

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2455/09-10
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB1/PL/EA+TP/1

**Panel on Transport and
Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Minutes of joint meeting held on
Friday, 28 May 2010, at 8:30 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Members of the Panel on Transport

- * Hon CHEUNG Hok-ming, GBS, JP (Chairman)
- * Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (Deputy Chairman)
- * Ir Dr Hon Raymond HO Chung-tai, SBS, S.B.St.J., JP
Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP
- * Hon Miriam LAU Kin-ye, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
- * Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon IP Wai-ming, MH
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
- * Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip

Members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs

Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP (Chairman)
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Prof Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, JP
Hon Tanya CHAN

(* Also members of the Panel on Environmental
Affairs)

- Members absent** : Members of the Panel on Transport
- Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
- * Hon LEE Wing-tat
- * Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, SBS, JP
- Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yea, GBS, JP
- Members of the Panel on Environmental Affairs
- Hon CHAN Hak-kan (Deputy Chairman)
- Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP
- Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
-
- Public officers attending** : Agenda item II
- Mr YAU Shing-mu, JP
Under Secretary for Transport and Housing
- Miss Janet WONG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Transport and
Housing (Transport) 1
- Ms Carolina YIP
Deputy Commissioner / Transport Services &
Management
Transport Department
- Mr Albert YUEN
Assistant Commissioner / Bus and Railway
Transport Department
- Dr POON Kit
Under Secretary for the Environment
- Mr Carlson K S CHAN
Deputy Director of Environmental Protection
- Mr MOK Wai-chuen
Assistant Director of Environmental Protection
(Air Policy)
- Mr Edmond HO
Principal Environmental Protection Officer
(Mobile Source)

Clerk in attendance : Ms Joanne MAK
Chief Council Secretary (1)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Sarah YUEN
Senior Council Secretary (1)6

Miss Angela LAM
Legislative Assistant (1)5

Action

I Election of Chairman

Ms Audrey EU was elected Chairman of the joint meeting.

II Rationalization of bus routes to improve air quality

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)2009/09-10(01) — Administration's paper on results of consultation with District Councils on franchised bus route development programme for 2010-2011
- LC Paper No. CB(1)2009/09-10(02) — Administration's paper on environmental benefits on expedited replacement of franchised buses
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1449/09-10 — Minutes of joint meeting on 22 January 2010
- LC Paper No. CB(1)2009/09-10(03) — Administration's consultation papers for District Councils on the 2010-2011 Bus Route Development Programme
- LC Paper No. CB(1)916/09-10(01) — Administration's paper on rationalization of bus routes to improve air quality)

2. The Under Secretary for Transport and Housing (USTH) and the Under Secretary for the Environment (USEN) together briefed members on the results of Transport Department (TD)'s consultation with District Councils (DCs) on the bus service rationalization proposals in the Franchised Bus Route Development Programme (RDP) for 2010-2011, and the related follow-up actions.

Comments on individual bus route proposals

3. Mr KAM Nai-wai highlighted the proposal to implement the conversion of Route 12 from a whole-day service to a peak-period service on non-public holidays, and considered it inadequate just to ensure that passengers affected would not have to pay a higher fare as a result because they might have to suffer from inconvenience and longer total journey time because of the need to interchange. In response, USTH and the Deputy Commissioner for Transport/Transport Services & Management (DC for T/TS&M) clarified that these passengers only had to switch to alternative routes charging similar fares such as 12M, 23A, 13 and 3B, and did not have to interchange between transport modes or routes.

