

**For discussion  
19 December 2005**

**Legislative Council Panel on Transport**  
**Measures to Enhance Road Safety and  
Safety of Public Light Bus (PLB) Operations**

**Purpose**

This paper updates Members on the progress of measures to enhance road safety and safety of PLB operations in Hong Kong.

**Background**

2. In December 2004, we put forth a package of measures covering legislation, enforcement, publicity, education and technology application to enhance road safety and safety of PLB operations. The progress of these measures is set out in the following paragraphs.

**General Road Safety Measures**

*(I) Driving Offence Points (DOPs) and Fixed Penalty for Failing to comply with Traffic Signals*

3. To strengthen the deterrent effect for failing to comply with traffic signals, legislative amendments were passed in July 2005 to raise the DOPs from 3 to 5, and increase the fixed penalty from \$450 to \$600. The new penalties will take effect from 1 January 2006. We will launch large-scale publicity programmes, particularly in these two months, to remind road users to observe traffic signals.

*(II) Enforcement of Three Common Traffic Offences through Fixed Penalty*

4. The three common traffic offences<sup>1</sup> are currently enforced by way of summons. To simplify the means of prosecution so as to facilitate enforcement and enhance the deterrent effect, legislative amendments were

---

<sup>1</sup> The three common traffic offences are -

- (a) using a handheld mobile telephone or telecommunication device while the vehicle is in motion;
- (b) failing to drive in the nearside lane of an expressway; and
- (c) driving motorcycle or motor tricycle without the necessary lights illuminated.

also passed in July 2005 to include the offences in the Schedule to the Fixed Penalty (Criminal Proceedings) Ordinance so that prosecution can be carried out by way of Fixed Penalty Ticket. The new legislation will take effect from 1 January 2006.

(III) Red Light Cameras

5. Currently, we have installed red light camera housings at 111 signalised road junctions, and 28 cameras are operating on a rotational basis. The Finance Committee of this Council approved funds for us to procure 68 additional cameras and install camera housings at 20 new junctions. With this expansion programme, we will have 96 cameras at 131 housings, representing some three-fold increase in the camera-to-housing ratio from 1:4 to 1:1.4, or from 25% to 73%. The new cameras will commence operation in phases starting from April 2006. We will continue to monitor red light jumping activities at other junctions, and will further expand the coverage of such cameras in the future.

(IV) Speed Enforcement Cameras

6. To deter speeding, we have installed speed enforcement camera housings at 85 locations on major roads and expressways with 10 cameras operating on a rotational basis. We plan to improve the camera-to-housing ratio and install more of such cameras and housings at other strategic roads. Since the installation of such cameras involve a number of technical issues such as site constraints and the availability of power supply, we are examining the potential sites in detail and will install these cameras and housings in phases in the coming years.

(V) Enforcement

7. The Police has continued to take enforcement actions to combat inappropriate driving behaviour. From January to October 2005, the Police prosecuted 189 108 cases against speeding and 34 063 cases against failing to observe traffic lights, representing an increase of 12.6% and 14.8% respectively when compared with the same period in 2004. Blitz operations will continue to be carried out by the Police at black spots.

(VI) Education and Publicity

8. Traffic offences involve primarily the driving attitude and behaviour of drivers. While the aforesaid measures that aim to raise the penalty levels and facilitate enforcement will no doubt offer strong deterrent effects against various traffic offences, especially speeding and red light jumping, the most fundamental measure is to instill in drivers a correct driving attitude through continuous education and publicity programmes.

9. In this connection, the Road Safety Council has been focusing on the cultivation of a responsible driving culture. The following measures will continue to be taken—

- carry out regular targeted publicity for PLB, taxi and non-franchised bus drivers;
- produce TV and radio Announcements of Public Interest and increase the number of airtime for road safety publicity;
- use mobile publicity media to spread road safety messages;
- display road safety messages at major roads and tunnel entrances/exits;
- carry out promotional activities on the safety of passenger vehicles;
- organise talks and seminars on road safety for drivers; and
- distribute pamphlets and launch on-street educational activities at major traffic blackspots, public carparks and boundary control points.

10. Large-scale publicity programmes specifically advocating the importance of obeying traffic lights will be launched in December 2005 and early 2006.

**Specific Measures for PLBs**

(VII) Installation of Speed Display Device

11. Speed Display Devices are primarily used to facilitate monitoring by PLB passengers and caution PLB drivers against speeding. In April 2005, we made mandatory installation of such devices on PLBs a new vehicle licence condition upon issue or renewal of a PLB licence. At present, over 2,300 PLBs (53% of all PLBs) have installed such devices. About 1,600 of them are green minibuses and 700 are red minibuses. By mid-2006, all PLBs should have installed Speed Display Devices.

