

Bills Committee on Motor Vehicle Idling (Fixed Penalty) Bill

Fourth meeting on Monday 7 June 2010

Submission of The Conservancy Association

Further to our written submission made prior to the meeting, the Conservancy Association would like to supplement the following:

1. The fundamental reason for this bill is to protect human health, in particular, people who have long-term exposure at the roadside whereby continuous vehicle exhaust emissions aggravate the health threat. Restriction of vehicle idling engine running will certainly alleviate the situation. And, it will cause some inconvenience or even discomfort to the transport operators. However, human health and life should be considered higher priority than inconvenience and discomfort.
2. As such, we expect the community, including people in the transport trade, to support this bill in principle. The inconvenience/ discomfort caused to the drivers of taxis, minibuses and coaches has been fully expressed in the past 10 years and certainly the Government should address all these concerns of the trade. Government should revise the bill so that these inconvenience/ discomfort could be brought to an acceptable level.
3. The Conservancy Association notices that Government has indeed revised the bill to provide more exemptions to the taxi, PLB as well as coach operators in order to address their concerns as follows:
 - (a) first five taxis at a taxi stand;
 - (b) first two green PLBs of each route at a PLB stand;
 - (c) in addition to the first two red PLBs at a stand, those with one or more passengers on board, plus one immediately behind each of these red PLBs; and
 - (d) coaches with one or more passengers on board.

We consider that the Bill has now minimal adverse impact on the trade. And, in fact, some start to query that whether the Bill can still serve its stated purpose with some much exemptions.

4. We notice that there are also arguments saying that drivers may not be willing to stop their engines at idling and consequently they will loop round the area leading more traffic congestion and air pollution.
5. CA cannot agree to these arguments. This is equivalent to saying that people can find ways to escape statutory controls, let's give all the laws up. This is totally unreasonable and it is hard to believe that people would have so much time and money (for the fuel) to spend in order not to "suffer" a little inconvenience/ comfort.
6. There are also arguments in the taxi/ PLB trade saying that why they are picked to pay the costs of environmental/ public health improvement while others enjoy the benefits? CA believes in shared but different responsibilities in alleviating pollution. Regarding this Bill, it

7. is clear that most people to be affected are drivers who do not enjoy any exemption including the private car drivers and the lorry drivers. HKIE pointed out in their submission that parents who are driving and queuing to pick up their children at schools may suffer in bad weather conditions because of this Bill. Indeed, there are some inconvenience/ discomfort that everyone may have to suffer but everyone (including drivers) will benefit at times when we are pedestrians on the street.
8. With the above arguments, CA fully supports the passing of this Bill in order to protect human health and improving the air quality. CA also understands that people affected by the Bill worry about changes ahead as they are not certain about the consequences of the changes. CA calls upon the Administration to leniently impose this law to allow for an adaptation period.