

For information
on 3 July 2007

Legislative Council Panel on Security

Arrangements for Cross-boundary Students

This note sets out, in response to Members' request, the arrangements in place to facilitate cross-boundary students' attendance at schools in Hong Kong.

Background

2. In recent years, the number of children who are Hong Kong residents but are residing in Shenzhen has been increasing. Many of them cross the boundary to go to school in the North District on a daily basis. According to the available statistics, in the 2006/07 school year, there are about 4,000 such cross-boundary students at kindergarten, primary and secondary school levels in the district.

3. As a general principle, parents are encouraged to enrol their children, especially those of younger age, in schools near the place of their residence. Parents are also expected to take into consideration the transportation arrangements when they choose schools for their children.

Cross-boundary students using Lo Wu Control Point

4. The cross-boundary students normally go to school in the North District daily via the Lo Wu Control Point. To facilitate their immigration clearance, the Immigration Department has opened additional immigration counters for the students' use during the busy hours from Monday to Friday. For arrival clearance, two additional counters are opened mainly for the students' use from around 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For departure clearance, the number of counters opened is increased from three to a maximum of six from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. for use by both the students and other boundary crossers.

5. In general, members of the public, including students, may access the Lo Wu Control Point only for crossing the boundary by taking the train. Separately, at present Lo Wu Station Road, just outside the Lo

Wu Control Point and managed by the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC), is located within the Frontier Closed Area (FCA)^{Note}. Only holders of Closed Area Permits (CAPs) issued by the Police may enter the FCA. Under the FCA policy, CAPs are normally not issued to persons who transit the FCA to access places outside the FCA, when other means of access (e.g. different modes of public transport) generally used by the public without having to possess CAPs are available. In addition, Lo Wu Station Road is only a country road with a limited design capacity for 100 vehicular trips per hour, and is the only emergency vehicle access to the Lo Wu Control Point. Overuse carries obvious safety risks, in addition to traffic management concerns.

6. Nonetheless, a number of schools *outside the FCA* have arranged for school coaches or mini-buses to operate between the schools and Lo Wu Station Road to take cross-boundary students to and from the Lo Wu Control Point. We recognize that the young age and needs of cross-boundary students require special consideration. Thus the Security Bureau and the Police, having taken into account the views of the relevant parties such as District Officer (North) and the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), have applied the CAP policy flexibly by issuing CAPs to cross-boundary students along the following lines -

- (a) issuing CAPs to “qualifying students” up to a limit consistent with the physical and safety constraints of Lo Wu Station Road; and
- (b) “qualifying students” are defined as students of a tender age or having special needs (e.g. students with disability) and students being siblings of students possessing CAPs.

7. As of June 2007, a total of about 2,530 CAPs have been issued to cross-boundary students using Lo Wu Station Road (which represents an 8% increase over 2006). The highest frequency of school coaches or mini-buses using the Road is 84 trips per hour. As the Road is also used by other vehicles at an estimated frequency of 50 trips per hour, its capacity of 100 trips per hour is already exceeded by over 30%. Indeed, during the busy hours, the Road is congested with school coaches or mini-buses. The situation has given rise to concerns about the safety of

^{Note} The FCA is designated under the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245) as part of the package of measures for maintaining the integrity of our boundary with the Mainland and for combating illegal immigration and other cross-boundary criminal activities. Access to the FCA is controlled by the Police through the issuance of Closed Area Permits based on actual needs to enter the FCA.

the students and other road users.

8. The sheer capacity limitation at Lo Wu Station Road, which cannot be expanded due to space and geotechnical constraints, and the likely increase in the number of cross-boundary students both point to the fact that it would be clearly unsustainable to rely on the issue of CAPs as a long-term solution to meet the transportation needs of cross-boundary students. In addition, based on the recommendations of the review of the coverage of the FCA announced in September 2006, Lo Wu Station Road will eventually be excised from the FCA, and people will be able to access the Road without having to possess CAPs. This will only exacerbate the capacity problem and hence the safety concerns.

Way forward

9. All along, the North District Office has been coordinating with the relevant parties both within and outside the Administration to explore additional measures to facilitate the students' attendance at schools outside the FCA. Such measures are outlined below.

Alleviating the traffic at Lo Wu Station Road

10. Schools are being invited to consider making arrangements to allow cross-boundary students to go to school at staggered hours, with a view to alleviating the congestion at Lo Wu Station Road during the busy hours and facilitating consideration of issuing more CAPs for using the Road.

Liaison with KCRC

11. KCRC is being engaged to discuss arrangements for deploying more station assistants as well as making available additional ticket turnstiles during the peak hours to assist cross-boundary students taking trains.

Diversion to the Lok Ma Chau Control Point

12. Departments concerned are exploring the feasibility of allowing school coaches to operate between the San Tin Public Transport Interchange (PTI) and the schools. Some Lok Ma Chau-Huanggang Shuttle Buses (Yellow Buses) have been designated for carrying these cross-boundary students. Meanwhile, consideration is being given to exploring the feasibility of providing more laybys for school coaches to

set down and pick up cross-boundary students within the PTI, where they can take Yellow Buses to cross the boundary via the Lok Ma Chau Control Point.

Providing enhanced support and assistance to schools and cross-boundary students

13. The schools are being encouraged to explore methods of providing enhanced support and assistance to cross-boundary students, such as providing escorts or nannies to accompany these students to ensure their safe journeys.

Operation of cross-boundary school coaches

14. The feasibility of allowing the operation of cross-boundary school coaches to take cross-boundary students directly from/to Shenzhen to/from their schools is also being explored.

15. The relevant Government bureaux and departments will continue to explore various options with a view to addressing the transportation needs of cross-boundary students in a holistic manner.

Security Bureau
Education and Manpower Bureau
Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
North District Office
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