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20 July 2021

Ms Anita Sit
Secretary of Finance Committee
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex,
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms Sit,

The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council
Follow-up matters for the meeting on 2 July 2021

I refer to the document issued by the Legislative Council Secretariat on 5 July 2021. At the meeting on 2 July 2021, the Finance Committee discussed the Government's proposal of creating three supernumerary posts in the Transport Department (TD) to strengthen the oversight and support in enhancing the safety of franchised buses (FB). In response to the enquiries raised by Members, we now submit the supplementary information regarding the redistribution of duties of existing Assistant Commissioner and Principal Transport Officers (PTOs) in TD upon creation of the relevant posts.

Currently, one Assistant Commissioner is leading the Bus and Railway Branch (BRB) of TD, with the support of three PTOs who manage three divisions respectively. BRB handles a number of different duties, including overseeing the services of the entire railway network (covering heavy rail, Light Rail, the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, etc.); planning, development, regulation and financial performance of bus services under the six bus franchises; non-franchised bus services and policy matters related to passenger service licences; tram services and its financial performance; planning of public transport

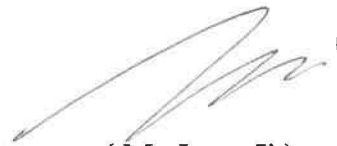
interchanges and related policy matters; reorganisation plans in respect of the public transport services upon the commissioning of new railway lines; and overall public transport policy matters, etc. The major duties of the above four directorate officers have been set out in detail in Enclosure 7 to the discussion paper EC(2021-22)6 submitted earlier to the Establishment Subcommittee of the Finance Committee.

As mentioned in the above paper, there is currently no dedicated team responsible for FB safety within TD. The duties related to enhancing FB safety have all along been spanned across different divisions, including the Bus Development Division of the BRB, Vehicle Safety and Standards Division and Road Safety and Standards Division. Amongst them, one PTO of the Bus Development Division (i.e. one of the three PTOs mentioned above) has been assigned to take on the additional responsibilities in relation to further enhancing FB safety since 2019. With the continuous expansion of the bus and railway networks over the years, the Assistant Commissioner and the PTOs of the BRB have been fully stretched and have no spare capacity to address the new tasks required for further enhancing FB safety. Upon the establishment of the FB Safety Team, the Assistant Commissioner and the PTOs of the BRB would be able to focus their efforts on dealing with a number of new important tasks in the coming few years under their existing purview, including franchise negotiation for the three bus franchises expiring in 2023, planning of new FB service networks and associated facilities in new development areas (e.g. Kai Tak, Hung Shui Kiu and Yuen Long South, etc.), implementation of the reorganisation of FB services following the commissioning of the MTR Tuen Ma Line and that of the cross harbour section of East Rail Line next year, examination of the operational feasibility of environmental friendly and new energy buses and review of their operating conditions, etc.

The newly established FB Safety Team of the TD will take up the responsibility in handling, coordinating and overseeing all aspects of work related to FB safety. With the professional support and advice from dedicated teams headed by two directorate officers (i.e. one PTO and one Chief Electrical and Mechanical Engineer), the Safety Director will provide high-level leadership in formulating a forward-looking, proactive and holistic strategy to enhance FB safety, strengthening TD's regulatory role in this regard and implementing various aspects of measures related to FB safety. The major work targets of the FB Safety Team include developing a training framework for FB captains and introducing a "Bus Captain Accreditation Programme", formulating a fatigue management strategy for bus captains, strengthening the safety performance management of FB operators, conducting thorough and rigorous accident data analysis, exploring the development

of comprehensive specifications and requirements of FB vehicles and in-vehicle devices and installations suiting the unique operational needs in Hong Kong, exploring the introduction of quality assurance scheme for the maintenance of FBs, introducing new vehicle technologies for enhancing bus safety, and enhancing safety of other relevant vehicles (e.g. non-franchised buses). For details, please refer to the paper mentioned above and the supplementary information issued to the Establishment Subcommittee on 25 June 2021.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jerry Ji', written in a cursive style.

(Ms Jerry Ji)

for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c. Commissioner for Transport (Attn.: Mr Felix Yim)