

Our Ref : BD 76/201-1  
Your Ref :  
Tel. No. : 2829 5812  
Fax No. : 2519 7017

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11 June 2010

Mr KWOK Wai-kwong, Chairman  
The K.M.B. Staff Union  
7/F, Wing Wong Commercial Building  
557-559 Nathan Road  
Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

Mr KWOK,

### **The Crux of the Operational Safety Problem**

With reference to your union's letter, dated 27 November 2009 to the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Transport, which sets out your union's views on the operation of franchised bus services by Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited (KMB), we would like to give our response as follows.

#### **Wastage of contract bus drivers**

The KMB has provided us with figures on the wastage of its bus drivers. In the years from 2008 to 2009, the wastage rate of KMB contract bus drivers was about 8% per year, which falls below the average employee wastage rate in Hong Kong during the same period, as according to Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management.

Staff wastage is related to personal inclination and changes in the job market. On the other hand, the bus company has, at our request, provided sufficient training to newly recruited bus drivers to enhance operational safety. To date, there has not been any figure that shows a direct relation between the employment terms of bus drivers and driving safety.

#### **Management of the company**

The prime task of a bus company is to provide service that ensures safety for its bus drivers, passengers and other road users. Therefore, we demand that all franchised bus companies should implement an internal monitoring mechanism with respect to the safe driving and service quality of bus drivers, and raise the staff awareness of such mechanism. The KMB has a panel of professional assessors with driving instructor qualifications who will in plain clothes conduct on-board operations to assess the overall performance of its bus drivers or be stationed at fixed positions such as traffic black spots or busy road junctions to observe the operation of buses passing by or to detect speeding of buses by means of laser guns and, conduct regular assessment of bus drivers in different aspects, including driving speed, driving attitude and customer service, etc. In recent years, there are, on average, over 60 000 assessments conducted every year with a passing rate of 97%. The KMB pointed out that such measures of monitoring staff performance are commonly adopted in the trade, and have been taken with a view to enhancing safety for bus drivers, passengers and other road users. On the premise of safety, we agree that franchised bus companies should conduct monitoring as regards the driving behaviour and service attitude of bus drivers as appropriate.

#### **Working hours and the work schedule of bus drivers**

To ensure the operational safety of buses, we have all along been concerned about the working hours and rest time of bus drivers. In that respect, we have issued to various franchised bus companies a *Guidelines on the Work Schedule for Bus Drivers* which will be reviewed from time to time, and urged them to make sure that their bus drivers are subject to proper working hours and provided with appropriate rest time. Following a revision of the Guidelines in July 2007, we have, in conjunction with the franchised bus companies, conducted a review of the same and will report the progress of the review to the LegCo Panel on Transport in due course.

We have also been concerned about the properness of the service schedules of various bus routes, and demanded that the bus companies should conduct reviews in that respect from time to time and apply to us for making proper adjustment to the schedules. As regards the daily operational routine, the journey time of bus routes may be extended because of unexpected traffic circumstances. Therefore, we have requested the companies to make adjustment as necessary to the routes taken up by or work schedule of the bus drivers, or to arrange for standby bus drivers familiar with the routes to be on duty so that the bus drivers are able to take a break properly after each journey.

#### Increased provision of slow-down signs and the provision of tactile markings

The TD has clear guidelines providing that additional signs will under normal circumstances be erected ahead of any road sections where the speed limit will be lowered to serve as a warning to motorists. The relevant arrangements are as follows:

- (a) first, warning signs will be erected at about 100 to 200 metres ahead of the road sections where the speed limit will be lowered;
- (b) speed limit signs will be erected at the starting point of the road section where the speed limit will be lowered; and
- (c) speed limit road marking will be painted on the road surface in the vicinity of the starting point of the road section where the speed limit will be lowered to 50 km per hour.

Therefore, the existing speed limit signs and road markings are adequate, and similar in design to those adopted in advanced countries overseas.

The purpose of providing “transverse yellow bar marking” is to give motorists the visual impression that they are driving through those yellow bars swiftly, thereby alerting them to be aware of any excess in vehicle speed and reminding them of the need to slow down. “Transverse yellow bar marking” is mainly applicable to

- (a) slip roads leaving expressways; or
- (b) approaches to toll plazas with speed limit of 70 km per hour; or
- (c) special road sections with circumstances that may make motorists unaware of the need to slow down. Under such circumstances, consideration may be given to using “transverse yellow bar marking” to enhance motorists’ awareness of the need to reduce speed in good time.

Should your union consider it appropriate to provide “transverse yellow bar marking” at individual locations, you are welcome to submit specific proposals to the TD.

(CHEUNG Jin-pang)  
for the Commissioner for Transport

c.c.: LegCo Panel on Transport

b.c.c. (incoming letter enclosed) :

Commissioner for Transport  
Deputy Commissioner for Transport /Transport Services and Management  
Assistant Commissioner for Transport / Bus and Railway  
Principal Transport Officer / Bus and Railway 1  
Chief Transport Officer / Bus and Railway 1  
Senior Engineer / Vehicle Safety  
Assistant Secretary for Transport & Housing (Transport) 1A