

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Driver Training

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to report to Members the outcome of the review on driver training policy and submit for Members' information a package of proposed measures for consultation with the driver training trade.

BACKGROUND

2. At the Meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Transport of 28 May 1999, Members and the trade raised a number of issues concerning driver training. The Administration was requested to review the current driver training policy and revert to Members in November 1999.

REVIEW

3. The Administration completed a review of the driver training policy and concluded that the existing two-pronged approach should be maintained. We will continue to promote off-street driver training through the establishment of driving schools subject to demand and site availability. We will also maintain a sufficient supply of private driving instructors (PDIs) for on-street driver training.

4. On this basis, we have developed a package of proposals to ensure that there is a good supply of PDIs, to streamline the operation of the PDI licences and to better manage on-street driver training activities. The key proposed measures are:

- (a) to organise the 7 types of PDIs into 3 groups:
 - Group 1 Private Cars and Light Goods Vehicles
 - Group 2 Bus and Public Light Bus
 - Group 3 Articulated Vehicles, Heavy Goods Vehicles and Medium Goods Vehicles
- (b) to cap the Group 1 licences at 1050 and not to issue Groups 2 and 3 licences for the coming four years;
- (c) two proposed methods for issuance of new PDI licences; and
- (d) to set down the criteria for the provision of off-street practice sites for PDIs.

Details of the proposals are set out in the consultation document at **Appendix I**.

5. Transport Department has distributed the consultation document to driving instructors associations and driving schools listed in **Appendix II** and will arrange a briefing session shortly for interested parties. Comments on the proposed measures may be forwarded to Transport Department on or before 1 March 2000. A detailed scheme for streamlining the operation of PDI licences will be formulated in the light of views collected.

ADVICE SOUGHT

6. Members are invited to note the proposals on driver training and the consultation process as set out in paragraphs 3 to 5. We will revert to Members in April 2000 on the outcome of the consultation with the trade and on the changes to the system.

Transport Bureau
November 1999

Appendix I

Consultation Paper on Driver Training

Background

Driver training is conducted under a two-pronged approach. We promote off-street driver training through the establishment of driving schools subject to demand and site availability. We have maintained a sufficient supply of private driving instructors (PDIs) for on-street driver training in selected areas. This two-pronged approach allows a choice for learner drivers.

2. The Administration has recently completed a review of the driver training policy and has concluded that the two-pronged approach should be maintained. Given the congested state of our streets, especially in the urban areas, we will continue to encourage off-street driver training. Depending on the success or otherwise of the Tsuen Wan Driving School, which is a new type of driving school, small driving schools of similar size and mode of operation would be extended to other areas.

3. At the same time, we will maintain on-street driver training provided that such activities will not aggravate the traffic situation or cause road safety concerns. In this connection, we have worked out a package of proposals to ensure that there is a good supply of PDIs, to streamline the operation of the PDI licences and to better manage on-street driver training activities. This paper sets out the proposals in detail. We welcome the trade's views on the proposals.

Proposals

4. The proposed measures are as follows :

4.1 Grouping of Private Driving Instructor (PDI) Licence

4.1.1 At present, there are 7 types of PDI licence (Private Cars, Light Goods Vehicles, Bus, Public Light Bus, Medium Goods

Vehicles, Heavy Goods Vehicles and Articulated Vehicles). A PDI can only give driving instruction for the type of vehicle for which he has been issued with the relevant PDI licence.

4.1.2 To allow PDIs greater flexibility and efficiency in their work, it is proposed to organise the 7 types of PDI licences into 3 groups :

- Group 1 Private Cars and Light Goods Vehicles
- Group 2 Bus and Public Light Bus
- Group 3 Articulated Vehicles, Heavy Goods Vehicles and Medium Goods Vehicles

4.1.3 Following the proposed grouping, an existing PDI holding one type of instructor licence in a group can give instruction to all other types of vehicles in the same group provided he has been in possession of a valid driving licence for 3 years for all the other types of vehicles in that group. If he is not in possession of a valid driving licence for 3 years for a type of vehicle in the group, he will not be allowed to give instruction in respect of that particular type of vehicle and the 'Group' licence will state so clearly.

4.1.4 The proposed grouping is considered appropriate because :

(a) From the driver training point of view, there are some common features within each group of vehicles :

- Group 1 small vehicles for the training of beginners
- Group 2 vehicles for the carriage of a substantial number of passengers
- Group 3 vehicles for the carriage of goods

(b) This is in line with current practice. Currently, there are the following direct endorsements for driving licence without test ;

(i) holder of a driving licence for Light Goods

Vehicles is entitled to drive private car;

- (ii) holder of a driving licence for Bus is entitled to drive Public Light Bus;
- (iii) holder of a driving licence for Heavy Goods Vehicle is entitled to drive Medium Goods Vehicle;
and
- (iv) holder of a driving licence for Articulated Vehicle is entitled to drive Heavy Goods Vehicle.

The new 'Group' licence will be issued at a fee with a validity period of 12 months.

4.1.5 Based on the latest information on valid PDI licences as at 1.11.1999, the number of licences for each group are as follows :

Group 1 : 1036

Group 2 : 124

Group 3 : 221

4.2 Issue of new Private Driving Instructor Licence

4.2.1 From the road safety and traffic management points of view, the present level of on-street driver training brought about by the PDIs is considered acceptable. It is proposed that a limited and controlled number of new PDI licences be issued from time to time in order to maintain the present supply of on-street driver training activities and to replenish the loss of PDIs through natural wastage.

