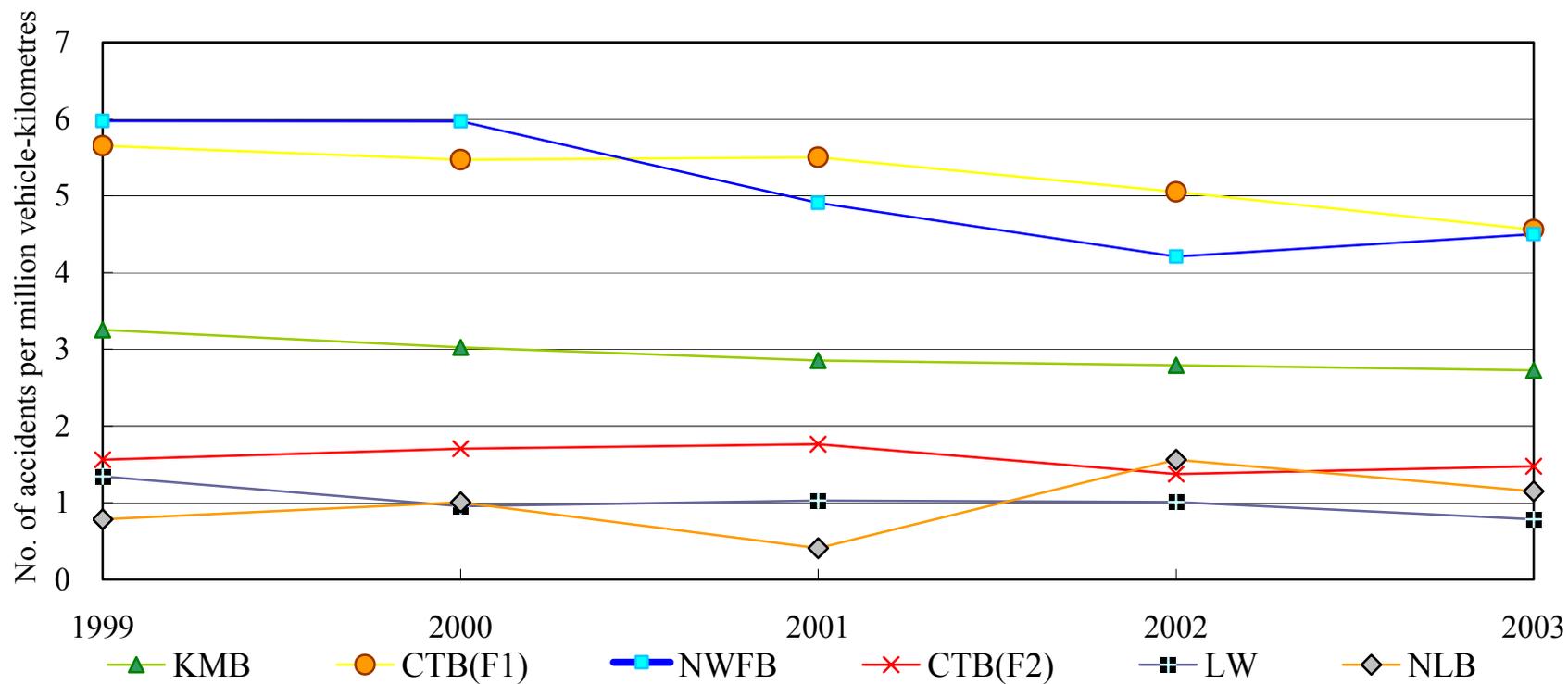
	Kowloon Motor Bus (“KMB”)	Long Win (“LW”)	Citybus (Franchise 1) (“CTB(F1)”)	Citybus (Franchise 2) (“CTB(F2)”)	New World First Bus (“NWFB”)	New Lantao Bus (“NLB”)
Total number of driving duties	6,611	243	1,263	329	1,346	87
Split-duties (% of total duties)	1,603 (24.2%)	37 (15.2%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	5 (5.7%)
Average duty length (hours)	10.44	9.77	10.22	9.83	9.70	9.52
Average driving duty (hours)	8.53	8.33	8.58	8.48	8.12	8.06
Minimum duration of meal break	30 minutes	30 minutes	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	45 minutes
Rotation of duties	Driver duties will be rotated every month within a route group. Spare drivers are employed for fixed route groups.		Driver duties will be rotated every week within a route group. Spare drivers are employed for fixed route groups.		Fixed duty for each driver except for the spare drivers.	Driver duties will be rotated on the 1 st and 16 th of each month within a route group. Drivers have to serve as spare drivers on rotation.

