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By Email

23 June 2017

Ms Jacqueline Law
Secretariat of the Subcommittee on Matters relating to Railways
Panel on Transport
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms Law,

Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters relating to Railways
Request for Setting up Animal Cars

Thank you for your letter dated 9 June 2017. Please find enclosed the response from the MTR Corporation Limited in response to captioned as raised by Hon. Jeremy Tam for members' information.

Yours sincerely,

[Chinese version signed]

(Veronica Tse)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

Panel on Transport
Subcommittee on Matters relating to Railways

Response from the MTR Corporation Limited
on the request for Setting Up Animal Cars

MTR serves over 5 million passenger journeys each day. Based on the maximum carrying capacity of train compartments of up to 4 persons (standing) per square metre, loading of various MTR lines is saturated or almost saturated during peak hours. The MTR system is heavily used and crowded. The Mass Transit Railway Ordinance (Cap. 556) stipulates that the MTR Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) can make the Mass Transit Railway By-laws (Cap. 556B). The main purpose of making bylaws is to suitably regulate the conduct of passengers so that MTRCL can provide safe, reliable and comfortable railway service to passengers. According to Section 28 of the Mass Transit Railway By-laws, no person shall bring any animal or other livestock into or upon railway premises except a guide dog accompanying a blind person. There are similar regulations applicable in other public transport modes, for example, Public Bus Services Regulations (Cap. 230A) stipulates that no animal shall be permitted to be carried on the bus (other than a guide dog accompanying a blind person), and the Prevention of Nuisances and Regulation of Travelling Rules (Cap. 107A) which regulate trams stipulates that no person shall take a dog or other animal into or on any car except by permission of the conductor.

2. In addition, MTRCL notes that railway systems in other cities have different policies regarding whether animals can be brought into railway premises. Individual railway operators decide on their policies based on their own operating environment. The Hon Jeremy Tam mentioned in his letter that animals are allowed in Stockholm Metro. However it should be noted that the patronage of Stockholm Metro is much lower than that of MTR – Stockholm Metro has an average daily patronage of about 1.2 million passenger journeys which is less than a quarter of the average daily patronage of MTR. Stockholm Metro’s route length of 110 km is also shorter than the MTR network which has a route length of 231 km. The operating environments in Hong Kong and Stockholm are very different and hence it is not appropriate to draw a direct comparison of their regulations in railway operation.

3. At the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to Railways meeting held on 28 April, MTRCL representatives said that the Corporation had to study the proposal to allow animals to be brought into railway premises in a careful manner, and had further examined the issue thereafter. Besides being a heavily-used system which is crowded during peak hours, MTRCL also needs to take into consideration the reaction of animals and their possible impact on other passengers on crowded platforms and in train compartments. In fact, passengers have different views on whether animals should be allowed in the railway premises. MTRCL, as the railway operator, seeks to provide safe, reliable and comfortable railway services to all passengers and therefore needs to strike a balance among different concerns and considers the interests of passengers as a whole in its operational arrangements. After careful consideration, MTRCL still considers that the current arrangement of not allowing the carriage of animals inside railway premises should be maintained and it cannot adopt the suggestion of setting up animal cars.

MTR Corporation Limited
June 2017