

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)1147/06-07
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/TP/1

Panel on Transport

**Minutes of meeting held on
Friday, 2 March 2007, at 10:00 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Chairman)
Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon LEE Wing-tat
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
- Members absent** : Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- Public Officers attending** : **Agenda item IV**

Miss Angela LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 1

Ms Macella LEE
Acting Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment,
Transport and Works

Ms Carolina YIP
Deputy Commissioner for Transport/
Transport Services & Management

Mr Albert YUEN
Assistant Commissioner for Transport/
Bus and Railway

Mr LEUNG Tak-fai
Chief Engineer/Road Safety & Standards
Transport Department

Mr David TSANG
Senior Engineer/Vehicle Safety
Transport Department

Agenda item V

Mr Philip YUNG
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 1

Ms Annie CHOI
Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works
(Transport) 3

Miss Angela LEE
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 1

Mr Donald NG
Principal Assistant Secretary for the Environment, Transport
and Works (Transport) 6

Mr Michael NG
Chief Transport Officer/Boundary
Transport Department

**Attendance by
invitation**

: Agenda item IV

The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited/
Long Win Bus Company Limited

Ms Winnie NG
Executive Director

Mr LUI Po-chiu
Operations Director

Mr Tim IP
Head of Traffic Department

Ms Susanne HO
Head of Corporate Communications Department

Citybus Limited/New World First Bus Services Limited

Mr Samuel CHENG
Managing Director

Mr William CHUNG
Head of Operations

Mr Paul LI
Head of Engineering

New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited

Mr Peter MOK
Executive Director

Mr WONG Wah
Administration Manager

Agenda item V

Tai Wo Motors Ltd.

Mr NG Hoi-shan, Aaron
Vice Chairman

The Fraternity Association of N.T. Taxi Merchants

Mr HO Che-kan
Chairman

United Friendship Taxi Owners & Drivers Association Ltd.

Mr LEUNG Chak-sang
Chairman

Taxi Dealers & Owners Association Limited

Mr NG Kwan-sing
President

Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories Public &
Maxicab Light Bus Merchants' United Association

Mr LEUNG Hung
Chairman

New Territories Taxi Drivers' Rights Alliance

梁宇榮先生
主席

Urban Taxi Drivers Association Joint Committee Co., Ltd.

Mr KWOK Chi-piu
Chairman

Rights of Taxi Owners and Drivers Association Limited

余叙勤先生
副主席

Quadripartite Taxi Service Association Ltd.

劉劍魂先生
主席

Sun Hing Taxi Radio Service General Association

Mr CHAN Wai-ming
Chairman

Non-franchised Public Buses Workers Association

Ms SO Po-lin
Chairman

Public Light Bus General Association

Mr LING Chi-keung
Chairman

Association of N.T. Radio Taxicabs Ltd.

Mr Sunny CHAN Kai-san
Vice Chairman

The Hong Kong Taxi & Public Light Bus Association Limited

Mr TONG Yeuk-fung
Chairman

Hong Kong Tele-Call Taxi Association

Mr WONG Yu-ting
Chairman

汽車交通運輸業總工會非專利巴士分會

梁世華先生
主任

China Hong Kong and Macau Boundary Crossing Bus Association

Mr CHAN Chung-yee
Secretary General

The Motor Transport Co. of Guangdong and Hong Kong Limited

Mr ZENG Hongan
Chairman

Hin Wan Bus Management Ltd.

Mr YU Ka-hung
Managing Director

Wing Lee (Kong Shum) Transportation Ltd.

Mr CHEUNG Kim-ping
Assistant General Manager

Zhan Gang Tourist Transportation Co Ltd.

Mr LAU Wing-tsan
Managing Director

Eternal East Cross-Border Coach MGT Ltd.

Mr LIN Chung-fai
General Manager

Hongkong Guangdong Boundary Crossing Bus Association

Mr CHOW Hing-wong, Sammy
Chief Secretary

Kowloon District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus
Operators Association

Mr LAI Chin-to
Chairman

Association for the Rights of Taxi Drivers

Mr LI Hong-chun, Andy
President

Tuen Mun District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus
Operators Association

Mr YIP Wing-ching
Vice-Chairman

Yuen Long District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus
Operators Association

Mr CHEUNG Yick-shum
Chairman

New Territories Taxi Operations Union

Mr CHAN Shu-sang
Chairman

Public Omnibus Operators Association Ltd.

Mr YEUNG Wai-hung
Chairman

Tsuen Wan District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus
Operators Association

Mr TANG Chi-keung
Chairman

Hong Kong District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus
Operators Association

Mr CHAN Chi-tak
Chairman

Wai Yik HK, Kln & NT Taxi Owners Association Ltd.

Mr LI Kwok-ying
Secretary

Taxi & P.L.B. Concern Group

Mr LAI Ming-hung
Chairman

Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Council Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Mr Noel SUNG
Senior Council Secretary (1)4

Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

Miss Winnie CHENG
Legislative Assistant (1)5

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- I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1002/06-07 - Minutes of the meeting held on
26 January 2007)

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2007 were confirmed.

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II Information papers issued since last meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)960/06-07(01) - Referral from Legislative Council Members' Meeting-cum-luncheon with Southern District Council on Mass Transit Railway South Island Line
- LC Paper No. CB(1)975/06-07(01) - Information paper on report on parking demand and supply and progress of improvement measures provided by the Administration
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1047/06-07(01) - Information paper on "Amendments to Subsidiary Legislation to Improve the Current Transport-Related Licensing Arrangements" provided by the Administration)

2. Members noted the information papers issued since last meeting.

III Items for discussion at the next meeting scheduled for 23 March 2007

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/06-07(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/06-07(02) - List of follow-up actions)

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next meeting scheduled for 23 March 2007 –

- (a) Measures to enhance safety of public light bus (PLB) and school private light bus; and
- (b) Measures to rationalize utilization of Build-Operate-Transfer tunnels.

IV Safety of franchised bus operations

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)783/06-07(01) - Information paper on progress on measures to enhance safety of franchised bus operation provided by the Administration)

4. The Deputy Commissioner for Transport/Transport Services & Management (DC for T/TS&M) updated members on the progress in the pursuit of measures to further enhance safety of franchised bus operation.