Guidelines on Working Schedule for Bus Drivers

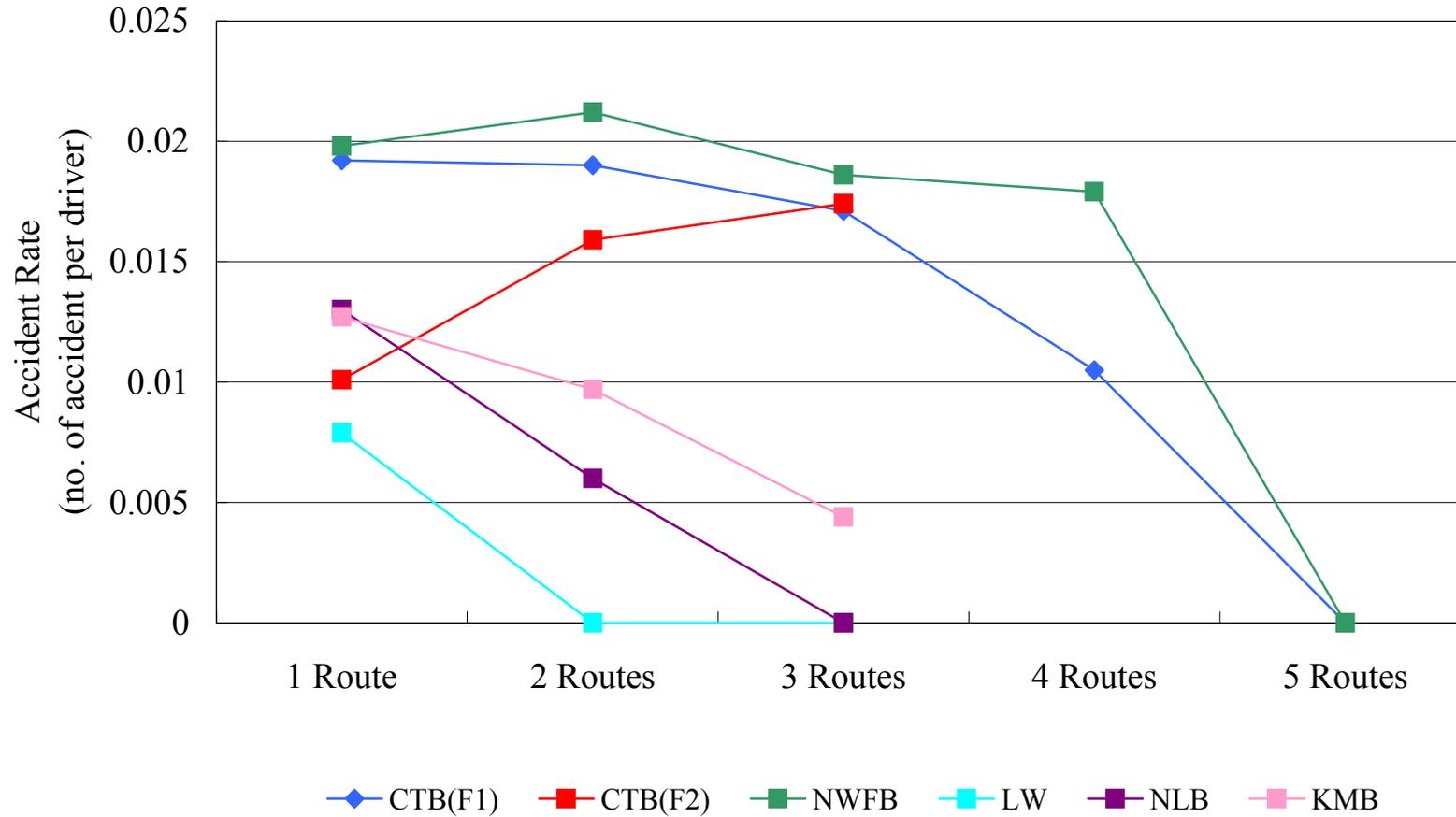
(Revised on 1 May 2004)

- Guideline A 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.
- Guideline B Maximum duty (including all breaks) should not exceed 14 hours.
- Guideline C Driving duty (i.e. maximum duty minus all breaks of 30 minutes or more) should not exceed 11 hours.
- Guideline D Break between successive working days should not be less than 9 hours.

Number of Bus Accidents Per Million Vehicle-Kilometre Operated (1999 - 2003)



**Bus Accident Rates and the Number of Bus Routes
a Driver is Required to Operate in a Shift**



Note: Based on bus accidents occurred in the 12-month period from 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004.