4. Ms Miriam LAU questioned the proposal to convert cross-harbour Route 692 from a whole-day service to a peak-period service on non-public holidays, pointing out that when Route 692 was not in service, railway service would be the only choice available to the passengers so affected, who were mainly residents of Hang Hau. On the other hand, the frequency of Routes 694 and 690, which served residents of Tiu Keng Leng and Hong Sing respectively, would remain unchanged although these routes were equally under-utilized. She also cast doubt on the reason quoted for this conversion proposal, namely, that since the commissioning of the MTR Tseung Kwan O Line, Route 692 on average carried fewer than 20 passengers per trip during off-peak hours. She highlighted that as shown in a recent bus accident that involved the route, even at mid-night more than 30 passengers were found on board of Route 692. She therefore sought figures on the average number of passengers of Route 692 during non-peak hours. Keen to minimize the impact of the conversion proposal, she also asked whether Route 690 could detour to Hang Hau to serve its residents, and whether Route 692P presently operating only during peak hours to provide a direct service to Central could extend its service hours to non-peak hours, considering that the emissions from this direct route, which would not go through such busy corridors as Hennessy Road and Connaught Road, would be minimal.

5. DC for T/TS&M responded that Routes 694 and 690 were not converted because both Siu Sai Wan and Hong Sing, the origins of Routes 694 and 690 respectively, were not directly served by railway like Hang Hau. Moreover, residents of Hang Hau could switch to railway services at lower fares for journeys between Hang Hau and Central. Notwithstanding, she undertook to consider the alternatives proposed by Ms Miriam LAU above. Noting the Administration's response, Ms LAU strongly urged the Administration to explore the Route 692P option.

6. While indicating support for efforts to improve the environment, Mr IP Wai-ming was concerned that the policy of using railways as the backbone of the transport system might leave little room for other public transport services to survive. He then declared interests that he was a resident of Tseung Kwan O, and expressed concerns similar to Ms Miriam LAU's about the rationalization

Action

proposal regarding Route 692. He further pointed out that the proposal was undesirable because rail service might sometimes be suspended. Moreover, the MTR fare concerned would go up \$0.6 by 5% in June. In response to his call to reconsider the above proposal, USTH explained that railways were environmentally friendly, efficient and reliable mass carriers. Under the overall policy, bus routes would be rationalized if passengers could take railway direct as an alternative. Addressing Mr IP's concern about railway incidents, he further assured members that under the circumstances, contingency measures such as emergency feeder bus services would be provided.

7. Mr WONG Kwok-hing opined that relevant DCs' views should be respected in taking forward rationalization of bus routes in recognition that DCs could directly reflect local views. He therefore considered it necessary for the Administration to actively follow up and report back on the developments of the route cancellation/amalgamation proposals regarding routes 234S, 69X, N237 and 962X, over which the DCs concerned had strong views as reported in the Administration's paper for this item. USTH responded that DCs' views were already given special consideration although Legislative Council (LegCo) Members' views would also be given due regard to maintain a proper balance. He further pointed out that local views were indeed always diverse. As such, a balance would also need to be struck between meeting passenger demand and improving road traffic condition and the environment. DC for T/TS&M, notwithstanding, agreed to follow up the above route cancellation/amalgamation proposals with DCs as requested.

Admin

8. Mr IP Wai-ming considered the proposal to change the headway of Route E22A plying between Tseung Kwan O and AsiaWorld Expo from 20/30 minutes to 30 minutes undesirable because many residents of Tseung Kwan O worked at the airport and had to ride on Route E22A. The Administration noted his view for consideration.

9. Mr WONG Kwok-hing requested the Administration to account for its failure to respond to the following strong requests from DCs –

- (a) Request for a new bus route that would go through Kwai Shing East Estate, Kwai Shing West Estate, Kwai Chung Estate, On Yam Estate and Shek Yam Estate to destinations in Kowloon East, such as Tokwawan and San Po Kong; and
- (b) Request for Citybus Limited (CTB)'s external routes to pass through Yat Tung Estate in Tung Chung, so that the New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited could not enjoy monopoly in Tung Chung.

10. DC for T/TS&M explained that requests for the introduction of new bus routes would be discussed in detail with the DCs concerned although the relevant details had not been included in the paper for this meeting. The Chairman

commented that requests for new bus routes might more appropriately be followed up at meetings of the Panel on Transport.

