

For discussion  
on 5 December 2011

## **Legislative Council Panel on Transport Elderly-friendly Bus Design**

### **Purpose**

This paper provides Members with information on the existing and planned barrier-free facilities on franchised buses for elderly passengers.

### **Background**

2. There are at present about 5,800 licensed franchised buses operating under six franchises by five bus operators, namely, The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited (“KMB”), Long Win Bus Company Limited (“LW”), New World First Bus Services Limited (“NWFB”), Citybus Limited (Hong Kong Island and Cross-Harbour Routes) (“CTB (F1)”), Citybus Limited (Airport and North Lantau Bus Network) (“CTB (F2)”), and New Lantau Bus Company (1973) Limited (“NLB”).

3. Apart from meeting the construction and maintenance requirements under the law<sup>1</sup>, the franchised bus operators conduct regular reviews on the design of their buses to enhance the level of comfort to passengers. One of the areas is to improve bus design and to provide facilities that meet the needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities (“PwD”). All franchised bus operators have also undertaken to adopt bus designs which can provide passengers (including the elderly and PwD) with a safe, comfortable and user-friendly environment when acquiring new buses.

### **Facilities for elderly passengers on existing buses**

4. Most of the franchised buses in service are equipped with some, if not all, of the following features to provide a barrier-free travelling environment for elderly passengers :

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<sup>1</sup> The Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) stipulate the requirements for the design and construction of franchised buses.

(a) Low-floor and wheelchair-accessible

As at end October 2011, about 3,500 or 60% of the franchised buses are wheelchair-accessible. These buses, with low floor and wide entrance, enable easy boarding by the elderly. For passengers that need to travel on wheelchair, they can also use the ramp provided on the low-floor buses to board the buses with ease and lock their wheelchair at designated wheelchair space on board. The franchised bus operators have committed that all new buses to be purchased in future would be wheelchair-accessible<sup>2</sup>. Backrest and restraint lap belt are normally installed at the wheelchair space so that the wheelchair can be fixed at the space safely. According to the current bus replacement plan, it is expected that all franchised buses will be low-floor and wheelchair-accessible by around 2015/16. The access ramp and wheelchair space of a low-floor bus are shown in **Photographs 1 and 2** in the Annex.

(b) Priority seats for passengers in need

In general, at least four priority seats are designated in the lower deck of a double-deck bus. These seats are located near the exit door to facilitate the elderly to alight the bus easily. Stickers are put up on nearby windows reminding passengers to offer their seats to the passengers in need. Details are shown in **Photograph 3** in the Annex.

(c) Easily reached stop button

On average, there are eight stop buttons installed in the lower deck of every double-deck bus. Passengers (including the elderly) can easily reach one of the buttons to call for alighting. In addition, low-level handrail with stop buttons at the priority seats for the elderly and PwD is now a standard feature on all new buses, making a total of nine to 11 stop buttons in the lower deck of new buses. Please see **Photographs 4 and 5** in the Annex for details.

(d) Continuous railing

To help reduce the chance of elderly passengers falling due to a loss of balance on board, the bus specifications of KMB, LW, CTB and NWFB have included continuous railing, guiding elderly passengers

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<sup>2</sup> Since low-floor buses are not suitable for operations on some roads with steep gradient and sharp bends in South Lantau, NLB will procure low-floor buses for operation on bus routes other than those which need to operate on the relevant roads in South Lantau.

to the priority seats, as a basic feature on new buses as far as practicable since late 2010. This new design allows passengers to hold on to a handrail as they move towards the priority seats or the inner part of the bus. The design of the continuous railing is shown in **Photographs 6 and 7** in the **Annex**.

(e) Handrails at exit doors

Some franchised buses have already been equipped with handrails at the exit doors at a lower position for easy alighting. The relevant franchised bus operators have started retrofitting handrails at exit doors for the remaining buses where technically feasible and will include such requirement in the specifications for new buses. The handrails at exit door are shown in **Photograph 8** in the **Annex**.

(f) Bus stop announcement system with visual and/or audio display

At present, about 5,000 (or 85%) franchised buses, including the entire fleet of KMB, LW and CTB (F1), have been equipped with the visual and/or audio (in Cantonese, Putonghua and English) bus stop announcement system. As for CTB (F2), NWFB and NLB, they are now conducting trials on the installation of the bus stop announcement system on their fleets. The target is to complete the installation on all buses in their fleets by end 2012. An on-board bus stop announcement panel is shown in **Photographs 9 and 10** in the **Annex**.

