

Progress Report
**Motion Debate on “Facing up to the needs of people with disabilities in
using transport”**
Legislative Council Meeting on 31 October 2007

Background

At the Legislative Council meeting on 31 October 2007, the following motion on “Facing up the needs of people with disabilities in using transport” moved by the Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung, as amended by Hon WONG Kwok-hing, was carried –

“That, although the Chief Executive, in response to Members’ questions during the Legislative Council’s Question and Answer Session on the Policy Address on the 11th of this month, said that he would give a response, in one or two months’ time, on how the provision of transport half-fare concessions for people with disabilities would be addressed, in view of the past records that despite this Council’s passage of motions in the 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 sessions calling for improvement to transport facilities for people with disabilities and offer of concessionary fares to them, the government departments concerned, some statutory transport corporations and other public transport operators have all failed to take corresponding measures and face up to the requests, there are worries about further procrastination by the government departments; this Council considers that for many years there is a general consensus in the community that there is a need to offer transport concessions to help people with disabilities to integrate into society and the Government is duty-bound to take the matter forward, this Council is greatly dissatisfied and expresses deep regret that the Government has been procrastinating for years and has not achieved any results so far; after a relevant subcommittee was formed by the Legislative Council and meetings held over the past year or so,

coupled with the fact that the Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission has written to the Chief Executive relaying the demands and justifications in this regard, the solution to this problem has dawned; moreover, some transport operators have recently proposed that the Government should bear all the deficits or keep all the surpluses arising from the introduction of half-fare concession for people with disabilities, but the government officials in charge have been procrastinating on putting forward a timetable and roadmap for implementation on the pretext that they have not yet assessed the various options and worked out precisely the financial commitments involved if the relevant option is chosen, which very much calls into question the Government's determination and sincerity in taking the matter forward; in this connection, this Council urges that the Government:

- (a) must relentlessly shoulder the responsibility to provide financial assistance, regardless of which option of transport half-fare concession it eventually decides to adopt for people with disabilities;
- (b) must expeditiously put forth, in the near future, specific proposals and timetable for introducing half-fare concession for people with disabilities, so as to help them integrate into society and improve their life;
- (c) should allocate additional resources to comprehensively improve the Rehabus service and, in particular, must extend such service to remote areas and new towns; and
- (d) should strictly regulate the public transport operators in providing barrier-free facilities, so as to enable more people with disabilities to use public transport and integrate into society.”

2. This report informs Members of the follow-up actions that have been taken by the Administration.

Provision of Public Transport Fare Concession for Persons with Disabilities (“PWDs”)

3. The Administration recognizes that subsidizing their public transport expenses through the provision of public transport fare concession will help to encourage them to go out more to participate in different activities, providing more opportunities for them to meet with the community, thereby facilitating their full integration into society. On this, the Administration has all along been liaising with the public transport operators, encouraging them take a further step to provide fare concession to PWDs in fulfilment of their corporate social responsibilities while improving their service facilities.

4. At the Summit on Social Enterprise held on 20 December 2007, the Chief Executive announced that the Government had decided to provide concessionary public transport fare to PWDs to help them to integrate into society. The Financial Secretary and the Secretary for Labour and Welfare are actively considering the relevant implementation details. The Financial Secretary will announce the scheme in the coming Budget in February 2008. The Administration will report back to the “Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs and Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for Persons with Disabilities” under the House Committee of Legislative Council.

Allocating additional resources to improve Rehabus service

5. The Administration understands that there is a great demand for Rehabus service from PWDs and endeavours to improve the service. In this respect, additional rehabuses will be purchased to meet service needs subject to funding constraints and competitive priorities for rehabilitation services. In 2007-08, the Administration has allocated additional resources to further improve the service by procuring 6 new buses and replacing 9 aged buses equipped with obsolete single-arm tail-lift. Among them, two buses will be

deployed for providing scheduled route service to meet the demand from those waitlistees reside in remote areas. In January 2008, the fleet size of Rehabus will be increased to 101 vehicles while the average vehicle age will be reduced from 6.8 years to 5.3 years.