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Working schedule for bus captains

Rest time

5. Ms LI Fung-ying was keen to ensure that the working schedule for franchised bus captains was reasonable. She therefore considered it undesirable that bus captains could only enjoy rest-breaks of "two minutes" between trips in 90% of the trips as shown in the findings of the survey conducted by three bus companies on the actual between-trip rest-break time of their bus captains recently (the Survey). Her view was shared by the Chairman, who considered two minutes too short and barely enough for responding to the call of nature, and suspected that the bus companies concerned had failed to comply with the guideline issued by the Transport Department (TD) on ensuring that bus drivers should have total service breaks of at least 20 minutes within six hours of duty. He further criticized that no proper place had been provided for bus captains to take a rest, and emphasized that bus captains should be allowed to rest properly to minimize any bus accident that might be caused by insufficient rest. Mrs Selina CHOW agreed that rest-breaks of "two minutes" between trips were insufficient. She however saw a need to tackle the problem from a wider perspective to ensure that a balance could be struck between maintaining the scheduled service timetable and allowing the bus captains to have reasonable rest time between trips.

6. Ms Winnie NG, Executive Director of The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited/Long Win Bus Company Limited (KMB/LWB), explained that the above quoted figures were only statistics. In reality bus captains of KMB/LWB would have enough time to go to the toilet and stretch themselves between trips. Should their rest time be shortened as a result of traffic congestion during peak hours, the lost rest time would be made up during non-peak hours. KMB/LWB would also keep up close communication with its staff and their unions to ensure the working schedule was reasonable, and would consult TD should there be a need to adjust the scheduled journey time of bus routes. Messrs Samuel CHENG and William CHUNG, Managing Director and Head of Operations respectively of Citybus Limited/New World First Bus Services Limited (Citybus/NWFBS), clarified that 90% of the trips with rest break of 2 minutes or more actually included 72% of trips with rest break of 5 minutes or more, and 18% of trips with rest break of 2 to 5 minutes. Mr CHUNG further emphasized that Citybus/NWFBS had always scheduled sufficient rest-breaks between trips for their bus captains. In fact, while the actual journey time of bus trips varied with traffic conditions, according to Citybus/NWFBS's record, taken together the rest-breaks between trips of their bus captains were longer than scheduled. Should Citybus/NWFBS become aware through its communication with bus captains and driver unions that the scheduled journey time of a certain bus route was prolonged because of such factors as road works, etc, adjustments would be made. Mr CHENG added that should the rest time of Citybus/NWFBS's bus captains be shortened as a result of traffic congestion during peak hours, the lost rest time would be made up during non-peak hours. Mr Peter MOK, Executive Director of New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited (NLB), reported that due to the lower frequency of NLB's bus service, NLB's bus captains could have longer rests in-between trips.

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7. DC for T/TS&M echoed the above points made by the bus operators, and reiterated that in 72% of the trips, bus captains had rest-breaks of five minutes or more between trips. She also pointed out that while traffic congestion might make it difficult for the drivers to have long breaks during peak hours, these were normally caught back during off-peak times. As such, the bus companies concerned could comply with TD's principle of ensuring bus captains had total service breaks of at least 20 minutes within six hours of duty. Notwithstanding, she undertook to follow up the findings of the Survey to ensure sufficient rest for bus captains. In particular, the Administration would ensure the bus companies would provide appropriate schedule arrangements, and would review and adjust the scheduled journey time of their bus routes from time to time, taking into account the traffic conditions, passenger demand as well as the feedback from bus captains and driver unions.

8. Despite the above assurances, the Chairman saw room for improvement for all the following guidelines on working schedule for franchised bus drivers issued by TD –

- 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.

9. Ms LI Fung-ying pointed out that there were occasions where bus captains did not even have time to go to the toilet because, due to traffic congestion en-route, they had to catch up the time lost and hence, their resting periods were forfeited. She urged the Administration and the management of bus companies to really get a feel of the actual situation instead of just looking at the findings of the Survey, and to take concrete measures to ensure sufficient rests for bus captains. In response, DC for T/TS&M pointed out that the operators had not only looked at the figures but had also consulted the staff unions with regard to the actual situation.

Other concerns about the working schedule

10. Ms LI Fung-ying considered it undesirable that sometimes bus captains were required to drive new routes during non-peak hours to suit bus companies' deployment convenience. In response, Mr Samuel CHENG of Citybus/NWFBS emphasized that all bus captains of Citybus/NWFBS would be given sufficient notice and route training

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before they were deployed to serve new routes.

11. Noting that KMB/LWB allowed its bus captains to apply for transfer of workplace from one depot to another, Ms LI Fung-ying sought to ascertain if other bus companies also had similar practices and if not, how they could ensure their bus captains' travelling time to and from work would not be unduly long as to affect their rest time and hence passenger safety. Mr William CHUNG of Citybus/NWFBS said that Citybus/NWFBS' bus captains could also apply for transfer of driving duties where there were vacancies. To shorten their bus captains' travelling time to and from work, Citybus/NWFBS also provided employees' bus services for their bus captains. Mr Peter MOK of NLB reported that NLB would arrange its bus captains to report duty to terminals situated in the district(s) they lived. It also provided for its bus captains hostels in the vicinity of remote bus termini, such as the one in Tai O.

Health of bus captains

12. Ms Miriam LAU was glad to note that with effect from 2007, KMB/LWB would join the other franchised bus companies in providing annual medical examination for bus captains aged 50 or above. She was however also keen to ensure that where necessary, arrangements would be made to redeploy bus captains to other posts in consideration of their health conditions, so that the above initiative to enhance bus safety would not cost bus captains their jobs.

13. In response, Ms Winnie NG of KMB/LWB assured members that consultation with driver unions had been conducted before KMB/LWB decided to provide annual medical examination. As undertaken to the unions, should any bus captain be found to be not fit for driving, KMB/LWB would redeploy him/her to other posts as far as possible. There was also very good communication between KMB/LWB and its staff, and bus captains' concerns in relation to the implications of annual medical examination could be reflected to the management for provision of assistance. Mr Samuel CHENG of Citybus/NWFBS reported that no bus captain of its company had lost his job because of the annual medical examination. Bus captains would be given time and guidance to improve their health should they fail their annual medical check. On most occasions, bus captains who failed the check could pass the follow-up check after making efforts to improve their health for a while. Where necessary, redeployment to clerical posts could be arranged for bus captains who were no longer fit for driving. Mr Peter MOK of NLB reported that NLB's practices were similar to Citybus/NWFBS's.

