

LegCo Panel Paper

Measures to enhance the efficiency of bus service

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the various measures which the Administration has taken to enhance the efficiency of bus service, with an update on the latest position of the bus-bus interchange schemes and the inter-district bus only lane scheme.

BACKGROUND

2. In recent years, the franchised bus operators have upgraded their bus fleet and expanded their service in response to rising expectation from bus passengers. To ensure efficient use of our limited road space and bus terminal facilities, there are on-going efforts to enhance the efficiency of bus services.

3. In the past year, we have taken a number of measures to rationalize bus services, including cancellation of routes with low utilization, reduction of service frequency where appropriate, route amalgamation, introduction of short-working arrangement, diversion of bus routes to less congested roads, and re-organisation of bus stops. Bus-bus interchange schemes were introduced and more schemes are being planned. Further details are given in paragraphs 6-8 below.

4. On the other hand, franchised buses are mass carriers which is the most efficient mode of road transport. The operating efficiency of franchised buses could be enhanced by giving them some degree of priority in the use of road space where appropriate.

5. A Feasibility Study of Inter-district Bus-only Lanes (BOLs) was commissioned in August 1996 to investigate the introduction of inter-district BOLs in six traffic corridors¹. Preliminary results were reported to the Panel in April 1997 and February 1998. The Study was completed in 1999. An update on the Study and the next steps to be

¹ Kwun Tong – To Kwa Wan/Hung Hom – Tsim Sha Tsui
Tseung Kwan O – Kwun Tong
Sheung Shui – Sha Tin – Tsim Sha Tsui
Tsing Yi – Kwai Chung
Tuen Mun – Kwai Chung – Tsim Sha Tsui
Aberdeen – Wanchai-Central

taken is given in paragraphs 9-16 below.

BUS-BUS INTERCHANGE SCHEMES

6. Bus-bus interchange schemes are developed to improve the bus network coverage to the benefit of the bus passengers, while at the same time make better use of bus resources which helps to reduce the pressure for new direct bus routes. Interchange fare discounts are provided by the franchised bus companies to encourage bus passengers to interchange with other buses at the interchange locations for the second leg of their journey. Two successful schemes were implemented at Shing Mun and Tai Lam Tunnels in 1991 and 1998 respectively. They involve over 20 bus routes and more than 30,000 passengers interchange buses at these two interchanges on a weekday.

7. We are actively developing bus-bus interchange schemes in other areas of Hong Kong. A new scheme involving 6 bus routes was implemented at Kwun Tong Road on 26 March 2000. Under this scheme, bus passengers of Route 296A plying between Tseung Kwan O and Ngau Tau Kok MTR Station are offered a fare discount through the use of Octopus for the second leg of their journeys when they interchange with five other routes to and from Kwai Shing, Shatin, Tai Po, Sheung Shui and Tin Shui Wai respectively.

8. We plan to introduce more bus-bus interchange schemes this year. We aim to introduce two more schemes at the Wan Chai Ferry Pier and in Causeway Bay within the next few months. There are also plans to introduce similar schemes at Admiralty and the tunnels where feasible. Discussions with the franchised bus operators are on-going to work out the details such as route selection, fare discount arrangements and necessary modification to the Octopus system design for these planned schemes.

INTER-DISTRICT BUS-ONLY LANE SCHEMES

9. The scope of the Feasibility Study of Inter-district Bus-only Lanes covered the investigation, planning and preliminary design of inter-district BOLs for six proposed route corridors, with due consideration given to the necessary complementary traffic management schemes, bus

route planning, cost effectiveness and public acceptance. The Study also covered the trial implementation of the Aberdeen – Wan Chai BOL scheme.

The Aberdeen - Wanchai BOL Trial Scheme

10. The Aberdeen - Wanchai BOL trial scheme were implemented in 1997/98. Results of the trial are summarised below:

Wanchai Bound Traffic

- a reduction of bus journey time by 2.3 minutes and a slight increase of about 0.4 minute in the journey time of other vehicles; and
- an improvement in the regularity of buses from 12% to 24%.

Aberdeen Bound Traffic

- a reduction in journey time of buses by about 2.9 minutes and a slight increase of about 1.2 minutes in the journey time of other vehicles; and
- an improvement in the regularity of buses from 12% to 13%.

11. The diversion of bus routes had a notable contribution to the overall reduction in bus journey times. The trial scheme, which includes bus diversion to Fenwick Street and Johnston Road, is operating satisfactorily in terms of road/junction capacities. The impact on users of other modes of transport had also been kept to a minimum.

Study on other Corridors

12. Experience from the Aberdeen – Wanchai trial scheme revealed that the public are very concerned with the impact of BOLs on other road users, especially the loss of kerbside loading/unloading spaces and the increase in journey time.

13. On the basis of the trial scheme, a set of assessment criteria was

formulated to examine the merits of introducing BOLs in individual traffic corridors in the Study. The effect of BOLs on journey times was adopted as the quantitative indicator of benefits and disbenefits. These are the reduction in bus journey times associated with the total number of bus passengers and the increase in journey times for other road users. Other qualitative assessment include, for example, the prohibition of kerbside activities, the need of banning turns and detouring along the BOLs. BOLs would only be proposed on road sections that satisfy the assessment criteria and produce net journey time savings.

14. The results of the studies concluded that we should only proceed with the Tuen Mun - Kwai Chung - Tsim Sha Tsui Corridor Scheme.

Tuen Mun - Kwai Chung - Tsim Sha Tsui Corridor

15. Tuen Mun Road and Castle Peak Road are the only two major roads connecting Tuen Mun and Kwai Chung. Most buses now use Tsuen Wan Road, Cheung Sha Wan Road and Nathan Road to go to Tsim Sha Tsui. The BOL scheme proposed for this corridor is illustrated at the Annex. It is revealed that only some sections of Cheung Sha Wan Road would be suitable for introducing BOLs.

16. Transport Department will implement the BOL on Cheung Sha Wan Road as a local traffic improvement scheme first. The relevant District Councils have been consulted and they indicated their support for the scheme. Due to intensive drainage construction works which will commence shortly on Cheung Sha Wan Road for completion in 2005, we plan to implement the proposed BOL after the completion of the drainage works.

FURTHER ACTION

17. The Administration will continue with its efforts to enhance the efficient use of bus services and will review the effectiveness of the above measures from time to time.

Transport Bureau
May 2000