

For Discussion
27 November 2009

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Enhancing Safety of Public Light Bus Operation

Purpose

This paper sets out the Administration's proposed measures to enhance safety of public light bus (PLB) operation. It also reports on the progress with the measures to improve the traffic condition at the junction of Sai Yeung Choi Street South and Mong Kok Road as well as enforcement actions taken by the Police.

Measures to Enhance Safety of PLB Operation

2. After studying the issue and consulting the PLB trade, we plan to implement the following measures to enhance the safety of PLB operation.

(I) *Requiring all PLBs to Install Speed Limiters*

3. Installation of speed limiters on PLB will help prevent speeding by PLBs. In recent months, the PLB suppliers have confirmed with the Transport Department (TD) that it is technically feasible to retrofit speed limiters onto current models of diesel and LPG PLBs. To speed up the installation of the device, the TD plans to introduce new conditions into vehicle licence and passenger service licence (PSL) of PLB in early 2010 to make speed limiter a basic equipment of PLBs and require all registered PLB owners to retrofit their PLBs with speed limiter that is endorsed and approved by the TD. Under our proposal, before submitting their vehicle licence renewal applications, all registered PLB owners or PSL holders will have to retrofit their PLBs with speed limiters endorsed and approved by the TD, and their PLBs will have to pass the vehicle examination required by the TD. Otherwise, the TD will issue to the PLB owners concerned a vehicle examination order and/or vehicle repair order and may consider rejecting their applications for vehicle licence renewal.

4. As the validity of a vehicle licence is one year, it is expected that by early 2011, all PLBs will be installed with speed limiters according to the licensing requirement.

5. We also plan to introduce into the Legislative Council (LegCo) in the 2010/11 legislative session a proposal to amend the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) for enhancing the regulation of the installation and use of speed limiters.

Specifications of Speed Limiters

6. The models of speed limiters to be installed on PLBs must be endorsed and approved by the TD. Their technical standards should comply with the international standards on speed limiters (such as the international vehicle regulations promulgated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe or relevant standards set by the European Union) and the international electromagnetic compatibility standards for vehicle installations. At present, the TD has approved and endorsed five models of PLB speed limiters meeting the above standards, and two models are being examined. The speed limiters will be installed by operators approved by the TD, including PLB suppliers and speed limiter suppliers. The TD will check whether the speed limiters so installed have met the requirements, and seal them. The TD has uploaded information regarding the approved models, speed limiter suppliers and installation operators onto its website for reference by the public.

'Set speed' for Speed Limiters

7. In connection with the requirement of installing speed limiters on PLBs, the TD will set a maximum speed for the device. With due regard to the operational condition of PLB and that most PLB routes are operated on roads with speed limits not exceeding 80 kilometres per hour (kph), the TD will set the maximum speed at 80 kph. Among the 353 Green Minibus (GMB) routes currently operating in the territory, 10 are authorized to operate on expressways with a speed limit up to 100 kph. The TD will take into account the operation condition of individual GMB routes and consider setting the maximum speed of the speed limiters concerned at 100 km/h if necessary.

Speed Limit for PLBs on Roads

8. The PLBs drivers must take heed of the road traffic condition and must not drive at speed exceeding the speed limit of road sections concerned. Despite that the maximum speed imposed on the speed limiter may be higher than the speed limit of the road section concerned, the PLBs should not be operating in excess of the speed limits indicated on the traffic signs. The TD plans to introduce new conditions into the vehicle licences and passenger service licences of PLBs in early 2010 to stipulate the maximum speed of the speed limiter. We also plan to introduce into the LegCo in the 2010/11 legislative session a proposal to amend the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) by prescribing the maximum travelling speed of PLBs.

(II) Mandating Vehicle Monitoring System (i.e. “Blackbox”) as a Basic Equipment of Newly Registered PLBs

9. The major functions of blackbox, a data recording device, include fleet management and monitoring of drivers’ driving behaviour. After taking into consideration the application of blackbox in overseas countries and in the Mainland, we consider that installation of blackbox in new PLBs feasible. The TD is studying and formulating the specifications of blackbox suitable for use on PLBs in consultation with PLB manufacturers and blackbox suppliers. We plan to introduce into the LegCo in the 2010/11 legislative session a proposal to amend the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) to include blackbox as a basic equipment of newly registered PLBs. Under our proposal, all newly registered PLBs must be installed with blackbox endorsed and approved by the TD and pass the vehicle examination required by the TD before a licence is issued.