14. In this regard, Ms Miriam LAU urged the bus operators to pay special attention to sleep apnea, and to supplement medical examination with questionnaire, etc. to ensure that bus captains suffering from the problem could be identified. This was because the factor of sleep apnea might be related to many traffic accidents committed by professional drivers. There was however difficulty in identifying the problem through normal medical examination.

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Employment terms of bus captains

15. While supporting the need to ensure sufficient rest for bus captains, Mr WONG Kwok-hing also opined that one of the factors that had affected the safety of KMB/LWB's operation was that in recent years, it had taken the lead to change the employment terms for their bus captains to contract terms, so that it had the highest percentage of bus captains employed under contract terms. Pointing out that the above employment arrangements had posed immense psychological pressure on bus captains, which in turn could directly affect the safety of bus operation, he urged the Administration to freeze KMB/LWB's percentage of bus captains under contract terms before the causes of bus accidents involving KMB/LWB were identified. In this connection, he also highlighted and showed appreciation for Citybus/NWFBS and NLB's relatively low percentage of bus captains under contract terms. In response, DC for T/TS&M said that KMB/LWB had analyzed the accident rates of non-contract and contract bus captains and the findings did not show evidence that the contract bus captains had a higher accident rate than the non-contract captains. Detailed findings were shown in Annex III to LC Paper No. CB(1)783/06-07(01). She also pointed out that before starting to employ new bus captains on contract terms, KMB/LWB had consulted its trade and driver unions. Noting the above response, Ms LI Fung-ying demanded that the Administration should clarify whether the trade and driver unions had really been "consulted" and had indicated agreement to the plan, or that they had merely been "notified".

Retrofitting seatbelts on franchised buses

16. Noting that most fatal bus accidents involved passengers being thrown out from the upper saloon of the bus after collision with another vehicle, Mr WONG Kwok-hing proposed that only buses which had seatbelts at their exposed seats should be allowed to run on the highway, roads with many bends and other high-risk roads. In response, DC for T/TS&M reported that most buses plying such roads were already new buses equipped with seatbelts. Notwithstanding, the Administration would liaise with the franchised bus operators on the possibility of deploying buses with seat belts for such routes as far as possible. In response to Mr WONG's demand for a more positive reply, DC for T/TS&M stressed the need to examine with the franchised bus operators the situation first. She further pointed out that bus safety also hinged on many other factors, for example, bus captains' driving attitude. Mr WONG expressed great disappointment at the response.

17. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed dissatisfaction with the progress of retrofitting seatbelts on franchised buses, which as he gathered from paragraph 3 of the Administration's paper was going nowhere. In response, DC for T/TS&M reported that the Administration had been closely following up with the franchised bus operators on retrofitting seatbelts on all exposed seats of franchised buses. The operators were also actively examining the matter with the major bus body builder which supplied most of the franchised buses in Hong Kong. It however took time to ascertain the technical

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viability of retrofitting seatbelts on buses not originally designed for and fitted with such facilities, as such would hinge on the structural designs of individual buses. Apart from the difficulty in ensuring the facilities so retrofitted would be effective, care also had to be exercised to ensure they could meet the safety requirements lest they would pose danger to passengers instead of protecting them.

18. Ms Miriam LAU observed that bus passengers seldom wore seat belts even when these were available. The reason might be that, as different from taxis and PLBs, there was no mandatory requirement for wearing of passenger seat belts on franchised buses. She therefore asked the Administration to consider also requiring bus passengers to wear seatbelts where such were available. DC for T/TS&M explained that in consideration of public acceptability and likely enforcement problems, at present bus passengers would only be encouraged to wear seatbelts where provided by stepping up publicity. Ms LAU was unconvinced, and said that legislation was also a form of publicity. Moreover, PLB passengers were required to wear seatbelts despite similar enforcement problems. In response, DC for T/TS&M said that the Administration intended to ascertain the effect of publicity efforts first before resorting to legislation.

19. Referring to the Administration's report on the progress of retrofitting seatbelts on existing buses, Mr LAU Kong-wah did not agree that nothing could be done to retrofit seatbelts on buses produced by manufacturers who were no longer in operation, claiming that expert assistance could be sought to solve the technical problems involved. He also did not agree that practices of other countries on the requirements of fitting and fastening of seatbelts on buses should be used to account for the lack of legal requirements for the provision of seatbelts on passenger seats of buses designed for urban use in Hong Kong. This was because the situation in Hong Kong, where the roads were narrow but many double-decker buses had to be used because of the large number of bus passengers, was unique. Mrs Selina CHOW echoed his views. In response to Mr LAU on plans to improve the safety of its operation in consideration of the large number of passengers KMB/LWB served, Ms Winnie NG of KMB/LWB acknowledged the unique nature of bus operation in Hong Kong, and stressed KMB/LWB's readiness to take measures accordingly to enhance operational safety. She however pointed out that the retrofitting of seatbelts on buses involved many technicalities. For example, whether the buses could withstand the impact posed by the additional anchor points arising from the facilities in an accident. Nonetheless, KMB/LWB would actively examine with its bus manufacturer the technical and financial feasibility of equipping with seatbelts all upper-deck seats of the new buses they purchased in future.

20. Having regard that PLB passengers were already required to wear seatbelts, the Chairman shared Ms Miriam LAU's view on the need to ensure fairness and also require bus passengers to wear seatbelts where such were available. He also opined that technical and financial viability should not be used as an excuse for procrastinating retrofitting of seatbelts on franchised buses. Highlighting bus passengers' anxiety when riding on buses without adequate safety device to stress the importance of seatbelts, Mr LEE Wing-tat agreed that existing buses should be retrofitted with seatbelts as soon as practicable, and that passengers should be required to wear them when these were

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available.

Bus design

21. Mrs Selina CHOW highlighted cases of traffic accidents where the design of the vehicle body had greatly affected the number of casualties/fatalities, and opined that there might be a need to review the design of bus structure and body to provide maximum protection for bus passengers. In response to her on whether any study in this regard had been conducted, Mr LUI Po-chiu, Operations Director of KMB/LWB, elaborated that all buses which KMB/LWB purchased were well-tested standard buses manufactured overseas. KMB/LWB had already examined with the bus manufacturer concerned on possible improvements to the design of bus structure and body after the occurrence of bus accidents involving KMB/LWB. It had been confirmed that the alloy used to produce the bus body was most commonly used in Europe and was even stronger than steel. As to the bumper, it might not be desirable to use harder material because such might create more injuries.

