

Your Ref : CB1/HS/1/05

18 June 2007

The Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Chairman of the Subcommittee to
Study the Transport Needs of and
Provision of Concessionary Public
Transport Fares for Persons with
Disabilities
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

**Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for
Persons with Disabilities**

Thank you for your letter of 11 May.

I understand that the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has, at previous meetings of your Subcommittee, made known its position on this matter, namely, any provision of fare concessions for people with disabilities (PwDs) should be a social welfare issue and that the fare concessions should be funded from the Government's welfare pocket. It has also cast doubts on the findings of the survey conducted by the Social Sciences Research Centre of The University of Hong Kong cited in your letter. According to MTRCL's past experience of offering other kinds of fare concessions, the introduction of fare concession for PwDs will likely result in a loss to MTRCL.

The Administration has further examined the issue. Our position is that the provision of concessionary fares to PwDs is not a transport policy matter. That the Government is the majority shareholder of

MTRCL and sole owner of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation is irrelevant. Maintaining the commercial viability of the two rail corporations (and the future merged corporation) is an important policy objective from the transport angle.

It is the Government's rehabilitation policy to promote integration of PwDs into the society. Resources have been allocated for this purpose as part of our welfare policy. In particular, to meet the basic transport needs of PwDs, we have been providing rebus service and financial assistance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance scheme and Disability Allowance payments. The total amount of resources committed for these purposes is \$6.9 billion in 2007-2008.

The provision, if any, of concessionary public transport fares to PwDs to incentivise them to go out more for social integration will represent an improvement to the existing social services to PwDs, which has to be examined in the context of our welfare policy. The provision of such concessionary fares will involve public money. If there is a case to do so, and subject to the funding constraints and competitive priorities for rehabilitation services, it may be funded from the welfare programme. Whether there is a need for further measures to meet the transport needs of PwDs and if so, what measures should be taken will have to be examined by the responsible Bureau Secretary, who will take a decision having regard to how the overall welfare budget is to be utilised and allocated. The responsible bureau will revert to the Subcommittee once a decision is taken.

Meanwhile, we shall continue our efforts to persuade public transport operators to provide fare concessions to PwDs in fulfilment of their corporate social responsibilities.

(Rafael S.Y. HUI)
Chief Secretary for Administration

cc Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works