Concerns about the approach and progress in taking forward bus service rationalization

11. Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming expressed concern whether the Administration might claim that after this meeting, it had secured the two Panels' endorsement of the service cancellation/reduction or route rationalization proposals, over which DCs had expressed opposing views as set out in Annexes 2 and 3 to the Administration's paper for this item [LC Paper No. CB(1)2009/09-10(01)] during the Administration's consultation with them. Mr CHEUNG also expressed concern whether the Administration would then cease to follow up the concerns expressed by the DCs concerned, which in his view were in a better position to comment on the proposals as DCs were more familiar with local needs. To ensure that relevant DCs would be adequately and fairly consulted on the proposals, Mr CHEUNG urged the Administration to undertake to follow up the proposals with the relevant DCs in detail notwithstanding this joint meeting. He also opined that the two Panels should discuss the relevant policy rather than the individual proposals.

12. Mr Andrew CHENG shared Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming's views, and pointed out that, if the Administration proceeded to do so as envisaged by Mr CHEUNG, it would be most inappropriate because LegCo Members were not as familiar with local conditions as DCs. For example, the proposal on amalgamation of Route 6 and Route 6A should be discussed by persons who were more familiar with Mei Foo so that the local condition, i.e. Mei Foo being an aging community, could be pointed out for the Administration to note as the proposal might require passengers who boarded Route 6 at Mei Foo Bus Terminus to walk about 160 metres to the bus stop at Mei Lai Road during the off-peak period. Ms Miriam LAU and Mr KAM Nai-wai also opined that it should be made clear that discussion of the proposals at this meeting would not be taken as consultation of the Panel on the relevant proposals. Ms LAU, however, acknowledged that details of the proposals might help members ascertain whether the relevant bus rationalization guidelines had been followed.

13. USTH explained that details of the above service cancellation/reduction or route rationalization proposals had been provided to the two Panels as requested by members at the last joint meeting on 22 January 2010. USTH further assured members that in recognition of DCs' valuable understanding of local needs, every year the relevant DCs would be consulted on the RDP of the current and following years concerned. However, it would be useful to consult Panel members on the rationalization policy, such as the major considerations in taking forward bus service rationalization, the mechanism under which proposals in this regard would be worked out and finalized, in particular how DCs' views would be handled.

Action

14. Noting the above response, Mr Andrew CHENG added that since the policy objective of bus rationalization was to reduce air pollution on busy corridors, it was equally important that corresponding transport and environmental protection policies would be implemented in parallel to facilitate bus route rationalization. In particular, the Administration's commitment to and strong conviction in such endeavours were necessary in negotiating with DCs and different political parties for implementation of bus rationalization proposals.

15. Mr Albert CHAN expressed concern that despite years of efforts, little progress had been made in reducing the number of buses going into Central. In his view, the Administration should set a target for itself in taking forward bus service rationalization, such as by setting a reduction target of 30%. USTH responded that during 1999-2009, the number of bus trips operating via Central, Causeway Bay and Nathan Road had respectively decreased by 21%, 24% and over 10%. Ms Miriam LAU agreed that although greater improvement could be made, the Administration had in fact significantly relieved traffic congestion in Central.

Comments and proposals on the relevant guidelines

16. Mr Andrew CHENG opined that apart from discussing the relevant approach and policy, the two Panels should also discuss the Guidelines on Service Improvement and Reduction in Bus Route Development Programmes (the Guidelines) at Annex 1 to the Administration's paper. The Chairman echoed his views.

17. Mr KAM Nai-wai emphasized that to make route cancellation/amalgamation proposals acceptable and even attractive, the Administration should make it a policy to ensure the offer of significant interchange discounts in return. If not, there would be difficulty in winning community support at the local level for implementation. Mr Andrew CHENG and Mr Albert CHAN shared his views. USTH responded that it was already a policy to provide sufficient incentives, such as fare concessions, to facilitate the acceptance of bus rationalization proposals. However, this might not be achieved in all cases. DC for T/TS&M quoted as an example the proposed truncation of Route 208, as a result of which the fare would be reduced from \$7.0 to \$4.2.