22. In response to the Chairman's call upon the Administration to review the design of bus structure and body to ensure maximum protection for passengers, DC for T/TS&M said that the Administration had already asked the bus companies concerned to examine whether any improvement could be introduced in this regard. Ms Winnie NG of KMB/LWB added that the aluminium alloy presently used for buses, though lighter, was in fact stronger and could better protect passengers than iron, which was used in the past. DC for T/TS&M echoed her point, and pointed out that aluminium alloy had already been used on buses for many years, and could improve stability of the bus. She further assured members that the structural safety of every model of franchised bus had in fact been confirmed by subjecting it to various computer simulation and field tests during the design stage by the manufacturers.

Causes of bus accidents and remedial measures

23. Mr LAU Kong-wah referred to the three fatal bus accidents that had caused grave public concern, and asked the Administration if it had conducted any study to identify the causes, so that proper remedial actions could be taken to prevent recurrence of similar incidents in future. In response, DC for T/TS&M said that as the said accidents were still under Police investigation, the Administration could not openly discuss their causes. She however pointed out that in recognition of the importance of the driving behaviour in preventing traffic accidents, the Administration had already been closely liaising with bus companies on how to gear up training for their bus captains, and on measures to reduce the stress felt by bus captains while on driving duties. In this connection, Ms Winnie NG of KMB/LWB added that KMB/LWB had already designated a special task force to follow up on the accidents to enhance the safety of bus operation and prevent recurrence, such as by examining with different bus manufacturers possible improvements to the bus body, liaising with staff unions on what could be done to enhance both bus captains' and passengers' safety awareness, etc. Mr Samuel CHENG of Citybus/NWFBS said that on the part of Citybus/NWFBS, the

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focus had been placed on providing bus captains with regular training and refresher courses to improve their road safety awareness and driving skills and behaviour. Citybus/NWFBS also had a team of plain-clothes inspectors who conducted random checks on bus captains' driving manner and made recommendations for improvements and retraining where necessary. Mr Peter MOK of NLB added that due to the challenging road conditions of NLB's routes, NLB had always placed great emphasis on its bus captains' driving behaviour and road safety awareness. NLB would also examine with its bus manufacturer possible improvements should any accident that related to the design of the bus body occur.

KMB
/LWB

24. Mrs Selina CHOW was glad to note the formation of the above task force by KMB/LWB, and enquired about its work plan and whether representatives from the Administration and engineering professionals were represented therein. In response, DC for T/TS&M confirmed the involvement of Government engineers in the force. At Mrs CHOW's request, Ms Winnie NG of KMB/LWB agreed to report to the Panel on the work plan and findings of the task force in due course. However, owing to the complexity of the technical issues surrounding seat belt installation on double-deck buses and the unique nature of bus operations in Hong Kong, it was difficult to make a commitment as to when the report could be submitted.

25. Pointing out that the first of the above three fatal bus accidents happened a long time ago, Mr LAU Kong-wah expressed disappointment that little progress had been made in identifying their causes, and in the pursuit of measures to further enhance safety of franchised bus operation, so that similar accidents had continued to occur. Ms Miriam LAU also opined that although the Police were still conducting investigations on the accidents, the Administration and the bus companies should adopt a more active attitude and start making efforts to minimize the accidents. In response, DC for T/TS&M reiterated that in recognition of the importance of the driving attitude/behaviour of bus captains in ensuring safe bus operation, the Administration had already been working closely with bus operators in improving driver training. The findings of the task force would also be reported to members in writing when available. In response to Mr LAU on whether insufficient safety awareness had been identified to be the cause of the bus accidents, DC for T/TS&M said that a macro perspective should be adopted to assess and tackle the problem. As such, apart from making efforts to improve the driving behaviour of bus captains, measures were also taken to enhance passengers' safety awareness.

26. Mr LEE Wing-tat echoed Mr LAU Kong-wah's views above, and expressed grave dissatisfaction with the Administration's work in enhancing bus safety. To expedite improvements and avoid procrastination, he indicated that he would consider inviting the Panel to move a motion for debate in Council to condemn the Administration for failing to put in place adequate measures to enhance bus safety at the next Panel meeting.

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Admin

27. Unsatisfied with the Administration's work in ensuring safety of franchised bus operation, members decided to continue to follow up the issue at the next meeting of the Panel to be held on 23 March 2007. They also agreed to request the Administration to introduce seatbelt legislation to cover exposed seats of buses equipped with seatbelts, speed up work relating to the retrofitting of seatbelts on existing buses, redeploy buses not equipped with seatbelts away from risky routes, review the design of bus structure and body to provide maximum protection for passengers, review the arrangements for employing bus captains under contract terms and the working schedule for bus captains to further enhance bus safety, etc. They also requested the Administration to provide information, inter alia, on the root causes of the three fatal accidents involving buses as well as the remedial actions taken to prevent recurrence of similar incidents in future. Members also considered it necessary for the Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works, the Commissioner for Transport and representatives of the Police to attend the next meeting to answer members' questions.

- V Traffic and transport arrangements for the commissioning of Hong Kong – Shenzhen Western Corridor and Sheung Shui to Lok Ma Chau Spur Line**
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1040/06-07(01) - Submission from Yuen Long District Council
LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/06-07(05) - Information paper entitled "Traffic and Transport Arrangements for the Commissioning of Hong Kong - Shenzhen Western Corridor" provided by the Administration

28. The Chairman welcomed representatives of the deputations to the meeting. He reminded the representatives of the deputations that when addressing the Panel, they would not be covered by the protection and immunity provided under the Legislative Council (Powers and Privileges) Ordinance (Cap. 382), and their papers or written submissions were also not covered by the Ordinance.

Presentation by the deputations

Tai Wo Motors Ltd.

29. Mr Aaron NG, Chairman of the Limited, said that his company fully supported the Government's policy to allow public transport operators to provide services at the boundary control points.

