

**Progress Report on follow up of the
Motion on Safety of Franchised Bus Service Operations
Legislative Council Panel on Transport Meeting on 29 October 2004**

Purpose

This paper reports the progress of the review on the Guidelines on working schedule of franchised bus drivers ("the Guidelines").

Background

2. At the Legislative Council Panel on Transport ("Transport Panel") meeting on 29 October 2004, the Panel carried a motion strongly urging the Administration to study revising the Guidelines that -

- (a) maximum duty (including all breaks) should be reduced from not exceeding 14 hours to not exceeding 10 hours;
- (b) driving duty (i.e. maximum duty minus all breaks of 30 minutes or more) should be reduced from not exceeding 11 hours to not exceeding 8 hours;
- (c) meal time schedule for drivers should not deviate from normal human biological clocks; and
- (d) schedules for driving routes should be given to bus drivers seven days in advance,

to enhance safety of franchised bus service operations.

Present development

3. The Transport Department has conveyed the motion passed by the Transport Panel to all franchised bus companies. They have been asked to study the feasibility and impact of implementing the proposed revisions and to consult their staff unions on the proposals.

4. Their preliminary responses are that most of their unions have expressed grave concerns on the proposed reduction of the maximum working hours and driving hours. Some of them consider that the revisions are not necessary because swapping duties is allowed for drivers who are not satisfied with their assigned duties, and adequate rest time is allowed between successive working days. Responses from some driver unions are awaited as they are conducting a survey to gauge views from their member drivers.

5. The bus companies are also examining the implications of the proposed shortening of working hours and driving hours, including the number of drivers that will be affected, impact on the drivers' take home pay, additional driving duties that would have to be created and the cost implications, etc.

6. As regards the period of notification on driver schedule and timing of the meal breaks, the franchised bus companies and their staff unions consider that driver scheduling arrangements vary among companies and their current arrangements are generally satisfactory. They indicate that there may not be a need to draw up guidelines on these two aspects. In response to the complaints made by a driver union of New World First Bus Services Limited ("NWFB") against meal break arrangements and insufficient advance notice for schedule changes, NWFB has already reached understanding with their unions that -

- (a) the bus drivers may raise undesirable meal break arrangements, and the company will consider adjusting the timings as far as possible; and
- (b) a 7-day notice will be given to drivers of change of normal duties.

7. The Transport Department will carefully consider all relevant factors, and report its findings and recommendations on whether the existing guidelines need to be revised after the concerned parties have been consulted.