18. Declaring interests that she was a resident of a remote area, Ms LI Fung-ying opined that in examining rationalization of bus routes to improve air quality, both environmental and transport considerations should be taken into account. As such, the following principles should be included in the Guidelines –

- (a) There was a need to assess and guard against the impacts of the proposals on the job security of bus drivers. As such, bus drivers

should be consulted on the proposals;

- (b) There should be special treatment if the areas affected by the proposals were remote and not adequately or conveniently served by public transport. Where necessary, subsidy and alternative modes of transport should be provided; and
- (c) Passengers' views should be given equal weight as those of DCs. For example, regard should be given to airport staff's call for the service hours of CTB's external routes, which linked airport supporting area and/or Tung Chung New Town to major locations in Hong Kong and Kowloon, to tie in with the working hours of airport staff, so as to enable them to go home by bus at a cheaper fare even during late hours.

19. Commenting on the point in paragraph 18 (a) above, USTH explained that while some bus routes would be rationalized, new routes would also be introduced. As such, rationalization of bus routes would not lead to significant manpower reduction on the part of bus companies that could not be mitigated by redeployment or natural wastage of existing drivers. The job security of bus drivers would therefore not be significantly affected by bus service rationalization. Mr IP Wai-ming requested that the above assurance be duly minuted.

20. As to the point in paragraph 18(b) above, DC for T/TS&M advised that efforts had already been made to retain bus service for remote areas in recognition of their need for special consideration despite the low patronage. For example, by using new single-deck buses with lower emission instead of double-deck buses.

21. Regarding the comment in paragraph 18(c) above, DC for T/TS&M pointed out that airport staff had the option of travelling on Cityflyer Routes which offered fare concessions to them. She however undertook to follow up the comment with the bus company concerned. Mr IP Wai-ming, however, pointed out that the fare concessions were not significant. Moreover, Cityflyer Routes would not pass through Tung Chung, in particular the Catering Area and Cargo Area at which many airport staff worked.

22. Mr Albert CHAN stressed the need for the Guidelines to include such basic principles as the provision of alternative and/or feeder services, offer of interchange discounts, requirement that the total journey time as a result of interchange should not be prolonged by certain minutes or percentage, etc., so as to assure passengers that they would in general benefit more from bus service rationalization. He quoted as an example the provision of the Shing Mun Tunnel Interchange Point, which was strongly opposed to at the beginning but was later greatly welcomed by passengers for the relevant interchange discounts. USTH responded that as a policy, the availability of feeder services and offer of

interchange discounts were already factors to consider when taking forward bus service rationalization. Mr CHAN considered this insufficient, and emphasized that undertakings in this regard should be given.

23. Ms Miriam LAU proposed that the Guidelines should also mandate the provision of alternative services, such as public light buses, whenever the frequency of bus routes with low utilization was reduced. To highlight the importance of this principle, she quoted as an example the proposal to reduce the frequency of 298E (Hang Hau Station – Tseung Kwan O Industrial Estate (Circular)), which in her view was undesirable because the bus services between Tseung Kwan O Industrial Estate and Lohas Park might then not be able to meet passenger demand. However, this proposal would hardly be fine-tuned despite strong views from the community unless the above principle proposed by her was included in the Guidelines.

24. Mr Andrew CHENG also urged the Administration to improve the Guidelines by including the following –

- (a) That bus-bus interchange stations should be designated in different areas of Hong Kong and Kowloon to facilitate interchange with discounts, such as in West Kowloon and Sheung Wan;
- (b) That to compensate passengers inconvenienced by bus route rationalization, section fares, and monthly and weekly tickets which were available in most big cities should be provided;
- (c) That due regard should be given to the implications of bus route rationalization on the areas concerned, so that special arrangements could be made if the areas concerned were mostly populated by elderly persons; and
- (d) That there was a need to ensure environmental benefits would result, such as improvement to roadside air quality.