(III) Publicity, Training and Education of PLB Drivers

10. We place great emphasis on the training and education of PLB drivers in order to enhance their safety awareness, improve service quality and instil in them proper driving behaviour. A PLB Driver Training Programme was introduced in 2003 to improve the driving attitude and customer service skills of PLB drivers. In 2004, the Vocational Training Council developed the above programme into an Advanced PLB Driver Training Course under the Skills Upgrading Scheme, and is now running the Course while the Government subsidize all PLB drivers participating in this Course 70% of the course fee incurred. The TD will continue to encourage red minibus drivers, and also GMB operators to send their drivers to attend the training course.

11. Since 2005, the TD has been organising PLB Driver Safety Workshops jointly with the Police and PLB associations to promote safety awareness among frontline PLB drivers. The TD will continue to organise these workshops regularly and disseminate messages on safe driving through the PLB newsletters. In addition, from January to September 2009, the Police organised 30 talks on better driving attitude of PLB drivers during which they explained to 2,082 professional PLB drivers from 27 PLB operators the relevant legislation and appealed them to adopt a safe driving attitude to prevent traffic accidents.

Amending Basic Requirements for Applicants of PLB Driving Licences

12. To enhance the driving behaviour and attitude of the new PLB drivers, we plan to introduce a proposal into the LegCo in the 2010/11 legislative session to amend the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374) to require applicants for PLB driving licence to attend a mandatory pre-service training course. The proposal is supported by the PLB trade in principle. The TD is formulating the detailed proposal, and will consult the trade again.

(IV) Enforcement

13. The Police have been focusing their efforts on combating traffic offences that may lead to traffic accidents, aside from conducting regular education and publicity programmes to promote road safety. Enforcement actions targeting at PLBs include speeding and other inappropriate driving behaviour. The Police may deploy plainclothes officers to monitor the operations of PLBs, collect evidence and step up enforcement on PLB routes with poor record. In the first three quarters of 2009, the Police instituted over 7,000 prosecutions involving PLBs. The breakdowns are at **Annex 1**. During the period from July to October 2009, the Police arranged 213 undercover operations against 114 red minibuses; and 99 green minibuses. In these operations, the Police arrested 3 PLB drivers, and issued summons or fixed penalty tickets to another 123 PLB drivers.

14. Since November 2008, the TD has been conducting a road safety scheme named 'Project Saferide' jointly with the Police and PLB trade. Under the Scheme, the Police have set up a dedicated hotline for PLB passengers to report speeding or improper driving behaviour of PLB drivers to facilitate investigation and prosecution by the Police where appropriate. Up to September 2009, 328 complaints on speeding and improper driving behaviour were received. The Police have issued summons or warnings to a total of 32 PLB drivers after investigation. The Police and the TD will review the Scheme in end 2009.

Pay Systems for PLB Drivers

15. Some media reports have alleged that the pay systems for GMB drivers, in particular the so-called revenue sharing arrangement, have adverse effect on the driving attitude of GMB drivers. It was claimed that some GMB drivers may drive at excessive speed in order to reduce the travelling time so as to earn a higher income. In this connection, the TD has collected relevant information about the pay systems adopted by GMB operators in recent months. According to the information collected, drivers of about 85% GMB routes were employed and remunerated under a system of basic wages or basic wages plus additional fixed allowances (such as meal allowance, safety bonus, overtime allowance or allowance for working on public holidays); about 9% were under a system of basic wages plus shared revenue; and only about 6% were on a solely revenue sharing basis.

16. The TD has further analysed whether the safety performance of GMB routes in which drivers are remunerated on a revenue sharing basis is different from that of other GMB routes. The findings of the TD do not indicate any direct correlation between the pay systems for GMB drivers and the safety of GMB operation. In terms of safety performance, GMB routes in which drivers are remunerated on a solely revenue sharing basis do not differ significantly from the routes in which drivers are remunerated under pay systems involving basic wages. The revenue sharing basis does not necessarily affect adversely the safety of PLB operation. Results of the analysis are at [Annex 2](#).

