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10 September 2015

Ms Sophie Lau
Clerk to the Panel on Transport
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong

(Fax no.: 2978 7569)

Dear Ms Lau,

We refer to the enquiries on bus route rationalisation and manpower of bus captains raised by Members of the Panel on Transport of the Legislative Council at the Panel meeting on 20 March. We are writing to provide supplementary information for Members' reference.

Rationalisation of bus routes is an on-going task of the Transport Department ("TD"). Since 2013, the TD and franchised bus companies have stepped up their efforts in pursuing route rationalisation. In addition to the regular annual Bus Route Planning Programmes, an "Area Approach" has been adopted to holistically review bus services on a district basis. Under this approach, bus services for a district are reviewed as a whole, rather than on a route-by-route basis, with a view to maximising the overall benefits to the district. Rationalisation was implemented through Area Approach in the North District, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, Shatin, Tsing Yi and Tai Po in 2013 and 2014.

The TD has observed that the number of complaints received is generally higher during the initial implementation of rationalisation as passengers need time to acquaint with and adapt to the service changes. The numbers of complaints concerning districts with more rationalisation items (namely Tuen Mun, the North District and Yuen Long) is also greater than those from other districts. To allow affected passengers to plan their trips ahead having regard to service changes, the TD and franchised bus companies

would extensively publicise the details of service changes before they are rolled out. The TD would also closely monitor patronage data and complaints upon implementation, and fine tune the detailed arrangements as necessary. The respective numbers of complaints received concerning the aforesaid six districts during the phased implementation of Area Approach rationalisation are at Annex A. For the three areas with more rationalisation items, i.e. Tuen Mun, North District and Yuen Long, their respective monthly complaint figures had come down gradually within the first six months of implementation of the rationalisation proposals. The TD has investigated the complaints, taken appropriate follow-up actions as necessary and explained to the complainants.

In 2013 and 2014, a total of 22 bus routes with low patronage were cancelled or amalgamated, and eight routes were truncated. The frequency of 104 routes was reduced. The volume of bus traffic en route major trunk roads in Central, Causeway and Mong Kok has been reduced by more than 2 000 trips in total per day. The rationalisation efforts have helped relieve traffic congestion and alleviate roadside air pollution. However, given that a number of the rationalisation items involve cross-district routes, and that the road traffic and roadside air quality of a district may be affected by such factors as road situation and social and commercial activities at individual locations, it is difficult to single out the impact of route rationalisation on the travel time of buses and air quality of individual districts.

Nonetheless, the TD has noted that after rationalisation of bus routes to simplify the routeing, there is a reduction in the journey time for some bus routes and such reduction is of a varying extent. For instance, after rationalisation, the journey time of Route No. 78K operating in the North District has been shortened from around 45 minutes to 40 minutes (a reduction by 11%) upon omission of Pak Wo Road and Tai Ping Bus Terminus during peak hours. Also, with the splitting of Route No. 277X (from the North District to Kwun Tong) into separate routes during morning peak hours, the journey time from Luen Wo Hui to Lam Tin Station has been shortened from around 75 minutes to 66 minutes (a reduction by 12%). The above examples show that route rationalisation does help enhance service efficiency and improve the overall traffic condition. As for air quality, the Environmental Protection Department (“EPD”) has been monitoring changes in roadside air quality. Comparing EPD’s air quality monitoring data of 2014 against those of 2009, the concentration of roadside respirable suspended particulates (PM10) has reduced by an average of 18%, whereas the roadside level of nitrogen dioxide has fallen by 7%. Route rationalisation should have helped improve the roadside air quality.

Regarding the manpower of bus captains, the franchised bus companies have taken a more proactive approach in recruiting and training bus captains. They have also strengthened communication with serving bus captains and improved their working environment. The TD will continue to monitor the

situation through reviewing monthly manpower reports submitted by the franchised bus companies. Should there be any sign of manpower shortage, the TD will urge the franchised bus company concerned to take improvement measures promptly. Please refer to **Annex B** for monthly figures on the turnover of full-time and part-time bus captains in 2014.

Yours sincerely,

(Louis Leung)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

Encl.

c.c. : Commissioner for Transport (Attn : Miss Rachel Kwan)

Number of complaints concerning Area Approach rationalisation

District	Implementation period of Area Approach rationalisation¹	Number of rationalisation items	Number of complaints concerning rationalisation
North	August 2013 to March 2014	23	250
Tuen Mun	September 2013 to March 2014	19	119
Tsing Yi	August 2014 to March 2015	10	45
Shatin	August 2014 to July 2015 ²	12	54
Yuen Long	September 2014 to June 2015 ²	19	248
Tai Po	September 2014 to March 2015	16	25

¹ Items under Area Approach rationalisation are usually implemented in phases within a certain period of time.

² Some items for the Shatin District will be implemented when the population at Shui Chuen O public housing increases further. The remaining item for the Yuen Long District will be implemented in the third quarter of 2015.

Manpower situation of franchised bus captains in 2014

	Full-time bus captains			Part-time bus captains		
	Total number of bus captains	Number of recruits	Number of leavers	Total number of bus captains	Number of recruits	Number of leavers
January	12 181	104	141	999	23	10
February	12 173	87	98	1 019	28	6
March	12 140	125	154	1 051	43	13
April	12 134	120	119	1 095	51	9
May	12 132	106	110	1 143	52	7
June	12 131	118	111	1 183	50	8
July	12 133	123	124	1 230	60	14
August	12 123	128	140	1 280	60	10
September	12 157	134	97	1 329	59	14
October	12 151	137	143	1 370	51	11
November	12 179	141	112	1 409	64	23
December	12 200	124	105	1 429	34	21
Total	N.A.	1 447	1 454	N.A.	575	146