(g) Other passenger facilities on board

Apart from the above facilities, there are some other barrier-free features to ensure a safer and more pleasant bus journey for the elderly and PwD. These are standard provisions on new buses, including:

- i. non-slippery bus floor material;
- ii. widened gangway to facilitate elderly passengers on crutches and wheelchair users;
- iii. high contrast step-edge to alert the elderly to mind their steps;
- iv. closing door buzzer and warning lamp at exits to enhance the safety of the elderly when alighting the bus; and
- v. larger electronic destination and route number display panels on the front, side and rear of the bus to facilitate the elderly to board the correct bus.

The above features are shown in **Photographs 11 to 16** in the **Annex**.

(h) Publicity on passenger safety

Passenger safety is the prime concern of the Administration and the franchised bus operators. An Announcement of Public Interest (“API”) to remind passengers of safety on board buses, including “holding onto handrails” and “no standing on stairway” was produced in 2006. Besides broadcasting on TV, radio and on board buses, the API is distributed to schools, elderly homes and community centres for viewing. The poster to promote the API is shown in **Photograph 17** in the **Annex**.

### **Improvements to Bus Design and Elderly-friendly Bus**

5. The franchised bus operators constantly receive suggestions from the public and collect views through their hotlines, passenger liaison groups, the Transport Department’s Working Group on Access to Public Transport by PwD etc. in reviewing and improving the bus design with a view to making their buses more user-friendly and more elderly-friendly. When acquiring new buses and setting specifications for the acquisition of buses, the franchised bus operators will adopt bus designs with barrier-free and elderly-friendly features as far as reasonably practicable. The franchised bus operators are pursuing improvements in the following areas :

(a) Improvement to the priority seats

Improvements are being made to the design of priority seats to make them more eye-catching and visible. KMB and LW have started a renovation programme by installing newly designed, eye-catching green colour headrest on the priority seats of some of their double-deck buses since June 2011 for easy recognition by passengers. Subject to the feedback of passengers, KMB and LW will extend their renovation programme to their whole bus fleets gradually. On the other hand, CTB, NWFB and NLB are considering renovation programmes by replacing the cushions of their priority seats with different colours. The newly designed, eye-catching colour headrests in a KMB bus are shown in **Photograph 18** in the **Annex**.

(b) Improvement to the passenger information at bus stops/termini

Franchised bus operators are pursuing plans to enhance the provision of bus service information to passengers at bus stops and termini by installing bus service information display panels showing route and

fare information, and setting up customer service centres. For illustration, a bus service information display panel at a bus terminus is shown in **Photograph 19** in the **Annex**.

## **Conclusion**

6. All franchised bus operators are committed to making continuous improvement in the bus design to enable passengers to travel comfortably and safely. The Administration will work together with the franchised bus operators to expedite the implementation of the planned improvements and actions, keep track of the best practices of bus safety as well as barrier-free designs and features, and adopt new elderly-friendly bus design in Hong Kong as far as practicable.

**Transport and Housing Bureau**  
**Transport Department**  
**November 2011**

**Photograph 1 : Wheelchair access ramp**  
相片一：輪椅上落斜板



Wheelchair access ramp  
輪椅上落斜板

**Photograph 2 : Wheelchair space with backrest and restraint lap belt**  
**相片二：附設靠背及安全索帶的輪椅停放處**



**Photograph 3 : Priority seats near exit for the passengers in need**  
相片三：設於巴士出口車門附近供有需要人士使用的優先座位



Sticker reminding passengers to offer seats to the passengers in need  
提醒乘客向有需要人士讓座的標貼