Improving Traffic Condition at the Junction of Sai Yeung Choi Street South/Mong Kok Road and its Vicinity

17. At the meeting of the Panel on Transport held on 26 June 2009, we briefed Members of the findings of TD's investigation into the traffic accident involving a PLB at the junction of Sai Yeung Choi Street South and Mong Kok Road in the night on 12 June 2009 as well as the measures to improve the traffic condition there. At the meeting, the TD undertook to review the existing stopping arrangement of bus and GMB routes along Mong Kok Road with a view to rationalising the picking up and setting down activities, thereby releasing road space for improvement of the layout of the junction of Sai Yeung Choi Street South and Mong Kok Road. The existing "Give Way" signs or markings can then be shifted forward to facilitate drivers to turn left onto Mong Kok Road via the junction.

18. With the support of the Traffic and Transport Committee of the Yau Tsim Mong District Council and relevant public transport operators, the TD completed on 20 September 2009 the rationalisation of the bus stopping arrangements of the bus and GMB routes. Four bus routes and two GMB routes no longer picked up / set down passengers on Mong Kok Road. This has resulted in a reduction of 250 bus-trips and 380 GMB-trips from stopping on Mong Kok Road per day, which is equivalent to about 32% of the total bus and GMB stopping activities before the rationalization. On the other hand, improvement work to the junction of Sai Yeung Choi Street South/Mong Kok Road has been substantially completed in October 2009. According to TD's observations, the above traffic improvement measures have enhanced safety at the junction of Sai Yeung Choi Street South / Mong Kok Road as well as its vicinity, and balanced the needs of stakeholders including passengers, pedestrians, the transport trades, local residents and shop owners.

Advice Sought

19. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
November 2009**

Annex 1**Number of Prosecutions Against Public Light Buses**

Offences	Q1, 2009	Q2, 2009	Q3, 2009	Jan to Sep 2009
Causing death by dangerous driving	3	3	1	7
Dangerous driving	6	7	6	19
Careless driving	173	143	139	455
Drink driving	2	2	1	5
Speeding	353	250	329	932
Failure to comply with traffic signals	291	284	298	873
Failure to comply with traffic signs/road markings	291	281	253	825
Failure to comply with restriction on double white lines	60	64	78	202
Failure to comply with restriction on prohibited and restricted zones	522	539	552	1,613
Offences relating to seat belts	399	415	426	1,240
Using a mobile telephone or other telecommunications equipment or an accessory to such telephone or equipment while the vehicle is in motion	39	55	52	146
Others	327	367	384	1,078
Total	2,466	2,410	2,519	7,395

**Number of Traffic Accidents Involving Green Minibuses (GMBs) from 2006 to First Half of 2009
(Categorised according to the pay systems)**

Number of Traffic accidents	Drivers remunerated by basic wages or basic wages plus additional fixed allowances				Drivers remunerated by basic wages plus shared revenue				Drivers remunerated solely on revenue sharing basis				All different category of pay systems			
	2006	2007	2008	Jan to June 2009#	2006	2007	2008	Jan to June 2009#	2006	2007	2008	Jan to June 2009#	2006	2007	2008	Jan to June 2009#
Number of vehicles involved in serious and fatal traffic accidents only per 1,000 registered GMBs	38.5	50.0	40.8	20.0	32.0	42.3	45.3	17.2	32.5	26.2	29.2	11.5	37.1	46.4	39.8	18.7
Number of vehicles involved in traffic accidents per 1,000 registered GMBs	232.7	258.1	225.7	125.7	153.0	179.6	219.5	82.8	245.6	198.3	233.2	126.8	226.2	243.1	226.0	121.6
Number of vehicles involved in serious and fatal traffic accidents only per million vehicle-kilometre	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Number of vehicles involved in traffic accidents per million vehicle-kilometre	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.3	1.4	1.6	2.1	1.5	2.5	2.0	2.4	2.7	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.3

Provisional figures