

**Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs
and Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for
Persons with Disabilities**

Information Paper for Meeting on 12 April 2007

PURPOSE

This paper is to respond to the Subcommittee's suggestion for the Government and the public transport operators to jointly provide fare concession to persons with disabilities (PWDs) under the principle of shared responsibility.

TRANSPORT POLICY TO FACILITATE THE INTEGRATION OF PWDs INTO THE COMMUNITY

2. As far as transport policy is concerned, the Administration is committed to providing a barrier-free transport system for all, including people with disabilities. We have all along been improving traffic and transport facilities with a view to meeting the needs of PWDs and enhancing their mobility. We equally encourage the public transport operators to do the same. To this end, public transport operators have been expending resources at their own cost to improve their facilities to enhance the accessibility of their transport services to PWDs.

3. Over the years, these improvements include deployment of low-floor buses, installation of bus stop announcement system on board of buses, construction of tactile guide paths and ramps at railway stations, etc. The transport policy of providing a barrier-free transport for all, including the PWDs, is diligently implemented. Moreover, the Transport Department holds regular meetings with PWDs and public transport operators to discuss and identify areas in the provision of transport services that can be improved to further enhance the accessibility of their services for use by PWDs.

4. Public transport services in Hong Kong are operated by private entities, with no direct subsidies from the Government. In pursuance of the spirit of free enterprise, whether to grant fare concessions or not is a commercial decision for the public transport operators. Having said that, the Administration has been encouraging public transport operators to offer fare concessions to the public including the PWDs having regard to their financial and operating conditions, as well as the needs of the community. At present, public transport operators are offering

around 50 fare concession schemes of various kinds to the general public. These include Octopus card fare reduction, monthly ticket scheme and return-trip fare reduction, etc. Passengers with disabilities can also benefit from these schemes when using the relevant transport services.

FARE CONCESSION TO BE OFFERED JOINTLY BY THE GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS

5. Under the welfare policy, the Government is providing various sources of assistance to take care PWDs' basic transport needs, the details of which are set out below –

- (i) Rehabus Service – the Government subsidizes the Rehabus Service with an annual provision of \$27 million to meet the basic transport needs of PWDs;
- (ii) Disability Allowance (DA) – the purpose of DA is to offer, on a non-means-tested basis, some measure of financial assistance to the severely disabled to meet their needs arising from disability. Recipients of Normal and Higher DA will receive \$1,140 and \$2,280 per month respectively. In 2007-08, expenditure in this area is estimated to be \$1.87 billion; and
- (iii) Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) – under the CSSA Scheme, in addition to a higher CSSA standard rate to meet their basic needs, the disabled recipients are given a wide range of special grants to cover their special needs, such as fares to and from hospitals or clinics and other essential travelling expenses as well as costs of medical, rehabilitation, surgical appliances and hygienic items. The average payment of a single disabled CSSA recipient is about \$3,700 per month. In 2007-08, CSSA payment to PWDs will amount to about \$5.0 billion.

6. On the suggestion of shared responsibility between the Government and PT operators in providing fare concession, we remain of the view that we have taken care of the basic transport needs of PWDs under our welfare policy through the various measures as set out in the last paragraph.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
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