

For Discussion
26 June 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Report on Traffic Accident on Mong Kok Road on 12 June 2009

Purpose

This paper informs members of the preliminary findings of Transport Department on the fatal accident involving a green mini bus (GMB) on Mong Kok Road on 12 June 2009. It also proposes traffic management measures to improve the road conditions and measures to enhance safety of public light bus (PLB) operations.

The Accident

2. At about 2340 hours on 12 June 2009, a GMB of Route 616S (Mong Kok – Lok Ma Chau) ran into a double deck bus of KMB Route 1A (Tsim Sha Tsui – Sau Mau Ming Central) when it made a left turn from Sai Yeung Choi Street South onto Mong Kok Road. As a result of the collision, the GMB ran onto the footpath of Mong Kok Road and knocked down a number of pedestrians, some of whom were waiting for bus services at the bus stops, along the same section of Mong Kok Road. 2 persons were killed and 8 injured / seriously injured. A plan showing the accident location is at the **Annex**.

TD's Findings

Accident Statistics

3. The subject junction is not an accident black spot. According to TD's accident statistics, there were 3 accidents involving personal injuries at or in the vicinity of this junction in the past 3 years (from June 2006 to May 2009), all involving slight injuries and vehicle-vehicle collision not involving pedestrians.

Road Design and Traffic Management

4. The subject sections of Mong Kok Road and Sai Yeung Choi Street South are heavily trafficked with high pedestrian volume, public transport services as well as general traffic. The footpath on Mong Kok Road is of an acceptable width of about 3.5 meters and further widening is not possible without narrowing the carriageway and compromising road capacity. In general, the intensity of franchised bus / PLB activities in the vicinity of the accident location has added to weaving traffic movements and complicated the traffic arrangement.

5. While the accident is still being investigated by the Police, TD has examined the current junction layout and considers that sufficient traffic management measures are in place in ensuring road safety. A “Give Way” priority control is in place where Sai Yeung Choi Street South approaches Mong Kok Road. A “bell-out” construction is in place, whereby the two traffic lanes on Sai Yeung Choi Street South are merged into one lane before entering the junction with Mong Kok Road. This arrangement has been implemented for more than 5 years and remains satisfactory in terms of road capacity. It also has the following road safety merits:-

- Shortening the crossing distance for pedestrians;
- Providing more footpath space for pedestrians waiting to cross the road;
- Reducing road carriageway width so that vehicles may approach the junction at lower speeds; and
- Allowing only one lane of traffic to pass the junction at a time, to improve traffic order and road safety.

6. The existing one-lane “Give Way” priority control at the junction of Mong Kok Road / Sai Yeung Choi Street South is a reasonable arrangement aimed at achieving road safety benefits and regulating traffic order, notwithstanding the fact that this has slightly increased the traffic delay across the junction. There are sufficient and clear traffic signs / road markings indicating this arrangement to motorists, who are required to slow down on approaching the junction, giving way to the traffic on Mong Kok Road and proceeding only when it is safe to do so.

Operation of GMB Route 616S

7. Immediately after the accident on 12 June 2009, TD warned the operator of GMB Route 616S to remind all drivers of this route to strictly adhere to traffic regulations and to adopt proper and safe driving behaviour during service delivery. Similar reminder was also issued to all the GMB operators in the territory.

8. The operator of GMB Route 616S has confirmed that the GMB driver involved in the accident is directly employed under proper employment contract. The driver has already worked for the company for a few years, and was deployed to take up a regular duty on the accident day. He is remunerated with a basic salary plus bonus, and the maximum number of trips that can be operated by an individual driver per working shift is capped. In gist, the GMB route concerned is not operated on a profit sharing basis. TD will continue to monitor the service level of this GMB route closely.

Proposed Improvement Measures

Traffic Management Measures

9. TD has examined the feasibility of signalizing the junction of Sai Yeung Choi Street South and Mong Kok Road. Both the preceding and the following junctions are signalized and in its close proximity. Signalizing the subject junction would adversely affect the throughput on Mong Kok Road, and would likely aggravate the tailback effect on the upstream junction of Mong Kok Road / Nathan Road. Considering our traffic management objective of minimizing possible disruption to smooth traffic on Nathan Road which is a major traffic route, we therefore do not recommend signalizing the subject junction. On the other hand, replacing the “Give Way” control with a “Stop” control is not recommended, as it would unnecessarily add to the delay on Sai Yeung Choi Street South. While TD has no record of complaints against the method of control at this junction over the past two years, certain improvement measures can still be considered, as noted in paragraph 10 below.

10. TD is prepared to review the existing bus / GMB stop arrangements along Mong Kok Road with a view to rationalizing the stopping activities there in order to release some road spaces for further improvement of the layout of the junction between Sai Yeung Choi Street South and Mong Kok Road. If the bus / GMB stop rationalization proposals were accepted, the footpath there could be widened, thereby providing room for shifting the existing “Give Way” control forward, making it easier for the left turning traffic to enter the junction, and onto Mong Kok Road. TD briefed the Yau Tsim Mong District Council Traffic and Transport Committee of this preliminary idea at its meeting held on 18 June 2009. The Committee in general supported the proposed way forward. TD is now drawing up a detailed proposal with relevant parties. Having said this, it should be noted that any proposal to change the status quo will have to take into account the paramount importance of road safety while balancing the interests of different stakeholders, including the passengers, pedestrians, transport trades, local residents and shop owners, etc.