The Fraternity Association of N.T. Taxi Merchants

30. Mr HO Che-kan, Chairman of the Association, said that his association welcomed the Government's decision to open the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor (HK-SWC) and the Lok Ma Chau (LMC) Terminus to taxis which had

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experienced a very hard time in recent years. Mr HO said that the non-franchised buses (NFBs) should not be allowed to access the two new control points as they did not provide regular bus services.

United Friendship Taxi Owners & Drivers Association Ltd.

(LC Paper No. CB(1)1034/06-07(02))

31. Mr LEUNG Chak-sang, Chairman of the Association, said that the HK-SWC provided a convenient boundary crossing point for travellers, and the Government should provide sufficient spaces for taxi operation at the control point.

Taxi Dealers & Owners Association Limited

32. Mr NG Kwan-sing, President of the Association, said that his Association supported the arrangement of allowing taxis to access the new control points. As taxis provided legitimate public transport services but suffered from poor business, there should be restrictions on other transport modes to access the new control points.

Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories Public & Maxicab Light Bus Merchants' United Association

(LC Paper No. CB(1)964/06-07(02))

33. Mr LEUNG Hung, Chairman of the Association, said that whilst supporting the Government's policy to allow minibuses to access the public transport interchanges (PTIs) at the HK-SWC and the LMC Terminus, the Association strongly requested that, for the sake of fairness, the Government should tender out the new green minibus routes serving the new control points.

New Territories Taxi Drivers' Rights Alliance

34. 梁宇榮先生, 主席 of the Association, said that although the Alliance favoured the policy of permitting taxis to operate at the new control points, it was concerned that the permission for 1 500 private vehicles to use the new control points might lead to the private vehicles providing illegal transport services to the travellers. He requested that the Government should take enforcement action against such illegal activities.

Urban Taxi Drivers Association Co., Ltd.

35. Mr KWOK Chi-piu, Chairman of the Association, said that since the Transport Department and the Police had not taken strict enforcement actions at the LMC control point, many vehicles had been providing illegal transport services at the control point. He requested that the Government should take adequate measures at the two new control points to protect the interests of the legitimate transport service operators.

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Right for Taxi Owner and Driver Association Limited

36. 余叙勤先生, 副主席 of the Association, said that the Association welcomed the opening of the two new control points to taxis, but objected to any move to allow the NFBs or private vehicles to provide transport services at the control points, as it would lead to a price war in which taxis would be put in an disadvantageous position.

Quadripartite Taxi Service Association Ltd.

37. 劉劍魂先生, 主席 of the Association, said that despite that taxi operators had to pay to the Government a high tender price for their licences, they faced unfair competition from other transport service providers. For example, the number of cross-boundary bus services had been increasing all the times. He said that the laid down policy for the transport arrangements at the new control points should not be subject to any further change.

Sun Hing Taxi Radio Service General Association

38. Mr CHAN Wai-ming, Chairman of the Association, said that his Association welcomed the arrangement for taxis to access the two new control points, and requested that the arrangement should be implemented as soon as possible.

Non-franchised Public Buses Workers Association
(*LC Paper No. CB(1)1040/06-07(02)*)

39. Ms SO Po-lin, Chairman of the Association, said that the NFBs provided special transport services to organizations such as travel agencies, schools and community organizations. The closure of the new control points to NFBs was both unfair and unreasonable to the operators and members of the public. A travel group of, say, tens of people could not be expected to take taxis to travel to or from the control points. It would not be practicable for a tour guide to take care of a group of travellers by using taxis. The use of NFBs for travelling would help relieve the traffic congestions at the control points.

Public Light Bus General Association
(*LC Paper No. CB(1)954/06-07(01)*)

40. Mr LING Chi-keung, Chairman of the Association, said that the Government should relax the restriction on red minibuses in accessing the LMC Terminus, and should award, through open tender, the green minibus route servicing the LMC Terminus.

Association of N.T. Radio Taxicabs Ltd.

41. Mr Sunny CHAN, Vice Chairman of the Association, said that whilst supporting the arrangement for allowing taxis to access the two new control points, the Association

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requested that measures should be taken to ensure the smooth traffic flow in the closed area to facilitate the operators. For the sake of traffic control, NFBs should not be allowed to access the control points.

The Hong Kong Taxi & Public Light Bus Association Limited

42. Mr TONG Yeuk-fung, Chairman of the Association, said that the Association supported the proposed transport arrangements at the new control points put forward by the Government.

Hong Kong Tele-Call Taxi Association

43. Mr WONG Yu-ting, Chairman of the Association, said that since the NFBs were allowed to use the LMC control point, they should not be permitted to extend their business to the new control points.

汽車交通運輸業總工會非專利巴士分會

44. 梁世華先生, 主任 of the Association, said that it was unfair that the NFB operators had not been involved nor consulted in the planning of the transport arrangements for the new control points, although all other transport service operators had been involved, and provided with the necessary facilities.

China Hong Kong and Macau Boundary Crossing Bus Association
(*LC Paper No. CB(1)964/06-07(01)*)

45. Mr CHAN Chung-yee, Secretary General of the Association, said that it would not be fair to allow NFBs to use the new control points, as the other types of public transport, including franchised buses, cross-boundary coaches and minibuses were subject to quota control, whereas NFBs were not controlled by a quota system. Under the existing arrangement, only two franchised bus routes, three minibus routes, and about 300 cross-boundary coaches were permitted to access the new control points. If the 5 000 odd NFBs were allowed to access the new control points, they could convey nearly seven million commuters a day. It would be impracticable to allow only some of the NFBs to use the new control points. If the 2 000 odd red minibuses were also granted access the new control points, more than 10 000 public transport vehicles would have the right to access the control points. To facilitate tourists, the best arrangement was to relax the quota on the cross-boundary coaches in using the control points, which would result in lower fares for the commuters.

The Motor Transport Co. of Guangdong and Hong Kong Limited

46. Mr ZENG Hongan, Chairman of the Company, said that the Company was the first company providing cross-boundary coach service and had been operating the service at the various control points for 27 years, contributing to the development of the two places. At present, there were about 1 000 cross-boundary coaches providing

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efficient transport services for commuters. With the opening of two new boundary crossing points, the Company was very concerned about the need of careful planning for transport services at the control points, so as to maintain the viability and cost-effectiveness of the different modes of transport services.

Hin Wan Bus Management Ltd.

