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11 June 2010

Mr CHUNG Chung-fai, Chairman  
New World First Bus Company Staff Union  
7/F, Wing Wong Commercial Building  
557-559 Nathan Road  
Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

Dear Mr CHUNG,

### **Views on the Operational Safety of Franchised Buses**

With reference to your union's letter, dated 25 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 New World First Bus Services Limited (NWFB), we would like to give our response as follows.

#### **Schedule of Service**

If the actual journey time of a bus route often exceeds the scheduled journey time, NWFB would apply to this Department for approval to extend the journey time of the route to ensure that the bus drivers are able to take a break properly.

Due to actual operational needs, in case of circumstances such as traffic jam which might prolong the journey time, the bus regulators of various bus companies would make appropriate deployment measures to minimize the impact on passengers, such as arranging bus drivers to drive the bus to the en route stops or final stops directly, cancellation of certain trips, or assigning standby bus drivers who are familiar with the route in question to drive the bus that is about to depart, so that the bus drivers are able to take a break properly after each journey.

#### **Arrangement for bus drivers of overnight shift to "drive the last and the first trips of the day service"**

NWFB has made arrangement in respect of the working hours and breaks for its bus drivers (including bus drivers of overnight shift) according to the *Guidelines on the Work Schedule for Bus Drivers* issued by us. According to the report submitted by NWFB to us, apart from standby or relief bus drivers, its bus drivers of overnight shift are subject to fixed working hours and assigned to fixed routes. If individual bus drivers want to have their shift arrangement revised, they may make such request and the company would make arrangement as appropriate. Just like other bus drivers, the drivers of overnight shift would be allowed, before actual operation, to familiarize themselves with the bus routes they are to serve and will not be assigned to take up routes that they are not familiar with.

### Facilities at bus termini that are available for use by bus drivers

The bus companies bear the responsibility of providing their staff with suitable rest facilities. Same as other bus companies, NWFB would as far as possible, provide rest room at suitable location at all bus termini for bus drivers to take a break or to take their meals. At present, as far as NWFB is concerned, only 9 bus termini, each of which accommodates only 1 NWFB route, are not provided with a rest room, and five of which (including Stanley, Chi Fu, Nam Cheong, Hung Hom Pier and Sai Kung) had had rest room facilities but such facilities were scrapped due to low utilization because bus drivers mainly make use of the rest room at the other terminus of that route. As for the remaining 4 bus termini (including Siu Sai Wan Estate, peak tram terminus at Garden Road, Pokfield Road and Lee On), the provision of a rest room was impossible due to physical constraints. In order to cater to the bus drivers' need for a rest, NWFB has arranged to let the bus drivers make use of the rest room at the other terminus of the bus route.

A rest room is usually air-conditioned and fitted with facilities such as refrigerator, microwave oven, tables and chairs, etc, for the use of bus drivers and bus regulators. If there are no toilet facilities in the neighborhood of the bus termini, NWFB would apply to the authorities concerned for the provision of mobile toilets for its bus drivers.

### Bus maintenance

All franchised buses must comply with the safety requirements as stipulated by law and pass the stringent examination of TD before they are allowed to provide passenger services. Each serving franchised bus must undergo monthly examination by its company. In order to achieve optimum utilization of resources, NWFB depot would, taking into account the daily workload, flexibly arrange different groups of technicians to provide maintenance services. The technicians responsible for the conduct of monthly examination and maintenance services are qualified and registered technicians with the required skills and experience in respect of the same type of bus, hence the arrangement for them to take up various kinds of maintenance service would not affect the quality of maintenance. TD must examine each serving franchised bus annually, to ensure that it is safe and roadworthy. Meanwhile, TD will also conduct random check to ensure that the buses are properly maintained, its equipment are in good condition and normal operation. We always closely monitor the maintenance programme of franchised buses, and hold regular meetings with bus operators to discuss about the bus examination results, and will formulate measures as necessary to enhance bus safety.

(JP Cheung)  
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  
Senior Engineer / Vehicle Safety  
Chief Transport Officer / Bus and Railway 2  
Assistant Secretary for Transport & Housing (Transport) 1A