

香港特別行政區政府

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

政府總部
運輸及房屋局
運輸科

香港添馬添美道 2 號
政府總部東翼



Transport and
Housing Bureau
Government Secretariat
Transport Branch

East Wing, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue,
Tamar, Hong Kong

電話 Tel. No.: 3509 8192

傳真 Fax No.: 3904 1774

本局檔號 OUR REF.: THB(T) 3/9/40

來函檔號 YOUR REF.: CB1/PL/TP

23 April 2014

Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn : Ms. Sophie Lau)

Dear Ms. Lau,

Service and safety of student service vehicle

Thank you for your letter dated 19 March 2014, referring us a letter dated 11 March 2014 from the Hon. Gary Fan Kwok-wai on the captioned subject. Our reply is set out below.

Student transport service

There are three types of student service vehicles (“SSVs”) in Hong Kong. They are (a) non-franchised public buses (“public NFBs”) with student service endorsement (“SSE”), (b) school private buses operated directly by schools or school sponsoring bodies, and (c) school private light buses (commonly known as “nanny vans”). Operators of public NFBs and nanny vans may, depending on market demand and their operating situation, provide service for different schools and districts. School private buses are basically operated directly by schools. The supply of SSVs depends primarily on free market operation. Each school makes its own arrangements for student transport service according to the needs of its students and parents.

The Transport Department (“TD”) has all along been closely monitoring the number of SSVs. The total number of the three types of vehicles mentioned above is about 5 300 at present. As a whole, the supply of SSVs in recent years has remained generally stable. Meanwhile, the number of students has dropped slightly in recent years. Operators or schools may, depending on demand, apply to the TD with supporting documents for increasing or adjusting the number of SSVs or SSE. The Government would endeavour to respond to market demand according to applications received.

Safety of student passengers

In order to enhance safety of student passengers, legislative amendments have been made to the Road Safety (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) to stipulate that SSVs registered on or after 1 May 2009 must be equipped with “Safer Seats”. Safer Seats are strong and closely spaced, with high and energy-absorbing backs, which can reduce the risk of students being thrown out of their seats and reduce the degree of injury in case of collisions. Overseas research proves that the use of Safer Seats on SSVs has been proven effective in protecting students.

The TD has also implemented various measures to enhance the safety of students on SSVs. For example, the conditions of passenger service licence require that escorts must be provided for all SSVs carrying kindergarten and primary school students. Besides, the TD has provided a teaching kit entitled “Road safety, I can do it” to kindergartens and primary schools to promote proper behaviour of students when travelling on SSVs. The TD has also issued “Guidelines for Ensuring Safety of Students on Student Service Vehicles” to SSVs operators, drivers, escorts, schools, parents/guardians and students. Moreover, the TD has been maintaining close liaison with the trade through regular meetings to convey safety messages.

Regarding the provision of seat belts on SSVs, the practices and views vary among different overseas jurisdictions. For example, while seat belts can protect students in accidents, they may prevent prompt egress from the vehicle as students (especially the younger ones) may not be able to unfasten their seat belts on their own. Besides, even though seat belts are installed, it may not be possible for the bus drivers or escorts to ensure proper wearing of seat belts by students all the time. In Hong Kong, SSVs are used to carry students of different ages, ranging from kindergarten to early

secondary school students. As these students have different body sizes, there is practical difficulty to provide one type of seat belt that can suit students of all ages. In addition, the question of who should be held responsible if the seat belts are not worn is yet to be resolved. In view of the above factors, compulsory fitting and wearing of seat belts on SSVs has not yet been adopted in Hong Kong. If SSV operators wish to provide seat belts on passenger seats, they are advised to install seat belts in compliance with the relevant standards as stipulated in Schedule 2 to the Road Safety (Safety Equipment) Regulations (Cap 374F). The TD is welcome to advise on the proper installation of seat belts.

We will continue to monitor the service of SSVs and safety of student passengers. We would like to thank the Hon. Fan again for his interest in the matter.

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Cordelia Lam)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c.

Transport Department (Attn.: Mr. Wong Chi-hung) Fax: 2294 2525