47. Mr YU Ka-hung, Managing Director of the Association, said that if all types of transport services, including NFBs, light goods vehicles and red minibuses, were granted access to the two new control points, and if there was not a quota system to restrict the number of franchised buses, green minibuses and cross-boundary coaches serving the control points, it would only create uncontrollable traffic chaos, putting enormous pressure on the frontline enforcement personnel, e.g. the Police, Immigration and Customs & Excise officers, and causing inconvenience to the passengers. The established transport management system should be maintained to allow different transport trades to play their respective roles in providing transport services to the public. The quota system had been operating effectively at the control points and should continue to be used.

Wing Lee (Kong Shum) Transportation Ltd.

48. Mr CHEUNG Kim-ping, Assistant General Manager of the Association, said that the opening of the new control points to taxis would lead to more serious and widespread illegal practices among the taxi operators. The small size of the PTI at the LMC Terminus would not be able to accommodate the 18 000 taxis allowed to access the control point. The traffic situation at the new control points could turn into a nightmare, and competition among the different operators would be extremely intense, e.g. there were about 1 000 cross-boundary coaches running at the various control points. If other types of transport service were allowed to operate at the new control points, they should be subject to the licence control.

Zhan Gang Tourist Transportation Co Ltd.

49. Mr LAU Wing-tsan, Managing Director of the Association, said that it had been the Government's policy to use a quota system to control the international passenger transport service at the various control points. It would only cause unfair competition, inconvenience and safety risks to the passengers, and enormous pressure on the enforcement personnel, if transport service operators other than franchised buses, minibuses and taxis were allowed to provide service at the control points. A departure from the existing transport policy for the control points would lead to serious consequences on the traffic situation in the Frontier Closed Areas.

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Eternal East Cross-Border Coach MGT Ltd.

50. Mr LIN Chung-fai, General Manager of the Association, said that transport services and control at the boundary control points should be carefully planned or else a bottle-neck would be created in the closed area causing inconvenience, chaos and safety risks to the users. The various control points should be designated for use by different types of travellers and transport service operators. If there was not a quota system to control the number and types of vehicles entering the control points, a lot of malpractice would follow, e.g. touting of passengers, "discount taxis", smuggling, etc. The control points should not be opened to all types of vehicles at the expense of passenger safety and a smooth traffic flow.

Hongkong Guangdong Boundary Crossing Bus Association
(*LC Paper No. CB(1)658/06-07(01)*)

51. Mr Sammy CHOW, Chief Secretary of the Association, said that the Government had laid down policy on the roles of different transport modes, and the system had worked effectively over the years. The cross-boundary coaches had been designated to provide international passenger service at the control points, and this role should not be changed. Based on the proposed transport arrangements for the two new control points, the cross-boundary coaches would not be allowed to service the LMC Terminus, and were subject to a quota system in accessing the HK-SWC, whereas the number and timing for taxis accessing the control points were not restricted. The franchised buses and minibuses could increase their frequencies whenever necessary. Such an arrangement was unfair to the cross-boundary coach operators. If the operators of taxis and minibuses considered that the cross-boundary coach service was more lucrative, they should transfer their investment to the coach service.

Kowloon District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus Operators Association
(*LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/06-07(03)*)

52. Mr LAI Chin-to, Chairman of the Association, said that the Association was greatly dissatisfied that the Government did not allow the NFBs to access the new control points. There were many advantages in allowing NFBs to operate at the new boundary crossings, namely the travel agencies could provide efficient and comfortable one-stop service to the travellers which should help foster Hong Kong's economy, and enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness in attracting tourists to visit the territory. The ban on NFBs at the new control points would deprive the passengers of their choice on transport services, and impose a bad image on the travellers. The carrying capacity of the NFBs was much larger than taxis and minibuses, and hence the number of vehicles in the closed areas could be reduced if NFBs operated at the control points. As a result, the traffic situation and the environment in the closed areas would improve significantly. He requested that the new control points should be opened to NFBs, for the sake of fairness, and a harmonious society. He said that many travel agencies had written in to support the opening of the new control points to NFBs.

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Association for the Right of Taxi Drivers

53. Mr Andy LI, President of the Association, said that the Association welcomed the provision of an all-weather taxi stand at the new control points. The Government, however, should step up traffic control at the taxi stands to prevent malpractices.

Tuen Mun District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus Operators Association
(LC Paper No. CB(1)988/06-07(01))

54. Mr YIP Wing-ching, Vice-Chairman of the Association, said that the banning of NFBs from using the new control points was unreasonable. There were many large housing estates in Yuen Long, Tuen Mun and Tin Shui Wai, and many community organizations in the area frequently organized economy local tours or tours to the nearby areas in the Mainland. The local residents were greatly dissatisfied that they could not hire the NFBs to access the new control points for travelling to the Mainland, as they belonged to the lower income group and could not afford hiring the cross-boundary coaches. As the residents traveled in groups, it was not suitable for them to use minibuses or taxis. Therefore it would only be reasonable to allow the NFBs access to the new control points.

Yuen Long District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus Operators Association
(LC Paper No. CB(1)988/06-07(02))

55. Mr CHEUNG Yick-shum, Chairman of the Association, said that the planning of the traffic arrangements at the new control points had been erroneous. The roads in Yuen Long had not been so planned as to accommodate the resultant large increase in vehicle volume after the opening of the new control points. The banning of NFBs from the new control points also deprived residents in Yuen Long a more economical and efficient means in travelling between Yuen Long and the Mainland, which was more frequent than that of other districts because many Yuen Long dwellers were the offspring of residents in Shenzhen, or came from the Mainland.

New Territories Taxi Operations Union
(LC Paper No. CB(1)981/06-07(01))

56. Mr CHAN Shu-sang, Chairman of the Association, said that the opening of the new control points would help improve the business of the taxis. He asked whether any toll fees would be charged for taxis using the HK-SWC. He said that the Association was concerned that the 1 500 private vehicles allowed to use the PTI at the HK-SWC might involve in operating illegal transport services, which would adversely affect the business of the taxis. Taxis operating as syndicates or by telephone appointments, which aimed at monopolizing taxi services at the control points, should also be disallowed. Enforcement actions should be stepped up to prevent such malpractices. The traffic arrangements at the LMC control point could be adopted in regulating traffic at the new control points.

