

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Driver Training

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is -

- (i) to report the views of the driving instructor trade on the package of proposals on driver training as set out in the consultation paper issued in November 1999; and
- (ii) to outline the proposed plan for issuing “group licences” for existing private driving instructors and issuing new licences.

BACKGROUND

2. In 1999, the Administration conducted a review on driver training policy. It concluded that the existing ‘two-pronged’ approach should be maintained: to promote off-street driver training through the establishment of driving schools and to maintain a sufficient supply of private driving instructors (PDIs) for on-street driver training.

3. In pursuance of the ‘two-pronged’ approach, we developed a package of proposals to ensure a good supply of PDIs, to streamline the operation of PDI licences and to better manage on-street driver training activities.

4. The package of proposals was issued to the driving instructor trade in the form of a consultation paper on 19 November 1999 with the consultation period ending on 1 March 2000.

5. This Panel was briefed at the meeting on 26 November 1999 of the outcome of the review on driver training policy and the package of proposals as set out in the consultation paper.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

6. The consultation paper was sent to 11 private driving instructor associations, the 2 designated driving schools and the ex-HKSM Driving

Instructors in November 1999. Three briefing sessions and informal discussions were held with the trade. The 11 PDI associations also circulated the consultation paper to individual members.

VIEWS RECEIVED

7. All 11 PDI associations, the 2 driving schools and the ex-HKSM Driving Instructors responded to the consultation paper. Another 82 individual PDIs submitted their views.

8. The views received are summarised as follows:

(i) Grouping of the Private Driving Instructor (PDI) Licences

- Of the 11 PDI associations, 10 gave their full support to the Grouping proposal and strongly urged for early implementation. The Hong Kong & Kowloon Goods Vehicle Omnibuses and Minibuses Instructor's Association was the only PDI association objecting to the proposal. The Association has 86 members, and represents mainly the interest of Bus PDIs. They considered that licences should be issued through examination rather than by direct endorsement.
- Of the 82 individual PDIs who submitted written views, 54 (66%) were in support of the proposal while 28 (34%) did not render support. Of the 28 not in support, 20 were Bus PDIs.
- The Hong Kong School of Motoring (HKSM) supported Grouping of Groups 1 and 2 but not Group 3 as it considered the driving techniques for Articulated Vehicles to be different from that for heavy and medium goods vehicles.
- Two Legislative Council Members and one Kwai Tsing District Council Member also wrote in support of the proposal and urged for early implementation.

- The ex-HKSM Driving Instructors objected to the Grouping proposal. They were of the view that PDI licences should be issued through examination and not by direct endorsement.

(ii) Issue of new PDI licences

- All were in support of the issue of new PDI licences and there was no suggestion for early issue.
- As regards the benchmark figure for issue of new licences, the majority accepted maintaining the existing level of supply and the figure 1050, based on the average number of valid PDI licences in 1999, was considered reasonable.
- The ex-HKSM Driving Instructors did not support a benchmark figure, and considered that if a figure was to be set, it should be increased from 1050 to 1500 to include all ex-HKSM Driving Instructors. They also suggested that designated driving schools should employ ex-school instructors before approaching TD for the issue of school instructor licences to new recruits.

(iii) Method for issue of new PDI licences

All are in support of Option 1 - i.e. :

- Application should be open to all.
- Sufficient number of eligible candidates will be selected by ballot to take the instructor tests for filling the PDI vacancies.
- All candidates who passed the test will be issued with the licence.
- Once all the vacancies are filled, the exercise will stop.

(iv) Off-street practice site for Private Driving Instructors

- Only one PDI association suggested that if such a site is to be provided, it should be equipped with a driving test centre to attract PDIs and learner drivers to use the practice site.

Driving Instruction Standards

9. To ensure that the driving instruction standards will be maintained, we have advised the trade during the briefing sessions that TD would run seminars on the techniques, driving test requirements and special features of the different classes of vehicles prior to the issue of group licences. All PDIs would be encouraged to attend. According to our experience in organising seminars for PDIs to update them on driving test requirements, we can reasonably expect all active PDIs with the intention to practise instruction for the newly acquired instruction entitlement to attend the seminar.

Benchmark figure of PDIs

10. Given majority support for maintaining the existing level of supply, i.e. 1,050 for Group 1 licences, we propose adopting this figure as the benchmark in our review for the issue of new PDI licences. As stated in the consultation paper, the supply of PDIs will be reviewed every two years on a group-by-group basis. New licences will be issued to replenish the loss through natural wastage over time.

GROUPING OF LICENCES

11. To effect the grouping of licences, amendments to Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations are required. We propose to issue a new “group licence” to existing PDIs upon expiry of the existing licences or if they choose to obtain a group licence before the expiry date of existing licences. The new “group licence” shall be issued after the holding of driving instruction seminars in July and August 2000. An existing PDI will be entitled to give instructions to all classes of vehicles in the same group if he holds the driving licence for not less than 3 years for all these classes of vehicles. If not, a restricted group licence will be issued instead. This restricted group licence will prohibit the PDI from giving instructions to other classes of vehicles which he is not entitled to.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Grouping

12. With strong support from the trade on the grouping of PDI licences, the

Administration proposes to amend the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations as soon as possible to effect the issuance of “group licences” to replace existing licences. The computer system will be upgraded to match with the target implementation of grouping from 1 September 2000 onwards:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Actions</u>
April 2000	- Drafting of legislative amendments - Enhancement of the Computer System (VALID) for issue of group licences
mid May	- Gazetting of amendments to Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations and tabling in the Legislative Council for negative vetting
end-June 2000	- Announcement of details for issue of new Group licences
July/Aug 2000	- Conduct seminars
September 2000	- Issue of new Group licences

Issue of New PDI Licence

13. The Administration is currently examining the legislative amendments required for the issue of new PDI licences under a balloting arrangement. The aim is to implement all necessary legislative amendments within the current legislative session, where possible.

ADVICE SOUGHT

14. Members are invited to comment on the proposed implementation plan.

Transport Bureau
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