4.2.2 The number of new licences to be issued is determined with reference to the following factors :

- (i) There is currently an adequate supply of PDIs to meet demand. Based on the number of learner driver applications, our initial

assessment is that after the proposed grouping of PDI licences, the supply of PDIs for Group 1 is about right but there will be substantial over-supply for Groups 2 and 3.

- (ii) Regular reviews at two-year intervals will be conducted for all Groups to ensure a reasonable supply of PDIs. For Group 1, a limited and controlled number of new PDI licences may be issued to replenish the loss of PDIs through natural wastage. As for Groups 2 and 3, since there is a large over-supply of instructors, it is proposed not to issue any new licences for these two groups in the coming 4 years. The supply of Groups 2 and 3 instructors will be closely monitored and reviewed by the end of the fourth year before deciding on any new issue.
- (iii) The current level of supply of PDIs for Group 1 (1036 Group 1 licences as at 1.11.1999), rounded up to **1050**, should form the benchmark for regulating the size of Group 1 PDIs. The trigger point for issue of new Group 1 PDI licence will be at a point when the number of valid PDI licences falls below the benchmark by 10%. The number of new licences to be issued will be the difference between the benchmark figure and the number of valid licences.

Method of issue of new licences

- 4.2.3 The issue of new licences will be open to all. Any person who meets the requirement for acquiring a PDI licence as stipulated in Regulation 22 of the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations may apply.

As regards the testing and qualifying for new PDI licences, two options are proposed for consideration :

Option 1 : Eligible candidates invited to take test by ballot

When the result of the biennial review indicates a need to issue new Group 1 licences, applications for

such licences will be invited. Sufficient number of candidates will then be drawn by ballot to take the instructor tests for filling the vacancies. They will be issued with a PDI licence on passing the instructor test. Once all the vacancies are filled, no further instructor test will be conducted and the exercise will stop.

Driving schools will continue to recruit their instructors under current arrangements. On passing, each candidate will be issued with an approval letter permitting him to serve as a driving instructor at the driving school concerned. On leaving the driving schools, these instructors will not be issued with a PDI licence. The approval letter will permit instructors to move from one driving school to another within 3 years after leaving the previous school they serve.

Whilst serving in the driving schools, these instructors may also put in applications for PDI licences when such are invited. If selected by ballot, these instructors will not have to undergo a further round of testing and will be issued with a PDI licence.

Option 2 : Eligible applicants to take instructor test on a first-come-first-serve basis

TD shall receive applications for PDI licences all the time. All applicants who meet the requirement as stipulated in Regulation 22 of Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations may take the instructor test on a first-come-first-serve basis. The waiting time would be dependent on the number of applicants and resources available for conducting instructor test. Candidates, on passing the test, will form a 'pool' of qualified candidates for PDI licences.

When there is a need to fill Group 1 vacancies, a ballot will be drawn from the 'pool' to fill the vacancies. The candidates drawn will be issued with PDI licences. Those who have not been selected can remain in the 'pool' for the period equal to the validity of their test results (i.e. 3 years maximum). No priority will be accorded to the unselected in further ballots.

Driving schools will also have to recruit their instructors from this 'pool' of qualified candidates. On leaving the driving schools, the instructors will not be issued with PDI licences. They are only permitted to serve as instructors while being employed by the driving schools. However, their names will remain in the 'pool' for balloting purposes. The arrangements for instructors in driving schools are similar to that under Option 1.

Provision of off-street practice site for Private Driving Instructors

5. There have been requests for the Transport Department to provide PDIs with off-street practice sites for the training of basic driving skills on a fee-paying basis. The Transport Department is prepared to consider the request provided the following criteria are met :

- (i) a suitable site of sufficient size and reasonable accessibility is available;
- (ii) the trade, or a representative part of it, can organise itself to be responsible for the management of such a site; and
- (iii) market rental is paid.

The Transport Department would be happy to assist the Private Driving Instructor trade in developing a trial scheme and identifying a suitable

site, if concrete proposals on the above lines are put forward by the trade.

Views sought

6. Members of the driving instructor trade, including PDIs and operators of designated driving schools, are invited to give their views and comments on :

- (a) organising the 7 types of private driving instructors into 3 groups;
- (b) the issue of new PDI licence;
- (c) the two methods for issuance of new PDI licences;
and
- (d) the provision of off-street practice sites for PDIs.

7. A detailed scheme for streamlining the operation of PDI licences will be formulated in the light of views collected. Please send your comments to :

Transport Department
(Licensing Division)
3/F., United Centre
95 Queensway
Hong Kong

on or before 1 March 2000

Transport Department
November 1999

Appendix II

Driving Instructors Associations and Driving Schools

- (1) Driving Instructors Merchant Association Limited
- (2) Hong Kong Driving Instruction Club Limited
- (3) Hong Kong & Kowloon Goods Vehicle Omnibuses and Minibuses Instructors' Association Ltd.
- (4) Hong Kong Society of Articulated Vehicle Driving Instructors Ltd.
- (5) Articulated & Commercial Vehicle's Instructors Union
- (6) Kowloon Motor Driving Instructor's Association Limited
- (7) Motor Transport Workers' General Union
- (8) Hong Kong Motor Car Driving Instructors Association Limited
- (9) Driving Instructors Association
- (10) Public & Private Light Buses Driving Instructor's Society Co. Ltd.
- (11) Hong Kong Commercial Vehicle Driving Instructors Association Ltd.
- (12) Hong Kong School of Motoring Ltd.
- (13) Quality Driver Training Centre Ltd.
- (14) Representatives of a group of ex-instructors of the Hong Kong School of Motoring Ltd.