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Public Omnibus Operators Association Ltd.
(LC Paper No. CB(1)981/06-07(02))

57. Mr YEUNG Wai-hung, Chairman of the Association, said that it was ridiculous and irrational that the NFBs serving mainly the tourists were not allowed to access the new control points, which were supposed to be opened for cross-boundary travellers, to facilitate members of the public, and to help foster Hong Kong's economy. The tourist industry contributed considerably to Hong Kong's economy, and the NFBs played an important role in the tourist industry. The Travel Industry Council fully supported the opening of the new control points to the NFBs.

Tsuen Wan District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus Operators Association
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1034/06-07(01))

58. Mr TANG Chi-keung, Chairman of the Association, said that the Association was in a furor in response to the banning of NFBs from the two new control points. The Transport Department should provide a level-playing field for all types of transport service operators to provide services at the new control points. Because of the unfair arrangements of the Transport Department, the different operators had to argue for their right to access the new control points, which should be open to NFBs.

Hong Kong District Tourists and Passengers Omnibus Operators Association
(LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/06-07(04))

59. Mr CHAN Chi-tak, Chairman of the Association, said that the Association was discontented with the proposed transport arrangements at the new control points. He said that in the recent transport study report, taxis, minibuses and NFBs were classified as the same group of public transport, and yet only NFBs were excluded from servicing the new control points. It was a totally discriminatory act against the NFBs. The need for schools, housing estates, and community organizations to hire NFBs to access the control points should not be ignored. It would not be appropriate for taxis or minibuses to provide such services. The use of NFBs to access the control points would be more efficient, economical, and environmental-friendly. Based on the above, NFBs should be allowed to operate at the new control points.

Wai Yik HK, Kln & NT Taxi Owners Association Ltd.

60. Mr LI Kwok-ying, Secretary of the Association, said that whilst the Association supported the Government's transport arrangements at the new control points, a lavatory should be provided near the taxi stands to facilitate the taxi drivers and passengers.

Taxi & P.L.B. Concern Group
(LC Paper No. CB(1)988/06-07(03))

61. Mr LAI Ming-hung, Chairman of the Association, said that the 1 300 odd cross-boundary coaches already catered for the need of travellers. NFBs should not be

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classified as the same type of public transport service as taxis and minibuses, which could charge the passengers individually. The NFBs only served to relieve the burden of other mainstream public passenger carriers in conveying passengers during peak traveling periods.

Discussion

62. Ms Miriam LAU said that the argument among the different types of transport service operators on the public transport arrangements at the two new control points reflected the difficulties faced by the operators in running their business. She opined that in the long term, the control points should be opened to all types of public transport services to facilitate the passengers, e.g. a quota system could be devised to allow NFBs to access the control points. However, the transport arrangements at the control points had to take into consideration the environment and limitations of the site. She was concerned that the cross-boundary coaches had to pay heavy fees to the relevant Mainland authorities, and operate under a strict quota system, which increased the operation costs of the coach companies resulting in high fares for passengers. Ms LAU asked whether the Government would discuss with the Mainland authorities concerned with a view to lowering the charges on cross-boundary coaches. For instance, negotiations with the Mainland authorities on the arrangement for cross-boundary goods vehicles had resulted in a relaxation on the restriction of the number of drivers using the same vehicle. Ms LAU pointed out that given the large number of taxis, particular attention should be paid to the arrangements for regulating the taxis entering the control points, or the confusion situation like that in the airport would emerge. Ms LAU opined that for the sake of fairness, interested parties should be given the opportunity to bid for the minibus routes for the new control points through open tender.

63. Mr Jeffrey LAM opined that despite that the opening of the HK-SWC was imminent, the detailed transport arrangements had not been clearly set out. With reference to paragraph 7 of LC Paper No. CB(1)1004/06-07(05) which indicated that the existing holders of private car quotas at other control points would be encouraged to use the HKSWC, Mr LAM asked whether the arrangement would apply to drivers of other vehicles as well. He also asked whether the existing holders of quotas at other control points could access both the existing and the new control points.

64. Mr WONG Kwok-hing remarked that the commissioning of the new control points should provide business opportunities for the transport service operators, and facilitate the travellers. The conflicts among the different operators mainly stemmed from the inconsiderate arrangements drawn up by the relevant bureau/department. Mr WONG asked whether the bureau/department concerned had consulted the operators and the related associations beforehand. Mr WONG opined that the primary consideration should be the need to facilitate the local passengers. For example, residents from remote areas needed transport services for group travel, and point-to-point journeys. The roads leading to the control points should be fully utilized. The different transport service operators should be allowed to compete on an equitable basis, and the passengers should be given the liberty to select the appropriate means of

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transportation in traveling to and from the control points.

65. Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Transport)³ (DS/T3) responded that the Government had fully considered the interests of different transport trades and the need of the public in planning the transport arrangements for the new control points. Meanwhile, the government had to consider the geographic constraints of the sites, the security of the control points, and the corresponding transport arrangements on the Mainland side. She said that owing to site constraints, the PTI at the LMC Terminus had an area of only about 6 000 square metres. The closed road leading to the PTI was only 7.3 metres wide, and the environment permit issued by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) had imposed a cap on the number of vehicle trips along the access roads to the PTI. On the Mainland side, passengers could only access the LMC Terminus through route No. 4 of the Shenzhen metro; other means of transportation, e.g. buses or coaches, would not be available upon commissioning. As far as the HK-SWC was concerned, the original planning of the control point was to cater for goods vehicles, and a small number of private cars and cross-boundary coaches. With the setting up of PTIs at the LMC Terminus and the HK-SWC, three franchised bus routes and two minibuses routes would be allowed access to the control point. She supplemented that the minibus route for HK-SWC would be put up for open tendering, whereas in the case of the LMC Terminus, an existing minibus route serving Ha Wan Village, which was very near to the new control point would be extended to serve the LMC Terminus. DS/T3 pointed out that corresponding complementary transport arrangements would be provided on the Mainland side, and the Hong Kong Government could not unilaterally increase the number or types of vehicles accessing the control points. The planning of the transport arrangements at the two new control points had to be made in collaboration with the relevant Mainland authorities, having regard to the geographical and environmental constraints of the sites. She stressed that apart from the two new control points, passengers and the transport service operators could still make use of the existing control points at Lo Wu, Man Kam To, LMC and Sha Tau Kok. The Government would closely monitor the traffic situation after the opening of the new control points.