25. Recapitulating members' views on the Guidelines, the Chairman urged the Administration to improve the Guidelines in the light of these views. At the Chairman's request, USTH agreed to review the Guidelines as requested, to improve the Guidelines if necessary, and to report back.

Admin

26. Mr CHAN Kin-por however pointed out that apart from ensuring that the Guidelines were comprehensive, there was also a need to ensure that they were enforceable. He also expressed concern that DCs would unlikely support bus rationalization proposals because they would inevitably affect the interests of

affected areas. USTH thanked him for his understanding of the need to ensure the Guidelines were enforceable.

The bus replacement programme

27. Mr CHAN Kin-por highlighted the Administration's claim that if all the remaining Euro II and Euro III franchised buses plying through the busy corridors were replaced by Euro V buses by end 2015, the emissions of respirable suspended particulates and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) on busy corridors would be reduced by about 20% and 29% respectively in 2015. He opined that considering the above effect, it might be more appropriate to pursue the early replacement of buses instead of bus rationalization. He therefore enquired about the progress in negotiating with bus companies on early replacement of buses, and whether the Administration would consider subsidizing the exercise.

28. USTH responded that apart from requiring bus companies to replace bus fleets according to an agreed timetable, the adoption of the latest commercially available and proven environment-friendly technologies for acquiring new buses had also been made a provision in all bus franchises. USEN added that expedition of the bus replacement programme might not be the only solution for the following reasons –

- (a) Under the normal replacement programme, there would be no pre-Euro and Euro I buses by end 2015. However, about 3 300 Euro II and Euro III franchised buses would remain in the 5 800-odd bus fleet. As such, if these 3 300 buses were to be replaced by end 2015 as well, more than half of the existing buses would need to be replaced within five years. The number would be too significant to handle, not to mention that apart from these 3 300 buses, close to 2 000 pre-Euro, Euro I and Euro II buses had also been scheduled for replacement by 2015;
- (b) Each bus would cost some \$3 million to replace. If 3 300 buses were to be replaced by 2015 in addition to the normal bus replacement programme, the impact on bus operation and fares would be very substantial; and
- (c) Other more effective and less costly measures were being considered to reduce emissions from franchised buses. For example, retrofitting Euro II and III buses with selective catalytic reduction devices to reduce NO_x emissions. The Administration had therefore been pursuing this option with bus operators.

Action

The way forward

29. At the Chairman's invitation for views on the way forward, Ms Miriam LAU, Ms LI Fung-ying and Mr KAM Nai-wai agreed that the two Panels should continue to hold joint meeting(s) to discuss the Guidelines to improve them.

30. Summing up, the Chairman reiterated that the two Panels had only noted, but not endorsed, the bus rationalization proposals in Annexes 2 and 3 to the Administration's paper, which should be followed up with the DCs concerned while the two Panels would focus its discussion on the relevant policy only. She further urged the Administration to improve the Guidelines, and to provide the information requested by members above as well as the following additional information –

Admin

- (a) A paper to explain how low emission zones would be implemented, particularly in relation to bus replacement and bus route cancellation/amalgamation; and
- (b) Information on the alternatives available if the replacement programme of franchised buses could not be expedited and completed by end 2015, in particular a comparison of the environmental benefits and financial implications concerned.

31. Members agreed that the two Panels should next meet in July to discuss the Guidelines, and on whether public views should be invited.

(Post-meeting note: The proposed July joint meeting was subsequently scheduled for Monday, 12 July 2010, at 10:45 am.)

III Any other business

32. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 9:45 am.

Council Business Division 1
Legislative Council Secretariat
14 July 2010