**Photograph 4 : Easily reached stop button**  
相片四：伸手可及的下車按鈴



Stop button  
下車按鈴

**Photograph 5 : Stop button near priority seats**  
**相片五：鄰近優先座位的下車按鈴**



**Stop button near priority seats**  
**鄰近優先座位的下車按鈴**

**Photograph 6 : Continuous railing**  
相片六：連續扶手



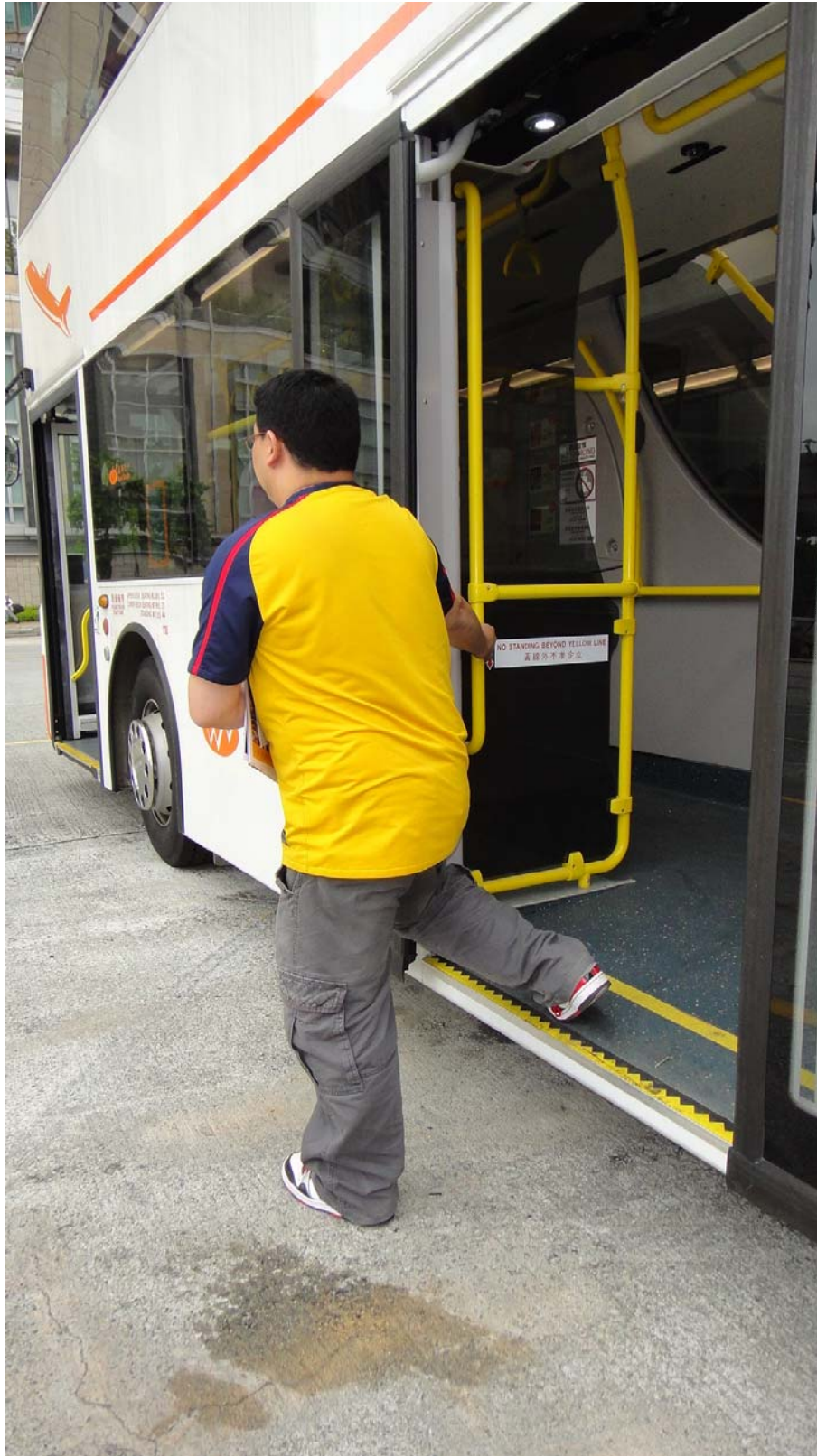
**Photograph 7 : Continuous railing**  
相片七：連續扶手