66. Ms LI Fung-ying maintained that there was a need to strike a balance among the interests of different transport trades to ensure fairness. As NFBs were licensed to operate point-to-point passenger service, it was unfair and discriminatory to deny them access to certain control points. The transport arrangements at the control points should aim to facilitate members of the public who should be given the choice to use the most efficient and economical means of transportation. She added that if there was a ceiling for the number of vehicles using the new control points, the quota should be evenly distributed among different transport modes to facilitate the public.

67. DS/T3 reiterated that given the site constraints at the new control points, priority had to be given to public transport services like franchised buses and minibuses that would serve the public at large. It should also be noted cross-boundary coaches were also NFBs.

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68. Mr LAU Kong-wah said that the Government's transport policy should aim to ensure the viability of all transport trades. From the public's point of view, the control points should be open to all types of transportation. Previously, the Panel had successfully requested the Administration to open the LMC control point to taxis. Currently taxis were only allowed to access the LMC control point in the evenings, and the Panel would continue to press for the opening of the control point to taxis on a 24-hour basis. The Panel's stance was to ensure that the transport arrangements were equitable to all transport trades. Mr LAU said that whilst the PTI at LMC Terminus was small, the PTI at HK-SWC was relatively much larger. The transport trades could consider jointly proposing to the Government that the LMC control point should be opened to taxis on a 24-hour basis, whereas the NFBs should be permitted to access the HK-SWC control point under a quota system. Corresponding transport arrangements could be made on the Mainland side. He pointed out that the NFBs served a clientele different from those of other transport trades. The NFBs provided services to residents of housing estates, schools and community organizations who travelled in groups and would not travel by taxis or minibuses. Mr LAU said that as Chairman of the Bills Committee on Shenzhen Bay Port Hong Kong Port Area Bill, he would arrange a visit to the Shenzhen Bay port. Members of the Panel might also wish to join the visit and have a better understanding of the PTI of the HK-SWC.

69. DS/T3 responded that the LMC control point was extremely busy, with more than 30 000 vehicles accessing the control point daily. The LMC boundary crossing could only be opened to taxis in the evening when vehicular traffic at the crossing was less busy. It would not be feasible to allow taxis to access the LMC control point in the day time in view of the heavy traffic at the boundary crossing and the connecting roads. As far as the HK-SWC control point was concerned, areas in the PTI had been designated for different facilities, and no space would be made available to accommodate additional passenger vehicles.

70. Mr LAU Kong-wah said that it was an opportune time to allow taxis to access the LMC control point on a 24-hour basis as the opening of the HK-SWC would relieve the traffic burden at LMC. The Panel and the relevant transport trades should press for such an arrangement. Mr LAU pointed out that the size of the HK-SWC control point had been fixed by the Central Government at about 8 000 square metres, which was about 2 000 square metres more than that of LMC Spur Line control point. The area of the new control point should be fully utilized to accommodate different transport modes. He opined that the Mainland authorities would make corresponding arrangements if the Government adjusted its transport plans at the new control points.

71. Mrs Selina CHOW said that transport arrangements at the boundary crossings should be made on an equitable basis. Some transport trades considered that the arrangements at the two new control points were unfair to them. She opined that if there was a quota on the number of vehicles accessing the control points, there should be no restriction on the types of vehicles entering the control points. Instead, traffic control should be imposed on the number of vehicles accessing the control points, which would not cause any conflict among the different transport trades. If NFBs were allowed to

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access the new control points, the Mainland authorities would make corresponding transport arrangements. Travel groups were also members of the public and should be entitled to the provision of the appropriate type of transport service, namely the NFBs, at the control points. The grievances of the NFB operators were justified. Measures should also be taken to alleviate the operation costs of the cross-boundary coaches in order to improve their competitiveness. The public would welcome the opening of the boundary crossings to all types of transport services. A quota system could be devised to control the traffic volume at the boundary crossings. The Government should resolve the traffic arrangements issue at the new control points through a comprehensive review on transport policy to improve the viability of different transport trades. Mrs CHOW said that enforcement actions should also be stepped up against illegal transport services provided by private cars.

72. DS/T3 responded that the Government had regularly reviewed its policy on the transport arrangements at boundary crossings. The situation at the new control points would be closely monitored and where appropriate, adjustments to the transport arrangements would be made. Vehicles accessing the control points would not be charged any toll fees. She said that the Police had taken enforcement actions against "pak pai (白牌)" at the control points and, despite the difficulties in gathering evidence, there were successful prosecution cases. DS/T3 pointed out that as far as the quota system was concerned, the Government and the relevant Mainland authorities had regularly reviewed the system, and the number of quotas had been increased as a result of the commissioning of the new control points. Holders of the quotas for other boundary crossings would be encouraged to switch to use the new control points.

73. Mr Albert CHAN said that it was most unfortunate that the three transport trades, namely non-franchised buses, minibuses and taxis, which faced the problem of poor business, had to struggle among themselves for survival, whereas the two railway corporations gained enormous profits. He said that if the three transport trades did not co-operate, their scope of business would only be further limited. As far as the transport arrangements at control points were concerned, the problem of collaboration with the Mainland transport arrangements should not exist as the Mainland authorities would take corresponding action to tie in with Hong Kong's transport arrangements. It was only the Government's policy of not opening the boundary crossings to all types of vehicles, even when the Mainland authorities had provided the necessary transit services, say, at Lo Wu, which caused problems. From the public's viewpoint, there should be a free choice of transport services at the control points. The transport trades should be allowed to compete in a level-playing field, and market force would determine which types of transport services should be provided. If there were site constraints, the Government could enforce a quota system to regulate the traffic at the restricted areas, e.g. the permit system for users of roads in Lantau. Mr CHAN said that the Government should be more flexible in implementing its transport policies to benefit the public and the transport trades alike.

Site visit

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74. The Chairman remarked that in order to consider further improvement to the transport arrangements at the new control points, the Panel should conduct a site visit before further discussing the arrangements with the Government.

75. Ms Miriam LAU opined that the Panel should pay a joint visit with the Bills Committee on Shenzhen Bay Port Hong Kong Port Area to the new control points. The Chairman said that he would discuss with Mr LAU Kong-wah, the chairman of the Bills Committee, regarding the arrangements for the visit.

VI Any other business

76. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:05 pm.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
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