Measures to Enhance Safety of PLB Operations

11. In the past years, the Government has been working hard to enhance the safety of PLB operation. Measures adopted include exploring installations to monitor the vehicle speed, enhancing training for PLB drivers, launching of publicity campaigns to promote safe driving behaviour, and taking enforcement actions against speeding and other improper driving behaviour.

(i) Vehicle Installations to Monitor Speed

Installation of Speed Display Devices (SDDs)

12. Since 2005, we have made mandatory installation of SDDs on PLBs a new vehicle licence condition upon issue or renewal of a PLB licence. With effect from 1 May 2008, any misuse or malfunctioning of the devices would constitute an offence under the Road Traffic (Vehicle Construction and Maintenance) Regulations (Cap. 374A). TD has reminded the PLB trade not to misuse and tamper with the SDDs and will reiterate the message at the coming trade conferences.

Installation of Vehicle Monitoring System (e.g. “Blackbox”)

13. Since 2004, TD has engaged suppliers to carry out trials of “blackbox” on PLBs. These trials have been unsuccessful because the device was found suffering from data loss and damage. Nevertheless, TD will continue to keep in view if there is any new “blackbox” product in the market for further trial.

14. TD has also encouraged GMB operators to install GPS based vehicle monitoring system on a trial basis with a view to strengthening their fleet and driver management capability. With such a vehicle monitoring system, the GMB operator would be able to understand better the driving behaviour of his / her drivers, and keep record of speed of the vehicles. There are still issues with the reliability of the device that need to be resolved. TD will continue to work with the PLB trade and the service providers to improve the capability and reliability of the device.

Installation of Speed Limiter on PLBs

15. It has been suggested that the installation of speed limiter on PLBs would be an effective measure to combat speeding by PLB drivers. On the technical side, the existing PLB suppliers in Hong Kong have advised TD that they would not support the proposal of retrofitting speed limiter on diesel PLBs because diesel PLBs of different body / model made in different production years would impose different mechanical problems / difficulties for retrofitting of speed limiter which cannot be overcome easily. There are also technical problems to be resolved by the vehicle manufacturer for installation of speed limiter on LPG PLBs. In respect of diesel PLBs, the vehicle suppliers advised that they would need about two years after the official announcement of the detailed requirements before they can include the speed limiters as a standard feature in new PLBs. TD will continue to explore with the PLB suppliers the feasibility of installation of speed limiter on new generation of PLBs and will consult the PLB trade in due course. However, it should be recognised that the driving behaviour of PLB drivers remains the most important element in the continuous enhancement of PLB safety.

(ii) Training and Education of PLB Drivers

16. In this regard, TD places great emphasis on training and education of PLB drivers to enhance their safety awareness, good driving behaviour and quality service delivery skills. In this connection, a PLB Driver Training Programme has been introduced since 2003 aiming at improving the driving attitude and the customer service skills of PLB drivers. In 2004, the above programme was developed into an Advanced PLB Driver Training Course under the Skills Upgrading Scheme launched and managed by the Vocational Training Council. TD will continue to encourage PLB drivers, and the GMB operators to send their drivers to attend the training courses.

17. Since 2005, TD has been organizing PLB Driver Safety Workshops jointly with the Police and PLB associations to promote road safety awareness among frontline PLB drivers. TD will continue to organize these workshops regularly.

Entry Requirements for Applicants of PLB Driving Licence

18. With the in-principle support of the PLB trades, we are formulating a detailed proposal to require applicants for the PLB driving licence to attend a mandatory pre-service training course that focuses on driving behaviour and attitude. When the details are ready, we will consult the trade again and submit the legislative proposal for a more comprehensive consideration by the relevant authorities in due course.

(iii) Publicity on Safe Driving

19. TD organizes regularly a variety of publicity programmes to promote safety awareness among the frontline PLB drivers from time to time. These include the Safety Charter for Public Light Bus Drivers, launched in 2005 and repeated in 2007. TD has also promulgated, after consultation with the PLB trade, Codes of Practices for PLB drivers and guidelines for picking up and setting down passengers in the past few years. TD will launch similar campaigns in 2009 and continue to disseminate messages on safe driving through the PLB newsletters.

(iv) Enforcement

20. Enforcement by the Police has been an effective measure for deterring speeding and improper driving behaviour of PLB drivers. Since 2008, TD has launched together with the Police and the PLB trade, the “Project Safe Ride” scheme. Under this scheme, the Police has set up a dedicated hotline for passengers riding on RMB and GMB services to report the speeding behaviour of frontline PLB drivers for direct investigation and prosecution where appropriate. The scheme will be reviewed by the end of 2009.

Advice Sought

21. Members are requested to note the content of this paper.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
June 2009**

Annex - Junction Layout

附錄 - 路口佈局



NOT TO SCALE