12. Our next step is to prepare legislative amendments to make Speed Display Devices a standard requirement on PLBs under the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulation, and that any misuse or malfunctioning of the devices would constitute an offence. We believe the legislative approach will facilitate more effective enforcement in the future.

(VIII) Mandatory Display of PLB Driver Name Plate

13. At present, PLB drivers are required under the Passenger Service Licence conditions to display their name plates at the front of the vehicles while they are on duty. However, some PLB drivers do not observe this requirement. We consulted the PLB trade in May 2005 on making the display of the driver's name plate mandatory under the Road Traffic (Public Service Vehicles) Regulation. The trade has no objection to the proposal. We are considering legislative amendment in this regard.

(IX) Mandatory Display of the Complaint Hotline

14. There are constant complaints from passengers that some PLB drivers ignore their requests for reducing speed. Having consulted the PLB trade in May 2005, we have incorporated the requirement for PLB operators to display the Transport Complaint Unit Hotline inside the vehicle as a Passenger Service Licence condition since November 2005. All PLB operators are now required to display the Hotline inside the PLB.

(X) Training for PLB Drivers

15. Since August 2003, the Transport Department has been organising the "PLB Driver Training Course" to help improve the driving behaviour of PLB drivers. So far, about 700 drivers have attended the course. In addition, TD has also organized jointly with the Vocational Training Council an "Advanced PLB Driver Training Course". PLB drivers who attend the course will be given a subsidy amounting to 70% of the course fee. So far, some 200 PLB drivers have attended the course.

16. In November 2005, TD also organized a refresher workshop "PLB Road Safety Seminar" for PLB drivers. About 100 PLB drivers attended the workshop.

17. We consider that continuous in-service training is vital to remind PLB drivers of the importance of safe driving. We will continue to encourage PLB drivers to attend refresher training courses.

(XI) Road Safety Publicity Programme for PLB Drivers

18. To enhance the road safety awareness of PLB drivers, we have launched a series of PLB-oriented publicity programmes. In May 2005, we organised the PLB Safety Action Day. In December 2005, we provided ‘Buckle-Up’ stickers to PLB drivers to remind passengers to wear seat belts. In January 2006, we will launch a safe driving campaign for PLB drivers.

(XII) Promulgation of PLB Driver Safety Charter

19. In March 2005, we helped the trade to launch the Safety Charter. So far, about 900 PLB drivers have signed the Charter to demonstrate their commitment to safe driving. We will continue to encourage more PLB drivers to do the same.

(XIII) Installation of passenger seat belts and high back seats

20. To better protect PLB passengers from fatal or serious injuries in traffic accidents, a new legislation requiring all PLBs to be equipped with seat belts and high back seats took effect from 1 August 2004. The law also mandates PLB passengers to wear seat belts, if such are available. By November 2005, 1,663 PLBs (1,101 green minibuses and 562 red minibuses) have been equipped with passenger seat belts and high back seats.

21. We note that most PLB owners would replace a PLB when it has served eight to ten years. Currently, about 960 PLBs (22% of the whole fleet) have served for eight or more years. We therefore expect that these vehicles would be replaced by new vehicles in the next one or two years. By then, over half of the PLBs will be equipped with seat belts.

22. As regards PLBs that were registered before 1 August 2004 with no seat belts, we will endeavour to assist the owners to retrofit them with seat belts. We are actively examining with the trade and vehicle manufacturers the details relating to such work, with a view to speeding up the retrofitting exercise.

(XIV) Strengthening of management of drivers

23. We have strongly urged all the operators of green minibuses to review and strengthen their management and monitoring over drivers, with particular emphasis on the latter's driving behaviour. We have also asked operators to conduct a thorough review of their Drivers' Code so as to further enhance passenger safety. We will also help those operators who need assistance to devise suitable Drivers' Code for their drivers.

**Measures Requiring Further Investigation**

24. Apart from the above initiatives which are being implemented, we will also continue to explore the feasibility of the following longer-term measures.

(XV) Installation of Vehicle Monitoring System

25. This system is essentially a "blackbox" which can keep a full record of the operating conditions of the vehicle for a period of time. In 2004, we carried out a trial on four GMBs that served different districts and with different operating characteristics. However, there were technical problems with the system and the trial was suspended in early 2005. At the present moment, we are not aware of any PLB blackbox in the market. Nevertheless, we will continue to explore Vehicle Monitoring Systems that are suitable for use on PLBs for further testing.

(XVI) Installation of Speed Limiters on PLBs

26. A speed limiter limits the vehicle speed to a specified level by controlling the fuel feed to the engine. It is an effective means to prevent speeding by locking the speed of the vehicle at a pre-set level. However, we understand that for LPG PLBs, there are technical problems with installing such a device. We will continue to explore with the suppliers whether there are technical solutions to the problems.

**Advice Sought**

27. Members are requested to note the progress of measures to enhance road safety and safety of PLB operations.