**Photograph 8 : Handrails at Exit Door at a lower position for easy alighting of elderly passengers**

相片八：出口車門側的扶手安裝在較低位置，方便長者乘客下車



**Photograph 9 : On-board bus stop announcement display panel**  
相片九：車廂內的報站顯示屏



Display of Chinese message  
顯示中文訊息

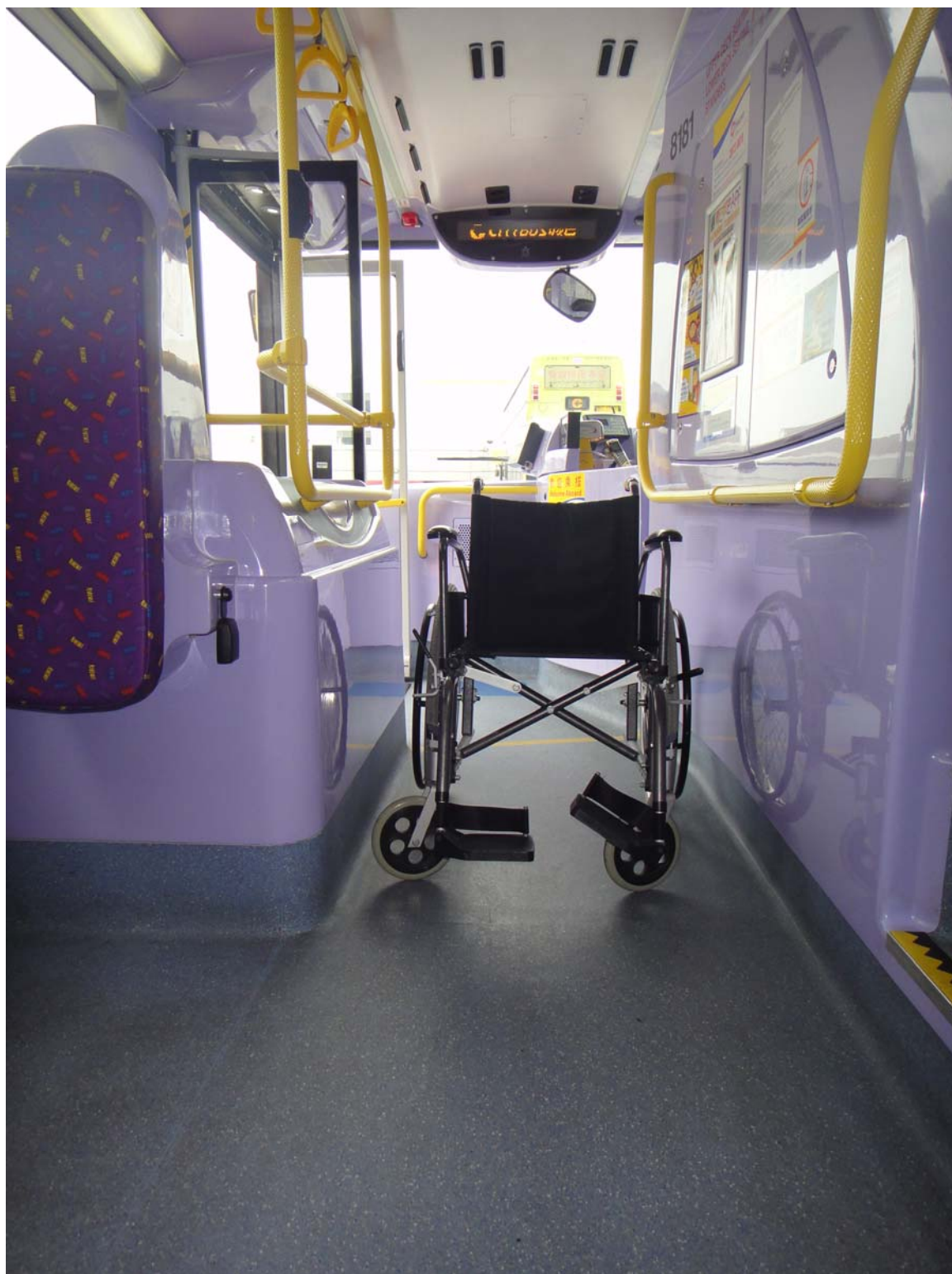
**Photograph 10 : On-board bus stop announcement display panel**  
相片十：車廂內的報站顯示屏



Display of English message  
顯示英文訊息



**Photograph 11 : Wide gangway**  
相片十一：寬闊的車廂通道





**Photograph 12 : High contrast step-edge**  
相片十二：顏色對比鮮明的梯級邊



High contrast step-edge  
顏色對比鮮明的梯級邊

**Photograph 13 : Closing door buzzer & warning lamp**  
相片十三：車門關閉蜂鳴器及提示燈



Closing door buzzer & warning lamp  
車門關閉蜂鳴器及提示燈

**Photograph 14 : Large destination &  
route number display panel on the front**

相片十四：位於車前方的終點站及路線編號大字體顯示屏



Destination and route number display panel on the front  
車前方的終點站及路線編號顯示屏

**Photograph 15 : Large route number display panel on the side**  
相片十五：位於車身側面的路線編號大字體顯示屏



Route number display panel on the side  
車身側面路線編號顯示屏



**Photograph 16 : Large route number display panel in the rear**  
相片十六：位於車尾的路線編號大字體顯示屏



Route number display panel in the rear  
車尾路線編號顯示屏

Photograph 17 : Poster for publicity of passenger safety  
相片十七 : 推廣乘客安全的海報



**Photograph 18 : Eye-catching headrests for  
priority seats on KMB buses**

相片十八：九巴顯眼的優先座位頭枕



Headrests for priority seats  
優先座位頭枕



**Photograph 19 : Bus service information display panel**  
相片十九：巴士服務資訊顯示屏