6. Apart from purchasing new buses and replacing existing ones, Rehabus will continue to rationalize its existing routes and upgrade its “Rehabus Information Management System” so as to enhancing the effectiveness of the utilization of fleet resources to serve more PWDs.

7. In 2008-09, taking into account the increasing demands for Rehabus service from PWDs, the Administration will continue to consider allocating extra resources to purchase new buses and replace the old ones, with a view to strengthening and improving the Rehabus service.

Improvement on Public Transport Facilities

8. To enhance the accessibility of people with disabilities (“PWDs”) to public transport services, the Administration will continue to uphold the vision of “Transport for All”. In fact, public transport operators have been supportive of this vision through enhancing public transport facilities to better serve passengers with disabilities. The latest progress of improvements of public transport facilities made by major public transport operators is at the Annex Annex. The Administration will continue to work together with public transport operators to enhance facilities to benefit more PWDs.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Transport and Housing Bureau
December 2007

Enhancement of Public Transport Facilities by
Public Transport Operators

Railways

1. All MTR stations and Light Rail stops are equipped with barrier-free access.
2. Except Racecourse station, all MTR stations are equipped with tactile guide paths.
3. Portable ramps are provided at all MTR stations (except West Rail Line stations of which the platform gaps are small) for easy boarding and alighting by wheelchair users.
4. Audible devices, which announce the fare charged and remaining value of the Octopus cards, have been installed in the exit gates led by tactile guide paths at all stations of Tsuen Wan Line, Island Line, Kwun Tong Line, Tsuen Wan Line, Tung Chung Line, Airport Express Line and most East Rail Line stations to benefit visually impaired passengers.
5. Flashing neon lights have been installed at East Rail Line stations with wider platform gaps to caution passengers.
6. Ticket vending machines with an interactive voice message function are provided at all stations of East Rail Line, Ma On Shan Line and West Rail Line to benefit visually impaired passengers.

7. In 2007, MTRCL installed passenger lifts connecting between concourse and platform at Lai Chi Kok and Tai Wo Hau stations as well as provided stairlifts at Wong Tai Sin, Cheung Sha Wan, Sham Shui Po and Yau Ma Tei stations.
8. Ramp access is available at all Light Rail stops. Lifts are provided at all Light Rail interchanges with West Rail Line. “Platform Gap Fillers” are provided to narrow the platform gaps at 62 platforms among 37 stops. In addition, low-height Octopus entry/exit processors are installed at Light Rail stops to facilitate the use by wheelchair users. All Octopus entry/exit processors are equipped with brailles to facilitate the use by visually impaired passengers.
9. Installation works of tactile guide path and audible devices are being carried out in the exit gates of all Light Rail stops.

Franchised buses

1. Franchised bus operators will continue their programmes to replace older buses with low-floor buses -
 - All franchised bus companies except New Lantau Bus Company Limited (“NLB”) agreed in 2001 that all the new buses to be purchased would be wheelchair accessible. As regards NLB, its operation is largely on Lantau Island and deployment of wheelchair accessible buses is not suitable for most of its routes due to constraints of the terrain. However, NLB has planned to purchase wheelchair accessible buses for deployment on routes where the terrain permits so as to cater for the transport needs of PWDs as far as possible.

- The number of wheelchair accessible bus has increased from 2,329 in 2003 to over 2,700 in October 2007. There has been an increase of 133 wheelchair accessible buses within a year since October 2006.
 - New World First Bus Services Ltd. (“NWFB”) has particularly arranged wheelchair accessible buses to operate on specific routes. All buses operating along these routes are wheelchair accessible so as to avoid confusion or inconvenience to people with disabilities.
2. The franchised bus operators will continue to install bus stop announcement system where feasible –
- The number of bus installed with bus stop announcement system has been increased from 2,825 in 2003 to 4,306 in October 2007. The number accounts for 73% of the total bus fleet. As compared to October 2006, there have been 86 buses newly installed with bus stop announcement system within a year time.
 - The bus stop announcement system is considered as a standard equipment for all new buses purchased by Kowloon Motor Bus Co. (1933) Ltd. NWFB and Citybus Limited are currently conducting a trial scheme of bus stop announcement system automated by a Global Positioning System with a view to providing more information and enhancing the accuracy of bus stop announcement messages.